The ministry of women in mid-nineteenth century England: Sister Dora and the Anglican sisterhoods

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It all starts here

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Preface and Acknowledgements

I first became interested in Sister Dora whilst undertaking an MA degree in theology and religious studies. Initially, I discussed undertaking some further work around her life with Sean Gill who at that time was working at Bristol University and was studying women during the nineteenth century in the Church of England. He agreed to become my supervisor and was inspirational. Unfortunately, he retired after three years, but one of the last things he said to me was, “Don’t give up”.

I spent some time looking for another supervisor and was fortunate to discover Reverend Professor Roger Grainger, who also had a real link to the history of women’s orders in the Church of England.

I have been very grateful for the useful meetings we have had and the comments he has made, together with those of Professor Smit. Peg Evans has been helpful and encouraging well beyond the limits of administration.

I have enjoyed the use of large resources such as the British Library and smaller archives such as the delightful Fliedner Archiv in Kaiserswerth and the Gladstone Library together with the Lambeth Palace Library. Their staff have been unfailingly helpful and often very enthusiastic.

Lastly, I have been assisted by those who have been prepared to listen to me try out lines of discussion about the sisterhoods and their members, which I still find exciting to consider.

Summary and key terms

Summary

The aim of this thesis is to identify and examine the distinctive features of ministry which are revealed by the lives and work of the women in the Church during the middle part of the nineteenth century in England, focussing particularly on the women in the Anglican sisterhoods and Sister Dora as an example of these women.

These women were largely invisible in the history of the Church of England and have only begun to rise to notice during the last twenty years. Even then, that notice has been sociological rather than theological and yet they had a central role in the development of the identity of the nature of Church and its ministry.

The thesis considers the diverse written material available about these women and critically analyses this information. It also considers the non-written evidence of their work which is revealed in buildings and the nature of work undertaken, as this period of time reflects non-universal literacy especially amongst women. The thesis concludes with a theological analysis of the work and identity of these women.

These women laboured under some difficulties including the disapproval of a society and Church which believed that marriage and family were the proper concerns of women and yet in which there were more women than men available for marriage in the population. As a result, the women in the sisterhoods concealed their personalities and largely avoided further visible controversy in the work they undertook. This inevitably placed a strain on them which sometimes told on their health and reflected on the responsibility of the Church of which they were a part. They themselves chose not to undertake a theological reflection of their role or even particularly to consider the role of worship, with the result that their communities did not particularly reflect their Tractarian roots with any rigour. They offered a revelation of an immanent and transcendent God and the possibility of exploration of the nature of relationship

for those who would care to seek and not retreat to the comfort of simply believing these women to be exceptional, both in their own time and in the present time for the Church.

Key terms

Anglican Church, Church work, Dora Pattison, Nursing, Oxford Movement, Sister Dora, Sisterhoods, Walsall Hospital

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1.1 Background

Women were extremely important in terms of the work undertaken by the Church of England during the middle part of the nineteenth century. Their work mitigated the difficulties caused by the inflexibility of the parish system and its difficulty in meeting the needs of a population moving from a rural to an urban lifestyle (Gill, 1994:136-138; Mumm, 1999: 93, 208-10).

For its part, the Church of England, more or less willingly, offered the opportunity to women to undertake an independent life organising themselves to work and worship within single gender communities. The work undertaken coincided with the beginnings of acceptable work for women outside the home, according to what were perceived as the special gifts of women, such as teaching and nursing. Accordingly, these women who formed sisterhoods focussed largely on this type of work.

Certain women have been studied very carefully in terms of the work they undertook. This study has included women within sisterhoods, such as Priscilla Lydia Sellon (Gill, 1994:158-60 and Gill in Mews, 1993:144-145). It has also included women who were not part of a sisterhood. Florence Nightingale is one of these women (see Woodham Smith, 1951) and Josephine Butler is another (Nolland, 2004). However, there were a large number of women who did not stand out as ‘heroes’, but worked in these areas assiduously.

Sister Dora (born 16 January 1832 and died 24 December 1878) is a woman whose life and lifestyle were of a sufficiently high profile for there to be a reasonable amount of material available for study. However, she forms an example of the type of work and lifestyle which was undertaken by many women. Her personality and work, and the place where she worked, combined to raise her profile to allow for documentation to be produced. Some of this is in the form of biographies produced shortly after her death (Lonsdale, 1880 and

Ridsdale, 1880) and more recently (Manton, 1971). Some is in the form of documentation collated by the Walsall Local History Unit including hospital reports and correspondence (Walsall Hospital Minutes of Board of Management Meetings 1866-1883, together with correspondence).

Sister Dora lived in a time when the Church of England was relatively polarised between those members of the Anglo-Catholic persuasion and the Evangelicals. I write as a Methodist and therefore from the perspective of an evangelical Church, although my theology is Liberal, influenced by feminist thinking. In some ways, this is likely to prove a strength, in that I do not share some of the important areas of faith and dogma held within the sisterhoods and can thus consider these with some objectivity. However, care needs to be taken to ensure appropriate weight is given to those issues which were important within the motivation and faith of those within the sisterhoods.

1.1.2 Problem Statement

The material which is available about the Church of England in the nineteenth century focuses almost entirely on the work of men, and the position of women at this time is dealt with from a sociological perspective. Even the small amount of material which considers women in Anglican sisterhoods does so from a sociological perspective. Susan Mumm has written two very helpful and informative books, *Stolen Daughters, Virgin Brides: Anglican Sisterhoods in Victorian Britain* (1999) and *All Saints Sisters of the Poor: An Anglican Sisterhood in the Nineteenth Century* (2001), but neither of these addresses the theological aspects of the work which was undertaken. The remaining material which is available is either factual - such as records of orders and work undertaken - or what might be termed hagiographic, in the form of biographies undertaken of particular people (Sister Gertrude, 1964, is an example of this). Therefore, there is little clarity about the roles undertaken by women and the extent of those roles. There is also little theological analysis of the impact of sisterhoods on the way the Church developed, in terms of Church history and the history of feminist theology, or the insights and opportunities which the work and lifestyles of these women offered to the ministry and witness of the Church.

1.1.3 Research Question

'What distinctive features of the ministry of nineteenth century Anglican sisterhoods can be indicated from the life and work of Sister Dora?'

The questions which emerge from this problem are:

- What is the state of the field in relation to the sociological study of women in the nineteenth century and what insights does this sociological study of women bring to the study of women who became members of Anglican sisterhoods? What does an exploration of the life and work of Sister Dora add to the sociological study which already exists?
- What questions arise theologically from a study of the life and work of such women, and of Sister Dora in particular?
- What was the lifestyle of those involved in Anglican sisterhoods, compared with the life of Sister Dora?
- How did the work of a nurse who was a member of a sisterhood differ from the work of a nurse who was not a member of a sisterhood?
- What were the distinctive features of ministry of Sister Dora and these women in terms of what they offered to the Church and what this ministry of women allowed and enabled the Church to offer to society, and what effects did the ministry of these women have upon them?

1.2 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 The Aim

The overarching aim of this thesis is to assess the distinctive features offered to ministry, by women in the mid-nineteenth century in England focussing on the Anglican sisterhoods and the particular case of Sister Dora.

1.2.2 The Objectives

The objectives of this thesis are related to the aim. In order to conduct the assessment postulated by the aim, it is intended to consider five aspects:

(i) To consider the state of the field, with particular reference to both what is currently offered in this area of study and where there are shortcomings. To

consider what an exploration of the life and work of Sister Dora adds to the current state of the field.

(ii) To analyse the life of Sister Dora in order to identify the features of sisterhood living and working which are relevant to this thesis.

(iii) To assess the importance of the particular lifestyle of these women in terms of ministry, comparing this with the life of Sister Dora.

(iv) To compare and contrast the extent to which the work of sisterhoods offers a unique insight to ministry using nursing as the example.

(v) To reflect upon the distinctive features of ministry of Sister Dora and these women, in terms of what they offered to the Church, and what this enabled the Church to offer to society, and what was the effects of their ministry upon these women.

1.3 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

The central theoretical argument of this thesis is that the 'invisible' women working as sisters in the Church of England during the middle part of the nineteenth century had a very distinctive but subtle role in forming the identity of the Church and its ministry, a role that was not immediately obvious but that contributed and continues to contribute to an understanding of the nature of the Church.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

Much of the material in relation to this area is in written form. However, it has to be acknowledged that some of the witness of these women is in a non-written form, by way of buildings and appearance, especially clothing. The sisters were often involved in building institutions and lived in particular surroundings. They deliberately adopted a particular mode of dress, which produced certain responses in those who saw them. This non-verbal communication is particularly relevant, given the levels of literacy at the time and, it will be suggested, could be used to subvert the stereotype of 'ladylike' presentation. The non-verbal communication may also be used to interrogate the written communication. Therefore work will be undertaken with non-written material as well as that undertaken with the various forms of written material already

alluded to. A critical analysis of the material will be undertaken, but this will also use the techniques of story and the growing realisation that history is the story from a particular viewpoint. There is probably no such thing as objective truth in the study of history: this is demonstrated in Anne E. Carr's book *Transforming Grace* (1988) and affirmed in Jean Corbett's *Representing Femininity: Middle Class Subjectivity in Victorian Women's Autobiographies* (1992:9).

The methods I propose to employ in this thesis include:

- A comparative literature search focussing on the history of feminism to identify the extent to which the current literature deals with the area of women in the Church during the mid-nineteenth century and a critical evaluation of the existing material.
- An evaluation of the material available, produced at the time of Sister Dora's life and subsequent commentary upon her life, focussing on the commentaries which were produced shortly after her death.
- An examination of the historical records and other material, such as standing buildings, to identify the work and identity of sisterhoods in the middle of the nineteenth century.
- An examination of the historical records which exist around the various forms of nursing extant in the middle of the nineteenth century and a comparison of that material.
- An evaluative theological analysis of the identity of these women and the impact of their work upon themselves, the Church and society.

2.0 WOMEN, RELIGION AND GENDER IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND: THE STATE OF THE FIELD

2.1 Introduction

Sister Dora is a complex figure, whose personality and characteristics developed in part from her background and environment, including that which was offered to her from a wider perspective. Her brother was Mark Pattison, a leading light of the Broad Church Movement and Rector of Lincoln's College, Oxford, for the last part of his life. During the period of her life before she became an Anglican sister, Sister Dora and Mark Pattison had a close relationship. This study relates to the distinctive features offered by women to ministry in the middle of the nineteenth century in England, focussing on the Anglican sisterhoods and the particular case of Sister Dora. It is intended to identify the extent to which the existing material provides a response to the issue of those distinctive features.

Although there is some available research within the area of women's contribution during this period and its rationale in terms of its theology, which will be explored later in this chapter, much of the discussion of these issues has been developed from a sociological basis. A study of the theology of Sister Dora, in its broadest sense, and both its rationale and its results for her and for those who lived with her and followed her will offer a real contribution to this area of study.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the work of women in the churches became increasingly important. In 1919, a Commission set up by the Archbishop of Canterbury commented on the huge amount of work undertaken by women since 1850, "under the different heads of domestic visiting, Sunday School teaching, Church music, parochial clubs, missionary societies, study circles, rescue and preventive agencies, besides the larger organisations represented by the sisterhoods and deaconess institutes, the Girls' Friendly Society and the Mothers' Union" (Heeney in Malmgreen 1986: 261). However, until the 1960s and 1970s, the history of that work and of women in the Church

was largely unwritten. As an example, the seminal four volume work on Methodism by Davies refers to Deaconesses in two pages, although the heroines of Methodism such as Susannah Wesley merit more space (Davies, 1960) Similarly, Chadwick, who wrote an important work on the Victorian Church, hardly mentions the contribution of women (1971, 1972). Women featured, as Susannah Wesley does, as 'guest stars', often stereotypically portrayed, and their place within the Church was largely invisible. This point was expanded in an analysis of the way women are excluded from texts generally in Miles (1985:152). Loades (1993:4) goes further than this when she trenchantly describes Christian tradition as "fundamentally ambivalent for women". This comment was reiterated by Watson (2002:14), who wrote that "the church, as institution, is often experienced by women as a space of fundamental injustice".

However, since the 1960s, there has been the development of specific study within the social sciences of women's position in society generally; this study has then broadened to other disciplines. The position of women in a historical context and in a theological context has become an area of study. From this development of feminist study in social sciences sprang a field of enquiry into the position of women within a historical context, including within a history of the Church. Initially these questions of past and present experience were regarded separately, as feminists sought to establish who women are in present society and emphasised particularly the biological given of sex (male/female), but this became more nuanced and reflective over time. The questions posed as to the position of women in present society began to be posed in relation to the position of women historically and the issue of the biological given of sex gave way to the issue of gender (the socially constructed difference between women and men).

In this chapter, consideration will be given to the historical development which became the feminist movement; for this reflection of the place of women in society did not begin in the 1960s, but has historical roots, which include the beguinages in the Low Countries and the Little Gidding experiment in England, and was a feature of society during the nineteenth century when the sisterhoods were being established. The current work on feminist studies will

also be considered in terms of the extent to which it deals with the situation of the women who were involved in the Anglican sisterhoods or offers insight into their situation. The contribution of feminist theology will be considered, as it relates to this study. Specifically the theory of 'separate spheres' will be discussed in some detail, since this relates very clearly to a study of the position of women in the nineteenth century. In terms of the current situation on this area of work, a review of the historiography of Anglican sisterhoods during this period of the history will be undertaken.

2.2 The Historical Development of the Study of Feminism

The historical development of the study of feminism is important within a historical work on women because, as King and Beattie (2004:113, quoting from Bennett, 1989:253) have said, "feminist history [is] historical work infused by a concern about the past and present oppression of women". This comment may be perceived as a little inflexible, since the history of women and even of the development of feminism is not only about oppression, but also about liberation.

It should be noted that the word 'feminist' was not coined until the end of the nineteenth century. Smith (1990:3 note 1) said that 'the word "feminism" was imported from France and apparently appeared in print for the first time in the 1890s. Nevertheless, the word will be used to describe this movement by women towards the assertion of their interests as women. Many writers take the view that modern feminism has its roots in the late eighteenth century. However, before this and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there had been a level of exploration of the potential for communal living for women, such as the Little Gidding experiment and the proposal by Mary Astell, suggesting the establishment of institutions to provide and serve as a haven for single women, as beguinages did in the Low Countries (Schneir, 1996:xv). Nevertheless, the initial group of feminists, identifiable as such, towards the beginning of the nineteenth century, are generally referred to as 'first wave feminists'. Humm (1992:5) described first wave feminism as extending from the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792 to the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* in 1949. Humm (1992:11) regarded first wave feminism as being about "women's individual and

collective social and political interests and self determination" Rendall (1985:1) similarly said, "I have therefore used the term modern feminism to describe the way in which women came … to associate together … Perhaps at first for different reasons and then to recognise and to assert their common interests as women", although Levine (1987:23) took the view that "feminism in this period then signalled the adoption of an alternative set of values". It is, perhaps, ambitious to assert that this was a movement, for the women concerned did not necessarily act in concert with each other and acted from various diverse motives.

These women now known as first wave feminists built upon such works as those of Mary Wollstonecroft (1792) and developed a movement for female suffrage during the middle of the nineteenth century. Kaplan (in Armstrong & Tennenhouse, 1987: 163-177) puts this into context describing Wollstonecroft's work as the founding text of Anglo-American feminism and noting her attempt to describe the lot of the working class woman. Reed (1843) also wrote clearly of these issues, describing her outrage to see women classed with children and 'idiots' and described the injustice to both genders in confining women to the home and downgrading the skills of women simply because they are exercised in the home and not in the outside world. So, by 1848, Harriet Taylor Mill, the wife of John Stuart Mill, wrote of the use of the political movement for and by women and advocated paid work for women outside the home in the journal *Enfranchisement of Women* (Schneir 1996:6).

Therefore, by the middle of the nineteenth century, there was an identifiable impetus for the rights of women. Some writers such as Anderson (1987) would want to suggest that this is in fact the beginning of the feminist movement, rather than tracing its roots to the end of the eighteenth century; they suggest a diversity of campaigns rather than simply a single direction toward female suffrage. The case of Caroline Norton which involved a mother losing the care of her children, because she had no parental rights as against the father became a *cause célèbre*, ultimately resulting in a change in the law. Hollis (1979:vii) suggested,

> The feminist movement in England truly began in the 1850s. It was motivated by three main concerns: the concerns of 'surplus women' and their need for work if they were to be self dependent; a more particular concern with the plight

> of governesses which led directly to the movement for women's education; and the increasing awareness of women's status at law publicised by the case of Caroline Norton.

Suffrage and other campaigns remained significant. The issue of anti-slavery especially was one which was strongly contested and advocated by women (Carr, 1988:185). Indeed Schneir (1996:xxii) said that "the basic strategy of the old feminism as an organised movement was to reform unjust laws which prevented women from participating fully in their society". Legal emancipation was an important matter for these women but was focussed on custody of children and ownership of property, rather than simply upon suffrage. Some of the higher profile issues were those relating to the lives of women; in particular those relating to children and married women's property were beginning to be addressed during the nineteenth century. Beetham and Boardman (2001:61) pointed out that journals such as the *Englishwomen's Journal* were focussing at this time on these issues together with education as well as suffrage. The Infant Custody Act 1839 and the Married Women's Property Act 1870 redressed some of the injustice to women in these areas, but these statutes were a culmination of much work by women.

Nineteenth century feminism was much concerned with the issues of the day for women. The issue of 'redundant women' was one which was highly significant in Victorian thinking. W.R. Greg's (1862:434-60) article encapsulated thought in this area when he focussed attention on the plight of women, particularly those in the middle classes. This article looked at the issue of the excess population of unmarried women as against men and postulated reasons for this. One of his suggestions was that women were reticent in marrying that "marriage shall almost come to be regarded merely as one of many ways open to them", that is to say that women were beginning to think that marriage was only one of several available options for them rather than a preferred route for their lives. One of his proposed solutions was to send 50,000 unmarried women to the colonies. It should be noted, as Poovey (1988:4) pointed out, that the context of these concerns is shown in the 1852 census, which records two million out of six million women as self-supporting and 42% of the 20-40 age group of women as unmarried. A response to this feature of the need for women to be employed, either because they needed to be self-supporting, or

because such a situation was likely in the future, was the establishment of groups of women to promote female employment. A major example of this is the Langham Place Circle beginning in 1857 and the Society for the Promotion of Employment for Women in 1859, discussed by Caine (1997:94), together with the *Englishwomen's Journal* established by this group of women. A further response to this issue of 'redundant women' and other concerns was the development of more systematic education for women and the establishment of Bedford College and Queen's College in 1849, for the education of teachers and governesses. Both of these colleges aimed to improve the education of women and the standing of teachers and governesses, admitting girls from the age of twelve, to provide both education and training for teaching. Indeed, this type of response, in terms of addressing need, was a real feature of this period of the history of the development of feminism in the sense that women's needs were met on an individual or single issue basis. Perhaps consequently, the identification of oppression can also be most readily defined within the individual or domestic sphere. Gomersall (1997:3) however, described this form of oppression as dominant rather than only more readily identified:

> The dominant form of patriarchy through much of the nineteenth century in England was private patriarchy where the expropriation of women's labour in the household by husbands and fathers represented the dominant patriarchal structure.

Thus the issue of attempting to professionalise an area of 'women's work' had a level of significance amongst the issues regarded as important by women at this stage of history, especially in the example of women as teachers and governesses. This was particularly the case because, as Peterson (1989:23) pointed out "women at mid-century did not have institutionally recognised power". As a result, oppression within their working environment, including limitation of wages and choices, was a real feature of life.

Although this movement to professionalism appears to be a progression of ideas in itself, several writers have drawn attention to the extent to which the development of feminism was relational in terms of other developments in society. The ideas were cross-fertilised by the situation in society and developed alongside actions. Kaplan (1987:177) stated,

> There is no feminism that can stand wholly outside femininity as it is posed in a given historical moment – all feminism gives some ideological hostage to femininities as they are constructed through the gender sexuality of their day as well as standing in opposition to them.

This factor of the impact of the situation in society having an impact on women's actions was compounded by a society which was under construction and Alexander (1983:3) pointed out regarding the status of the mid-Victorian middle class, "The middle class ideology we most often associate with the Victorian period was to be contested and always under construction [for] the system of ideal and institution … was uneven and it developed unevenly".

This development was uneven both in terms of its progress and in terms of its acceptance across society or even the middle class. Anderson (1987:71) in her biography of Eliza Lynn Linton pointed out the opposition of Eliza Lynn Linton to the occupation by women of positions in politics and education and she repeated this point throughout the text. However, notwithstanding this, as Smith said, "liberal feminism of the twentieth century grew from nineteenth century intellectual roots" (Meehan, 1990:190).

In terms of the position of the sisterhoods within that history of feminism, interestingly, just as the sisterhoods are largely invisible within the written history of the Church, so they are invisible within the written history of the development of feminism. It might have been expected that this could have been different, for the sisterhoods were involved with the issues in this area. Much of the written work on the history of the development of feminism during the nineteenth century has been published since the 1980s and has been consciously written as history of women's experience. As Heeney (1986:261) pointed out, in an exception to the general absence of sisterhoods from writing, work within the Church and as members of sisterhoods was a part of life for a large number of women. A failure to explore sisterhoods as a way of being and a motivating experience and also as an enabling way of experiencing a form of life for many women is a significant omission in the understanding of the history of the development of feminism and that which was exclusively female. This study will seek to address this omission by exploring the unique contribution that the development of sisterhoods gave to women and to society in the middle of the nineteenth century.

2.3 Twentieth Century Feminism

During the first half of the twentieth century the development of feminism demonstrated significant changes with the institution of universal suffrage and an increasing acceptance of working and professional women. The beginnings of modern feminism are evident with the work of women such as Viola Klein (1946:118), who explored the extent to which women's lives were "circumscribed by the triad; church, child, kitchen".

During the period from the 1960s to the present day, feminism has become a distinct movement, beginning in the 1960s with the Woman's Liberation Movement, of which the "initial premise ... was that women were oppressed by men" (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993:65). This led to the development of women's studies and gender studies departments in many universities. It also led to a gendered approach to many studies, and so there have been various attempts to define feminism. The following gives some sense of the range of such definitions. Banks (1981:3) described as feminist "any group that have tried to change the position of women, or the ideas about women". Rather more narrowly, Ann Loades (1993:3) described feminism as: "a movement that seeks change for the better for women, for justice for them … the assertion of the claims of women as a group and the body of theory they have created".

Meehan (1990:189) defined feminism as "the quest for a sexually just society". Lovenduski and Randall (1993:2) defined feminism as "all ideologies, activities and policies whose goal it is to remove discrimination against women and to break down the male domination of society". Jones (2000:5) stated that "feminism is a commitment to participating in the struggle against oppression of women and for their liberation". There have helpfully also been various definitions of patriarchy, as another key concept in the study of women, brought together by Gomersall (in Lown, 1983:29), who whilst acknowledging that "to start talking of patriarchy is to enter a conceptual minefield", but recognised with Lown that patriarchy is a "pivotal principle". Gomersall noted with approval the definition of Walby (1992:174) of patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate oppress and exploit women". These definitions of patriarchy are important because feminism began, during this period, to consider the relationship between women and structures of power

and between women and men, both as independent study and within the context of other areas of study. Thus Lovenduski and Randall (1993:176) asserted, “It is a function of many components of male strength and social dominance which historically have produced structures, norms and patterns that are effective as controlling women”.

As the study of feminism continued during this period it began to acknowledge its historical roots and as Meehan (in Smith, 1990:190) stated “liberal feminism in the twentieth century grew from nineteenth century roots”. It began to consider the development of the history of the position of women as relevant and informative to a study of the position of women currently, and this will be an area considered within this study.

During this period also, feminism began to develop different theoretical strands. By the middle of the twentieth century, it had developed a radical wing of those who wished to achieve equal rights for women and focussed on male violence towards women. A Marxist wing was also developed by those who sought economic autonomy and studied the extent to which women’s oppression is tied to forms of capitalist exploitation of labour, with women’s work being analysed in terms of its function in the economy (Richardson and Robertson, 1993:5). There was also a liberal wing of those who wished to have equal civil rights, access to education and equal pay, focussing on individual rights and the extent to which the law could rectify the deficit. However, in the latter part of the twentieth century, a further strand of romantic feminism had also developed. This “celebrates the emotional and natural to counteract the prevailing emphasis on the rational and the technical” (Loades, 1993:1, which also gives a general history of feminism). This new part of the movement has developed to begin to consider whether the striving for equality has lost that which is often a particular skill for women. Meg Gomersall (1997:148), for example, has considered the extent to which the emphasis on gender equality in the education system is based on subject areas of direct relevance to the economy with no feminisation of boys’ education in tandem with the masculinisation of girls’ education. This line of study is being extended to other areas of thought.

A further study during recent years has been a recognition by the feminist movement that there is a level of oppression within the feminist movement itself, with white middle class women believing they could speak for all women and indeed considering whether women can be grouped together or whether other features supervene. Spelman (1998:3) wondered,

> Is it possible to give the things women have in common their full significance without thereby implying that the differences among us are less important? … Is it really possible for us to think of a woman's 'womanness' in abstraction from the fact that she is a particular woman whether she is a middle class Black woman living in North America in the twentieth century or a poor white woman living in France in the seventeenth century?

This area of more recent feminist study has considered the interrelationship of race, religion, language and culture. In exploring the issue of a more diverse range of feminisms, beginning to recognise that women are not powerless, nor simply reactive to the actions and structures of men. This will be seen to be an interesting question in relation to the sisterhoods, and the chapter on the sisterhoods will show the extent to which this is an extremely complex issue. This whole area of sisterhood living, which has been mentioned earlier as invisible in the history of the church and of the development of the study of feminism (which is of course different from the development of feminism itself although the two learn from each other) offers real opportunities to explore a more nuanced approach to the study of women's history and theology, and to develop and interrogate this strand of scholarship by reference to a particular group of women. As Norris (1999:403) said "they are questions that each generation must ask anew as circumstances change and beliefs are readjusted. Who are we? Who do we want to be?" It might be added to these questions, Who were we?

2.4 Feminist Theology and its Impact on the Study of Victorian Church History and Women

Although the study of the feminist movement began on a broadly sociological basis, it soon explored and interrogated other areas including, particularly importantly for this study, theology. Interestingly, there has been considerable conflict between the feminist approach and the theological, particularly in considering women in the nineteenth century. Some of this conflict has been based on stereotypes of the practice of religion. As an example, Krueger

(1992:4) pointed out that “there is an assumption feminist theorists share … : that all evangelists -- given their medium, the phallocentric, logocentric texts of Scripture and religious discourse -- necessarily preach reconciliation with patriarchy”. During the rest of her study, she went on to consider, amongst other issues, that the way women in the nineteenth century dealt with texts, as preachers and writers, by no means always complied with a patriarchal model of the Church or of society. Such women would depart from such a model either covertly or overtly in their writing and preaching. Krueger (1992) considered the texts of women writers and noted that although they would regularly acknowledge a patriarchal model by indicating, for example, that their writing was of a trivial nature compared to that of men, or was highly dependent on male writing, or was designed to simplify the more complex writing of men, nevertheless would advance new ways of interpreting text. It was, however, rare, in her view, for women in these genres to set themselves up in any sort of opposition to the expertise of men. It is suggested, during this chapter, that there can be over-simplifications of theology and religious practice when studies are undertaken purely sociologically.

It should be noted that feminist theology generally has been feminist Christian theology, although of recent years there has been some exploration of other faiths and, as importantly, recognition of this in the mainstream study of feminist theology. Feminist theologians began to consider fascinating questions about the nature of God, of faith and of the Church, celebrating and exploring being human and female in a context of faith, wishing to explore normative ways of living. Examples of this are Ruether (2007) which explores feminist theologies relating to Christianity and other faiths and relating to different cultural experiences of faith and Johnson’s (1992:45) statement about “emancipatory praxis i.e. ways of living which liberate self and others”. Beverley Wildung Harrison (1993:203) stated that a “basepoint for feminist moral theology derives from celebrating ‘embodiment’” and “the final and most important basepoint for feminist moral theology is the centrality of relationship” (1993:207). Theology is, perhaps, well placed to consider the diversity of human beings, their relationships with one another and in community, and their reactions to situations. Feminist theology is well placed to consider an incarnational practice of faith such as that of the mid-Victorian Anglican sisterhoods, for the

women of the nineteenth century offered a significant perspective on the practice of religion and on the Church. As an example of this, Melnyk (1998:xvii) pointed out that there is a "tendency of these women writers to advocate the centrality of action to theology" and this offers a particular way of reflecting the Church and faithful living.

Since the beginning of the development of the study of feminist theology, there have developed strands of enquiry, which have included a distinction between sex (the biological given of male/female) and gender (socially constructed masculinity/femininity), and indeed have linked the study of feminism with other liberation studies. Mercy Ambu Oduyoye (1986:120-137) asserted that Christian feminists dramatise the plight of all the underprivileged and the loss to the community of their gifts and experience, although it may be questioned whether this view is defensible in its totality. Theologies of liberation share a view of the Gospel that finds a call to free people from political, social and material oppression. There is therefore a natural link between feminist, black and Asian theologies. The statements made on one form of theology of liberation can also apply to other theologies of liberation. McGrath (1997:116) suggested this was a theoretical link but went on to state "In this sense, feminist theology could be regarded as a form of liberation theology, as the older term 'Women's liberation' suggests. Equally Black theology is unquestionably concerned with the issue of liberation". Thus, Reddie's (2008:16) helpful statement on black theology can be transferred to feminist theology, and is particularly significant to a study of sisterhood nursing in the nineteenth century:

> Black theology in Britain, like all theologies of liberation, is governed by the necessity of orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy. In using this statement, what I mean to suggest is that one's starting point in talking about God is governed by the necessity to find a basis for acting in response to the existential struggles and vicissitudes of life, which impinge upon one's daily operations in the attempt to be a human being. The need to respond to the realities of life as it is lived in postcolonial Britain, is one that has challenged many Black British Christians to seek in God, a means of making sense of situations that seem inherently meaningless.

This line of study as it has developed has challenged a monolithic or inflexible view of theology, within or without feminism, and this has been emphasised within the, initially black, womanist movement in theology which wished to assert that white middle class feminists do not speak to the experience of all women. Indeed women may occupy different places in the world at different

times. They may occupy more than one place in the world at a time. They may be black or white, they may be employed or unemployed, they may be mothers or not, and so on and as Collins (1982:366) pointed out, a celebration of diversity means some things speak to some situations: wholeness of vision may lead to a multiplication of differences as people are able to choose freely the person they want to be rather than following a pattern of one they are *expected* to be.

Webb (WCC, 1975:10) stated in making a similar point:

> Recognizing that alongside this difference [physical] there have been different histories, different expectations, a different sense of identity, and an association with the structures of power that have created a male dominated order in almost all human society and certainly within the Church, making it impossible for the Church to foreshadow the truly human community.

Farley (1993:239) also emphasised this point in her contribution to this area when she stated "Feminist theology ... is itself as pluralistic as is theology generally ...". Hunt (2007:87) explored diversity and plurality when she said, "the feminist/womanist challenge in the United States is how to live religious pluralism despite continued persistent Christian hegemony" and "pluralism is not diversity alone but the energetic engagement with that diversity" (2007:88). This issue of diversity and plurality is significant in the study of mid-Victorian Anglican sisterhoods, since the struggle of many of the women to establish themselves as women independent of their birth families and independent of societal norms is central to their story and the development of the sisterhoods.

Feminist theologians have gone on to consider the issues of relationship, between human beings with each other as the Church, and with God. They have studied the place of women in the Church, commenting on the stereotypical view of women. As Carmody (1995:53) said,

> They [women in the Church] were pure as virgins but also corrupt as whores. What they seldom heard themselves called, seldom found themselves treated as, was the equals of men in ordinary representative normative humanity – neither great saints nor great sinners, simply people, ordinary apples of God's eye.

Feminist theologians wish to look at the relationships between the community of faith and God. Jones (2000:155-159) postulated seven features of the Church inhabiting, as she put it, Scripture. She said the Church is a community

in which Scripture is regularly read and listened to; in places like our local Church the story is read in many different ways; we inhabit the story as the definitive story of our lives; Church is the community that performs the story; people describe themselves as called into this community by God; the Church never constructs our world in isolation from our communal commitments but normatively shapes us in the midst of them; recognises its identity as a sinful community (not synonymous with God but dependent on God). Carmody (1995:127) said, "the church ought to be a sacrament an ongoing demonstration of the new liberated humanity … that the reign of God made possible". The use of the word sacrament in this context perhaps suggests that the church should be a demonstration of a meeting place between the people of God and God. Notably all this describes people in relationship with each other and with God and forms a useful discourse in which to consider the development of sisterhoods and the life of Sister Dora.

Feminist theology has given a perspective on how the Church would form a way of offering direction and inspiration to women and men in their sense of themselves, as individuals and in relationship as people of God and members of the Christian Church. It looks to 'reorient doctrines of human person, sin, grace and the church in renewed service to the world' (Jones, 2000:vii). Jones, (2000:14) noted that feminist theology

> takes a special interest in the lives of women, their stories, their hopes, their flourishing and failures and their multi-layered experiences of oppression. This land of feminist theology brings their lives and experiences into the drama of the Christian message and explores how Christian faith grounds and shapes women's experiences of hope justice and grace as well as instigates and enforces women's experiences of oppression sin and evil.

Feminist theologians have then gone on to consider an incarnational and relational view of Christian women and men in Church as it ought to be, embracing a model of women as "nurturing creative collaborative … and non-hierarchical" (Ruether, 2007:19), being interested in "the nature of human life as social and ontologically grounded in relationship" (Brock, 2007:49-55). The church should be "a space in which women can flourish and celebrate their being in the image of the divine" (Watson, 2002:119). Within this normative perspective, feminist theology has considered how the Church should see itself. A common journey is postulated in which all are engaged together and so "the

Christian ascent to glory was undertaken by the whole community: the strong helped the weak and all held each other accountable for their commitment to the struggle" (Brock, 2007:52). Feminist theology asks the question of the Church, when it is considering its thinking about doctrinal issues, "Is it a doctrine that situates the community within the drama of God's emancipatory will for creation?" (Jones, 2000:17).

In considering a normative view of church, feminist theologians have begun to examine how this could proceed to reality within the Church in terms of common purpose. In this regard Watson (2002:14) stated:

> Within the church we need a framework for analyzing injustice and creating justice for women as well as for telling the stories of injustice and oppression. But we need to go further than that: Letty Russell proposes justice as a fifth mark of the church. Such a concern for justice needs to transcend the boundaries of the church as an institution and seek to transform it into an open space where justice is found, but also into an institution which by its very nature takes a greater cultural stand in advocating justice for the whole of creation, both human and non-human.

These perspectives have also had profound implications for the study of Church history. In this study, history and theology cannot be separated. The approach mentioned by Morgan (2004:115), which involves "inserting religion into the wider historiographical and methodological reflections", cannot be contemplated, if only because "religion faith and gender consciousness were in consequence two of the most formative intellectual and discursive influences upon both men and women". Religion is, as she said, a major factor in the lives, lifestyles and choices of women and men in the mid-Victorian period. It is interwoven and cannot be simply inserted, any more than history can be inserted into theology and religious studies.

Feminist theology has enabled a number of radical questions to be asked. For example, it has interrogated the 'established' order of the Church. These are issues which are fundamental to a study of the nineteenth century sisterhoods. This study will consider the extent to which those women offered an alternative view of the Church and the roles of women and men, both within the Church and within society as a whole. It will consider the theology of the inception and working of the sisterhoods within the context of the Church and in doing so will

draw on those issues of feminist theology which have developed during recent years.

These strands of enquiry have allowed a range of questions to be asked:

- Did men and women contribute to Victorian Christianity differently?
- Did men and women have a unique gender based contribution to Victorian Christianity?
- Did men and women experience Victorian Christianity differently?
- In what ways did Victorian Christianity and the practice of faith limit and enable women?

However, as this area of study develops, it becomes increasingly clear that these questions cannot be defined simply. Lerner (1976:300) highlighted the problems in a relatively early work, when she argued that "there is a limitation if it [historical study] deals with women in a male defined society and tries to fit them into the categories and value systems which consider man the measure of significance".

If diversity is taken seriously in feminist theology, then questions of class need to be considered also. The questions addressed from a middle or upper class perspective produce very different responses to the same questions addressed from a working or other class perspective. This has been increasingly highlighted by work undertaken on women such as Josephine Butler (Nolland, 2004) and Florence Nightingale (Webb, 2002) and will be a continuing thread in this study. Indeed the responses also look different (or their perspective is different, even if the responses are not) depending on whether the women are evangelical or catholic. "Women in every age speak in a variety of accents" (Bynum, 1992:2). This is an important point, since many feminist historians write from a secular perspective which downplays the importance of religion as an independent variable.

In attempting to consider these issues in terms of Victorian Christianity, it has to be conceded that there are problems of evidence. The 1851 census found that in some areas, some 60% of children were unable to read and write, although this did not distinguish between girls and boys. However, it follows that

recorded information is information from the perspective of the minority of society and almost inevitably from a middle or upper class perspective (Carroll, 1976:79 and Gill, 1994:8). The descriptions of the working class or other class perspective are not from the mouths of those women but are a story told about them. In terms of the sisterhoods, this problem is compounded by the fact that many early records have been destroyed and the story is thereby edited or retold from later times. Although the 1851 census did not analyse literacy by gender, nevertheless later studies have described the undue impact that illiteracy has on women and the way women were seen within the Church. Pauline Webb (1988:4-15) described the ways in which women are denied education and the ways in which religious traditions indoctrinate for gender. This situation is compounded, as Diane Pearce (1978:28-36) described, by a discrimination against women in terms of access to economic resources. Nevertheless the material which is available allows an investigation of women who are not "passive recipients but active" (Gill, 1994:3).

There are various theories for explaining why the distinctive role which women came to play in society and in the Church may have come about. There was of course, as the 1851 census made clear, a large number of 'redundant' women. This was significant, since there were unmarried women who were without obvious occupation. Those women were 'available' to undertake voluntary work and the Church traditionally made use of voluntary female labour, in certain areas of its activity. Some writers would wish to argue a reductionist theory; that these women needed something to do and the Church provided this. Mumm (1999 and 2001) rather adopts this argument. Some writers would wish to argue a passage to modernity; that this was an inevitable part of the process of society moving into a modern age. However, Prochaska (1980:222-230) suggested this distinctive role of women in Church and in society generally was inspired by kindness and helped to expand the social role of women rather than being a middle class conspiracy to inculcate middle class values into the working class mind.

2.5 Separate Spheres

A significant contribution to this debate as to how women came to work as independent professionals was the theory of 'separate spheres'. This theory

was developed by Welter in 1966 (1966:51-74). Several writers during the late 1980s and particularly Davidoff and Hall (1987) continued to develop this theory. The 'separate spheres' theory argues that men and women have their own areas of power and control. Men are in control of the public sphere and women of the domestic or private sphere. The latter includes both the home and also the traditional areas of female activity and is interwoven with traditional views of the characteristics or nature of women. So, Banks (1981:7) argued that the moral purity movement was "accompanied by ideas of the moral superiority of women". The moral purity movement was particularly strong during the second half of the nineteenth century and counted among its main workers women like Ellice Hopkins. It aimed to question the sexual double standard which was applied to the moral judgement of men and women, in particular in relation to prostitution on the basis that women were naturally of a higher moral character than men. Valenze (1995:145) stated that women (particularly middle class women) were named as guardians not only of the domestic sphere, but of morality itself. It will be suggested that the application of this role is questionable in relation to working class and other class women. As an example of the different views of the guardianship of morality by women, the Magdalen work was a clear example of middle class women 'rescuing' working class and other class women. Therefore this demonstrates a view that some women were not to be respected in terms of morality. The impact of this thinking will be considered in terms of the sisterhoods and their working.

The skills involved in being a woman are described by various writers. Langland (1995:35-37) described the aspects of female skills enumerated in etiquette manuals of the day and the importance of household management and household accounts. However, again, this would be a middle and an upper class explanation rather than one which was appropriate to the working class and other class women, since firstly, literacy is largely a middle and upper class phenomenon and secondly, the working and other class experience is different from that of the middle and upper class women. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the sphere of women's activity in the middle class and upper class had become restricted by the view of those classes of women and this view related to both the qualities and the skills of women. It may therefore be suggested that

women who were restricted to a private or domestic sphere expanded that sphere to reduce the restriction upon their lives and even, as Waddington (2000:xvi) suggested, that these are women who "utilised the language of their distinctive sphere to make claims for themselves".

An obvious area of activity in which it was possible to make a distinctive claim for their skills for women was that of philanthropic activity, which was regarded as part of the domestic or private sphere (Lewis, 1991:10) the effect of this type of activity was to feminise the public sphere by bringing into it interests in rescue, housing, health, education and so on. This area of activity would probably be increased (or at least made more visible) by the increasing urbanisation of society and the inability of the Church of England to manage the parish system with enough flexibility to meet the needs of a rapidly urbanising society, of which there was awareness at the time. Loades (2001:76-77) referred to the *Address to the Clergy* given by J. Fraser in 1872 noting the breakdown of the parish system in urban areas. There are also arguments to suggest a slightly different relationship between the spheres, as Davidoff and Hall (1987:73) argued, that women launched their endeavour by broadening the domestic or private spheres, but an alternative argument may be that the private or domestic sphere became the basis of a relationship with the public sphere. This study would wish to argue that the situation for women was not capable of reduction to a single theory, but was nuanced and influenced by various factors including the personality and intentions of the women concerned.

However, the attributes of true womanhood were regarded as more important than the skills of women. Wordsworth (1884) said woman's true strength "is in her loyal submission, her true power is in tender love and dutiful obedience". Thus it was not only skills which were ascribed to women but also characteristics. These included, as Wordsworth (1884) said, love and obedience and also, importantly, characteristics of "sacred mission and spiritual grace". Alexander (1983:8-10) pointed out the extent to which the myth of women's natural moral superiority underpinned this separation so that virtue was "increasingly articulated upon gender in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth", and women were being depicted as incarnating virtue. This

idealised view of women was reflected in fiction and also reflected in versions of the lives of famous women such as the early biographies of Sister Dora and even the rather later biographical accounts in Baring Gould (1900) and Chappell (1898). This phenomenon is also illustrated in biographies of women such as Grace Darling (Hope, 1875:104-105): “there was an easy winning grace and guileless sweetness of manner”. As part of this type of depiction of women as incarnating virtue, they were regarded as asexual. However, women were also regarded as having dangerous, carnal and uncontrolled lusts as Charlotte Bronte’s depiction of the first Mrs Rochester in *Jane Eyre* reveals. Alexander (1983:ch. 5) carried a discussion of this phenomenon and the ambivalence to this which was revealed in the treatment of governesses who occupied the borderland between women and ladies. This view of the sphere of women in the middle and upper classes is clearly supported by the development of hospital nursing and management. Summers (1989:35-37) postulated that Florence Nightingale patterned nursing on a “wholly familiar model of female domestic management”. This nursing was also regarded as an opportunity to bring womanly characteristics of high moral influence to those for whom they cared.

However, this separation of spheres and representation of women as incarnating virtue allowed women to enter a ‘border area’ by designating it as private and designating the tasks as suited to their ministering skills. *The Ladies Treasury* extolled nursing by ladies thus (Bentham and Boardman, 2001:213, quoting from *The Ladies’ Treasury*, 1858:213):

> A staff of volunteer lady-nurses with paid and trained nurses under their orders has been now for some time employed at King’s College Hospital … the presence of women of refined habits and education shown to be thus effective in the wards of hospitals has been found to be of no less service in the cells of prisons and in those reformatory institutes which are designed to reclaim the criminal.

These areas of work were regarded as appropriate for women because they called on their skills of household management and their superior moral influence over fallen humankind. In any event, this movement of women’s activity allowed or promoted ‘space’ for the development of groups such as the Langham Place group, which founded the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women in 1859, which in turn inspired women like Elizabeth

Garrett and was certainly significant in motivating the demand for entry to professions.

The theory of separate spheres must also take into account cultural and religious views of the day. Davidoff and Hall (1987:73) argued that "religious belonging grew to be a central plinth of middle class culture". Thus, there is a clear impact upon the notion of women's sphere of activity by the overarching aims of society. So Banks (1981:26) asserted that the "effect of the evangelical movement on feminism was to be conservative … it was primarily in order to bring the domestic virtues into the public domain". She argued that the Protestant emphasis on family had a significant impact on this. Hall (1979:29) averred that the Christian home presided over by a virtuous wife and mother became "a protected space in a hostile world from which the great campaign of evangelisation could be securely launched" within an evangelical context. The impact of religious thought, however, if it is significant, is likely to have had a greater effect on the middle class women than on working class women. The 1851 religious census made clear that attendance at Church or chapel was an activity in which a greater proportion of the middle class population was engaged than the working class population. Attendance at both churches and chapels attracted a greater proportion of the rural population than the urban population (Inglis, 1963:4). It is pointed out that the Church and the clergy were prepared to take an interest in women and there may well be an aspect of women becoming involved for that reason. As Loades (2001:11) said, "The clergy are the only persons who as a class have taken any pains with women's minds". It certainly appears to have been the case, when one considers the biographies of those women involved in a high profile position in the Church, that they have been educated by men who have been careful in this area, and have diligently educated their daughters. However, this may well be a comment which relates to particular classes of women, since those women about whom biographies have been written seem to have come predominantly from the upper middle and upper classes.

Women who were led by religion to claim a place within the public sphere did not necessarily change the public view of women's character. Hall (1979:33) suggested "their philanthropic initiatives were often diametrically opposed to the

emancipation of women in the social classes beneath them". Furthermore, she said their material help was designed to reach hearts and minds not to eradicate poverty (Hall 1979:35). However, there is material to suggest this is not wholly correct. Sister Dora went to run the Epidemic Hospital during a smallpox epidemic in 1875 specifically to imbue confidence so that people would go to the Epidemic Hospital. Nevertheless, there is no reason to suppose that these women undertook this work because they were bored. After all, nobody attempts to say men became involved in politics or the justice system at this time because they were bored (Hall 1979:38).

There is a danger, however, in this theory in terms of the diversity of women's situation. It is probably true that women in the middle and upper classes were in charge of the domestic sphere including the development of philanthropic activity, whilst not having an overtly public persona. However, this is a Victorian middle and upper class phenomenon. Even in the upper and middle classes, it should be recalled that women did not universally accept their restriction to habitation of such a sphere. Women such as Reed (1843:7-21) argued that managing a household takes as much skill as men's activities and that it is intrinsically wrong that women should be denied the rights of citizens simply because of their gender. She said "neither is there justice to either sex in the social system which tries to confine them to these occupations" (1843:15).

Within the working and other classes, as opposed to the middle and upper classes, the theory of 'separate spheres' is highly questionable. The experience of working class and other class women was different. Working class and other class women would regularly be working for wages and would not be 'angels of the hearth'. Gomersall (1997) wrote of the Lancashire mill workers and made it clear that these were often married women. Taylor (1983:78, from Kelly, 1806:12) quoted "a respectable working class woman then was one who kept a good home, 'paid her own bread' and was 'not a burden on the scanty earnings of her husband'". There is a danger of generalisation of the middle and upper classes' experiences to all women. As an example of this Davidoff and Hall (1987:93) argued that "the strict demarcation of age as well as status of women and girls in the nineteenth century is indicated by the variety and complexity of their clothes" whilst Langland (1995:38) demonstrated the limitations of such an assertion: "Yet

fashion, as I have suggested, is driven by cultural beliefs, the most telling being that middle class women were above menial work and were different in kind from the female servants who performed that work". Indeed, Victorian attitudes and the visible appearance of Victorian women reflected a sense of the difference of middle and upper class women from working and other class women. Rose (1988:63) pointed out that the middle classes saw the lower classes as different -- that pauperism is a contagious and hereditary disease! Furthermore, as Gorham (1978:353-379) pointed out, in considering the purity reformers, a generalisation of their (middle and upper class) experience was insensitive to the economic and social reality for women in adopting this view of female moral superiority. If that experience of the middle and upper class women is generalised, it masks the possibility of other experience and it also masks the extent to which that experience was universal.

The question is then raised as to whether this separation of spheres allows a respect of all women by suggesting that 'separate spheres' is universal or at least the most desirable situation, or whether this disregards working class and other class women. This theory depended strongly on the concept of the middle class women as idle. It ignored the fact that for many women this was not a reality and indeed that it was not to be regarded as desirable. Ada María Isasi-Díaz (1988:97-98) argued: "Mutuality asks us to give serious account to what the other is saying, not only to respect it but to be willing to accept it as good for all". It is also questionable as to whether this separation allowed the development of women and their skills or whether, as Colt (1977:156-157) argued, that "limited involvement in philanthropic activity could divert from desire for change". Carter (1979:5) similarly suggested that "all the mythic versions of women, from the myth of redeeming purity of the virgin to that of the healing reconciling mother, are consolatory nonsenses invested to obscure the real conditions of life".

This 'separate spheres' theory is used to explain how women were able to develop their sphere by utilising this sense that they were supremely well suited to work amongst the poor and in nursing because these are utilising female characteristics. This is particularly the case if such work is in the name of the Church, even though such activity brought them into contact with the areas of life which would seem to offend the sense of what was appropriate for women

to know. So, as Poovey (1988:14) quoted: "A Nightingale nurse was able to make the hospital a home". Morgan (in Poovey 1988:173) suggested that it must not be forgotten, however, that this was only effective because Florence Nightingale and others severed the poor reputation of the nurse from the work they undertook. Morgan (2004:119) suggested:

> Only by appropriating dominant ideologies of femininity – female domestic sovereignty, motherhood, women's moral superiority and the greater compassion of the female sex – did women activists successfully allay their co-worker's fears as to the impropriety of public roles for women while, at the same time, counteracting male opposition.

It should also be noted that other writers have suggested a different reason for the development of separate spheres at this time. Loades (1993:7) suggested: "Women can be exalted as wife, virgin mother or deprecated (and enjoyed) as temptress, playmate, whore. In whatever way this male projection works, woman is object, non-equal, manipulated, distanced."

In other words, Loades considered that women are separated particularly because they are viewed in a different way from men. She built on the concept that women were regarded as having a higher moral nature ontologically and suggested that this is part of a general conception of women being regarded as different. This view diverges from the process postulated by Davidoff and Hall (1987), which would suggest that women's sphere is the domestic or private sphere and that women are of a higher moral nature. It is the very basis of their thesis that any other way of living for women would be regarded as unnatural and aberrant. This description of the 'baser or higher nature' of women as a stereotypical Madonna/whore dichotomy being the separating aspect is reinforced by Bianchi, quoted by Rowan "women have always exemplified the power of activity over passivity" (Rowan, 1987:42-43). Armstrong and Tennenhouse (1987:1) stated that "anthropologists generally agree that cultures systematically designate a certain kind of woman as the object of desire" and that "information is still used primarily to essentialise women to fix their natures and in this way remove them from the theatre of political events that nature has apparently designed for men" (1987:4). The notion of 'separate spheres' was encouraged by an ontological view of women as good and moral creatures and conversely, those who did not behave as expected as particularly reprehensible (a Madonna/whore dichotomy), which resulted in a need for

those women who were beginning to inhabit areas which were otherwise unacceptable to step outside the accepted stereotype. Poovey (1988:14) expanding on this explored the extent to which Nightingale's use of the phrase that a nurse was 'able to make a hospital a home' liberated her within an acceptable social framework and similarly the extent to which her separation of nursing from the concept of the monthly nurse (who came into a household on a paid basis as a nurse and who was not generally regarded as having high status) allowed her to make nursing respectable. It seems, within this theory, that the cost to the working class women from whom monthly nurses were drawn was not considered. Women were regarded as being on a higher moral plane than men and greater things were expected of them, so they were placed on a pedestal. Conversely, if they fell from the pedestal, they were regarded as either bad or mad. A real danger of an acceptance of 'separate spheres' is that it allows those who do not conform to be repudiated as unnatural and also prevents 'good' women from straying outside the acceptable boundaries.

The work about the theory of 'separate spheres' has been viewed as simplistic. Vickery (1993:383-414) made the point that the argument for separate spheres relates largely to middle and upper class women. However, she wanted to emphasise a particular aspect of this theory, which was echoed in the lives of women more generally, this is the area of the social and economic marginalisation of propertied women and the degradation of working women as a result of capitalism. She also argued that much of the contemporary material relating to separate spheres is prescriptive rather than descriptive (1993:383). This argument can be supported by reference to the large amount of writing undertaken by women at this time. There was a significant number of women hymn writers and writers of literature particularly for women and children and some of those demonstrated significant levels of learning. Charlotte Yonge (1888:20) was competent in Latin and the heroine of *The Daisy Chain* is said to compete with her brother in Latin. Cecil Frances Alexander translated the hymn 'I bind unto myself today' from the Irish (*Hymns and Psalms*, 1983:695). The over-simplification of reality for these women, that 'separate spheres' would suggest, is emphasised by the quotation, made by Gourvish and O'Day (1988:100), of the point made by Thane, that there is a dichotomy between "the strong sense of social responsibility, purpose and commitment to hard work with

which Victorians of both sexes, and all classes were socialized", and the view of female passivity and inaction. Furthermore, it is clear that women were not all living within a stereotype of lack of education and totally domestic activity. This fact is supported by the stories of well-known Victorian women, such as Florence Nightingale and indeed the story of Sister Dora. The theory of separate spheres tends to stereotype women and men, although as Vicinus (1985:208) pointed out, women were unlikely to be free of the stereotype. The theory of 'separate spheres' also suggests that the situation for women in the nineteenth century was unique and that there was a 'golden age' for women of the eighteenth century. As various writers have suggested, this is an unsafe assumption. Hufton (1983:126) and Earle (1989:328-53) both pointed out that in both 1700 and 1851, the most common female occupations were domestic service, charing, laundry, nursing and the making and mending of clothes. In essence, it is suggested by them that the story of women in the nineteenth century is little different from that of other centuries, and involves a marginalisation of women, particularly in the middle classes. Thus, the view expounded in 'separate spheres', that women were regarded differently in the nineteenth century and thus their activity was curtailed, is not reflected in the historical evidence. 'Separate spheres' only works if the areas of women's work are defined as private, and of course it may be that women extended the definition of private for their own purposes. Caine (1997:89) argued this to some extent:

> In its origins and its outlook mid-Victorian feminism was a middle class movement; all accepted the idea that women were innately more chaste, compassionate, virtuous and dutiful than men and used this image of women as a means of arguing that women needed and were entitled to a larger public role.

She went on to say that "the development of feminism was helped … by the formalisation of the idea of separate spheres during this period" (1997:92). Corbett (1992:59) extended this when she said, "religious women paradoxically justify their entry into public discourse by representing their work as private and domestic". Those arguments come dangerously close to being circular. Nevertheless, on the other hand, it is fair to say that the theory of separate spheres has been simplified by some writers from the important works of Davidoff and Hall (1987) and Prochaska (1980), and this is a complex debate. Indeed, as Rendall (1999:482) stated, "a single version of the public sphere is insufficient" and, as Sharpe (1998:208) said, "the appreciation that women's

experiences were diverse does not render all explanatory frameworks barren". The theory of 'separate spheres' provides a useful starting point in relation to this debate, in terms of the idea that two opposed views of women's socio-religious identity are fundamental to any assessment of the nineteenth century attitude to women and therefore their position in the Church. However this study will show that the reality for women in the sisterhoods during the nineteenth century was more complex and nuanced than the theory would suggest.

2.6 Sisterhoods

There is no simple answer to the question of whether religion and the Church of England freed or captured (liberated or shackled) women at that time. However, it certainly seems to be true that women used the religious teaching they were given for emancipatory purposes, possibly both consciously and unconsciously, possibly as a primary and as a secondary purpose.

Within the Church of England, the place and role of sisterhoods was ambiguous; a view that a simplistic response is unlikely to be complete would be supported by the position of the sisterhoods. The sisterhoods provide an interesting test case of the debate surrounding the concept of 'separate spheres'. The sisterhoods themselves developed an ambiguous relationship with their communities, both the secular community and the Church. This is exemplified by the use of 'motherhood' within their thinking. Both Sister Dora and Florence Nightingale used this concept and word in their description of their relationships with those with whom they were working and of course 'motherhood' is institutionalised into the hierarchy of the sisterhoods.

This notion of motherhood was particularly significant in the thinking of the mid-Victorians. As part of the separation of spheres, motherhood was "set at the ideological centre of the Victorian bourgeois ideal" (Shires, 1992:31). It was "sacred mission and spiritual grace" (Shires, 1992:31). This 'motherhood' allowed the mother to be at the centre of the private sphere and to be responsible for both the domestic and the moral. Responsibility was placed on mothers for the care of their children, as well as of the household. This was a heavy responsibility indeed. As Mrs Beeton (1880:419) indicated, if a fretful

mother fed her baby the “food is upset and deranged and turned into draughts of poison almost” and it is quite clear that this responsibility for children amounted to the direct care of the children for the majority of women. Subsequent to the Victorian era, it has to be said that some of the written material has looked at an upper class perspective of motherhood. An example is Hewlett (1998:208) who said that “contact between mother and children was often restricted to an hour or less a day”. It is quite clear that this was not the norm for the Victorian woman. Branca (1975:44) considered the figures for the income of the middle class and the extent to which this would have supported servants. She concluded that the income of the greater majority of the middle class was either under £100 a year or between £100 and £300 a year. The cost of servants was £20 a year for a cook; £20 a year for a parlourmaid and £14 a year for a nurse housemaid. Clearly an income of £300 would not have supported a nurse as well as other servants and Mrs Beeton (1880:18) confirmed that an income of under £300 a year would only support one servant.

This whole area of motherhood has been helpfully dealt with by Yeo (1999:201-217). In particular, she looked at the extent to which this idealised concept was extended during this period to include both physical motherhood and also ‘moral motherhood’, including virgin motherhood and militant motherhood. These extensions of the concept were used by women to authorise their activity in the public sphere. Yeo (1999:202) made the point that natural motherhood had degrees of approval in society, “some women regarding their own motherhood as superior and more authoritative”. ‘Moral mothers’ were able to enter the public sphere as superior people who could be heard in a way that women could generally not be heard. ‘Virgin mothers’ were described by Yeo (1999) as those women who set up a new icon of those women undertaking sacrificial work with the poor. This model transferred the status of ‘mothers’ by allying the work of mothers with the concept of motherhood, thus allowing women to become involved in the field of social justice by engaging in such activities as district visiting, nursing and parish work in a visible way. However the cost of this was to infantalise those with whom they worked. A further form of motherhood is that of the ‘militant mothers’ who were those fighting politically in the field of social justice. Josephine Butler would be a prime example, as would the French women of the Paris commune immediately after the French

Revolution of 1789. A helpful article by Bobotis (2006:63-83) explores the extent to which motherhood was in fact used politically and used as example in the 'rival maternities' of Maud Gomme, as Mother Ireland, in which she showed that women's activism can transcend the private sphere, and Queen Victoria, as mother of the nation.

It should be noted that whilst Yeo's (1999) article is very helpful, it does not deal with the entirety of the concept of motherhood and the way it is used by Sister Dora, which, it is suggested in this study, is significantly more sophisticated and subtle than Yeo (1999) would countenance. It does not address the issue of faith or the question of whether there is a religious imperative acting on these women's decision to become sisters, even though Yeo (1999) uses religious language in identifying this as 'virgin motherhood'. The model suggested by Yeo (1999) of offering moral and virgin motherhood as a way of dealing with social justice suggests simply meeting need, rather than campaigning or otherwise working to eradicate need. This model does not fully explain the actions or the rationale for those actions in the situation of women like Sister Dora, who was involved with the Midnight Meetings (which attempted to engage with prostitutes by developing night shelters and religious services) and worked to deal with epidemics in terms of campaigning and in broader issues of social justice. Nor was this an isolated instance in the case of the sisterhoods generally. An example of this sort of work is that of the Community of the Holy Cross, an Anglican sisterhood which set up a hostel for the elderly to avoid the results of the Poor Law (Amendment) Act 1834, which inflicted separation on elderly couples, amongst other issues (Mumm, 1999:96). Yeo (1999) also failed to deal with the campaigning around the arguments raised at the time, that if mothers were so highly significant, they should at least receive adequate education. This was a very live debate about the 'social imperative of ensuring well educated mothers so as to best raise their children' (Gleadle, 2002:56) and the need for mothers to have a more realistic status. Reed (1843:2), in protesting about the degraded rank in which women were held, pointed out that, given the influence mothers have on their children, they should be educated for this reason alone. Many of the sisterhoods were highly involved in health care for women and with education for girls. This could be regarded as a subversion

of the role of mother or as a support for it. Yeo (1999) did not consider this issue as part of her discussion of militant motherhood.

Both Florence Nightingale and Sister Dora saw themselves as 'mother' to their patients. Sister Dora wrote to her patients when she went to the Epidemic Hospital in 1875, "What did you say to your mother running away?" (Manton, 1971:289) and Florence Nightingale is quoted in Woodham Smith (1951:199), "Oh my poor men, I am a bad mother to come home" and in a private note written in 1857 she refers to the soldiers as "my children" (Woodham Smith, 1951:217). Yet, it should be recalled that the use of the words mother and father did not necessarily imply a maternal/paternal relationship. Florence Nightingale, in writing to Frau Fliedner, addressed her as 'Mutter' although she did not address Theodor Fliedner as 'Papa' but as 'Herr Fliedner'. However, in a letter to Theodor Fliedner of 29 December 1864, she said that Theodor Fliedner was a man "who I revered as a father" (held at the Fliedner Archiv, Kaiserswerth). Florence Nightingale went to Kaiserswerth twice during her life and on the second longer stay undertook some training as a nurse. Kaiserswerth was a deaconess institute founded by Theodor Fliedner in 1833 which grew from very small beginnings to a large hospital and institution. It trained nurses and teachers and became well known throughout Europe as a model for this sort of work, receiving a large number of visitors and trainees. The Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth addressed Theodor Fliedner as 'Papa' in their letters which are held at Kaiserswerth. Similarly, Krueger (1992:47-48) pointed out that some of the early Methodist women preachers referred to John Wesley as 'father' when she said that "Ritchie and Knapp spoke of Wesley as their 'father'". Porter (1927) said that Mary Sumner was regarded as the Mother of the Mothers' Union (1927:26) and similarly said that Mary Sumner wrote to the members of the fledging branch of the Mothers' Union in Madagascar as "my dear daughters" and herself as "your white mother" (1927:37). Therefore the use of the words 'mother ' and 'father' should perhaps be regarded as implying a relationship of quasi-familial hierarchy with mutual rights and responsibilities rather than anything else. Yeo (1999:201), referring to the concept of moral motherhood, suggested that this vested the 'mother' with moral responsibility and 'social motherhood' which then carried the moral responsibility for those functions including nursing and the teaching of children,

which of course positioned the recipients as children. Thus, although Yeo's (1999) argument partially explains this use of the concept of 'mother' by women such as Florence Nightingale and Sister Dora, the use of the word seen in their written records is more nuanced and carried a number of concepts including a definition of relationship of both giver and recipient.

2.7 The Historiography of Anglican Sisterhoods in Nineteenth Century England

Studies on the history of Anglican sisterhoods in nineteenth century England deals with several issues. This history became a sphere of modern investigation during the 1970s when feminist perspectives were used to interrogate it. Probably the first serious work on this was that produced by Deacon and Hill (1972:vol 5) and subsequently in Vicinus (1985), where the matter of women in religious communities was dealt with as a chapter in a broad ranging book. Vicinus made the point that sisterhoods were different from other organisations of women, in that sisterhoods were not generally created for a single purpose. She also made the point that there is often a wide range of classes of women involved, rather than the single class of women in other organisations. However, Gill (1984:149) would suggest that a sisterhood automatically conferred the status of 'lady' on those women who became sisters. Vicinus (1985) also made the point that there was a level of dependency on men, suggesting that other organisations were not so dependent. However, Prochaska (1980:ch.1 and ch.2, 21-72) would suggest this is questionable, when she looked at the small number of women's organisations which were managed by women, compared with the much larger number which were managed by men. Prochaska (1980) and Vicinus (1985) have both conducted a sociological study, which means the theological aspects are not addressed. Since Vicinus's (1985) book was addressed to the sociological aspects of the life of single women, it is hardly a criticism to suggest that it did not address the theological aspects of her subject. This limitation is understandable, but it is an important one. However, Vicinus (1985:52) does make some fundamental errors in the areas pertaining to churches and religious studies, such as her statement that "entering a sisterhood was the most natural

thing in the world … a Methodist Sister of the People". The Sisters of the People were not a sisterhood but akin to a deaconess order.

In terms of work on sisterhoods, there are several forms of literature. There are a fairly large number of works on individual women and sisterhoods written from within the groups they describe. Examples of this type of work include such publications as Mother Elizabeth's (1981) history of the Community of St Francis, and Sister Janet's (1972) book on Mother Maribel. These were intended to narrate the history of an individual or a group and were generally not intended to make any sort of critical analysis nor a theological commentary. They are largely hagiographical in nature. In respect of Sister Dora, there were two books written very shortly after her death (Ridsdale, 1880 and Lonsdale, 1880). Lonsdale's (1880) book was not well received in Walsall and indeed was, at the time, repudiated by the people of Walsall, because it was critical of the town. Both books were largely uncritical of Sister Dora and perpetuated the myth of her as an extraordinary woman. Nevertheless, these were written by people who knew Sister Dora during her life and were written during the period within which she lived. They therefore include reflections which should be taken seriously because of that personal knowledge and the contemporaneity of their work, and because they provide insights into the way Sister Dora was perceived at the time of her life. During the first years of the twentieth century, other books were written which included Sister Dora, in particular those by Baring Gould (1900) and Chappell (1898). Again, these were largely hagiographical in nature and perpetuated the myth of Sister Dora as an extraordinary woman to the detriment of the facts. As an example, Baring Gould (1900:355) referred to Sister Dora giving up her dress allowance as a young woman so that the money could be used for the poor. In fact, her father ceased to pay any of his daughters a dress allowance.

An important source for early material on the background of sisterhoods is provided by the archive at Kaiserswerth, which is a fascinating history of the development of that institution from 1838, as a rescue organisation within an economically challenged area of Rhineland Germany, to a huge organisation providing for a wide range of social need across a broad geographical area. Interestingly the development of this organisation and its mythology provided

the basis for the development of women's ministry in the United Kingdom during the later nineteenth century. Mary Jacques (the friend of Theresa Newcomen, the Mother Foundress of the Coatham Sisterhood, who nursed the victims of the explosion at Middlesbrough in 1859 and then continued to nurse with the Sisterhood until about 1865) had trained at Kaiserswerth, as had Florence Nightingale, Agnes Jones and Elizabeth Ferard, amongst others. This training emphasised the theoretical and practical aspects of nursing together with a devotion to duty. Pastor Theodor Fliedner, the founder of the Kaiserswerth Deaconess Institute, undertook several fundraising and publicity tours of Europe together with a prodigious correspondence and reception of visitors at Kaiserswerth itself including the offer of training and education to those who were not going to become deaconesses such as Florence Nightingale. These activities allowed the development of widespread public knowledge about Kaiserswerth and the growth of a mythology. There are several comparisons, which will be drawn during this study in respect of the social class from which the women were drawn; the methods of organisation; the development of public visibility and the purpose for this. The Theodor Fliedner Archiv at Kaiserswerth also holds contemporary reports of many organisations of women across Europe, which assists this investigative process as indeed does the Lambeth Palace Library in respect of the United Kingdom.

A second form of literature is commentary on the life of individuals or groups, which is intended to be a critical analysis. An example of this type is Gill's (Gill in Mews, 1993:144-166) chapter on Priscilla Lydia Sellon. This type of work offers considerable assistance in of exploring the life of a particular woman within her theological and sociological setting. It raised, in the example given, the issues of Sellon's views in relation to 'rescuing' the poor from a morally superior position (Gill, 1993:151). Similarly, work has been undertaken on several female figures, most notably Florence Nightingale and Josephine Butler (Webb, 2002 and Nolland, 2004 respectively). These were all highly exceptional women and made clear contributions to the development of women's work in the second half of the nineteenth century. Sister Dora was not exceptional in the same way. She was a woman who pursued her vocation in a similar way to other women, but within a local and not a national area. It may be therefore that her life and work will offer the possibility of insight into the

ministry of women in a more general and transferable sense within the Protestant churches during this time. Branca (1975:2-11) emphasised this point:

> Almost all the studies of Victorian women have one note in common – the note of discontent. It is the generally accepted position that more and more women bored with their life of genteel uselessness sought more meaningful roles outside the home. In other words the feminist movement was a reaction against boredom while the eminent women achieved their position by defying the common norms … they depart from the situation of middle class women during most of the nineteenth century.

Sister Dora's life offers the opportunity to reflect on the life of a woman who was not exceptional in the way that Florence Nightingale and Josephine Butler were exceptional. For Sister Dora was a middle class woman who lived her life in a local area and not in a national setting. She dealt with ordinary people and not with members of national organisations or governments. It is therefore anticipated that a study of her life will reveal something about the distinctive features women offered ministry during this period of history. As Branca (1975:2-11) pointed out, this sort of work has been little undertaken in relation to 'ordinary' women. Nevertheless, even in considering the life of a more ordinary woman such as Sister Dora, there must be a risk of generalising from particular experience. Corbett (1992:9) raised this point in relation to autobiographies:

> Moreover can we make our accounts of women's authorship particular enough and mark them as such so as to prevent taking a few individual examples as representative of all women's experience: shouldn't we be talking about and writing of subjectivities in the plural rather than the singular?

A third form of literature is that which addresses the social and sociological issues for women in religious communities. An example of this is the work of Mumm (1999) which is a broad ranging description of the women's Anglican communities of the nineteenth century. It has to be said it is not entirely accurate, commenting as it did that there are no female contemplative orders during this period, whereas the Community of the Precious Blood based near Birmingham became contemplative very early in its history during the nineteenth century and Mumm herself pointed out that the Sisters of Bethany, founded in 1866, had a contemplative function (Mumm, 1999:155). Mumm (1999:xii) was attempting to address the issues of "the growth of the Sisterhood movement to 1900; secondly to find out what kind of career convent life offered to women, … and to re-examine the public debate on the topic". She did not

attempt to address the issues of female spirituality and worship, in the sense of the significance of worship rather than time spent on the activity of worship, and it is these issues of vocation, faith and ministry, which a study of Sister Dora will offer. Sister Dora's life demonstrates and allows a critical analysis of both her own spirituality as she practised it and that which she offered from the perspective of ministry and vocation.

Mumm's (1999) book forms an excellent description of the work undertaken by the Anglican sisterhoods of this period. It also described the lifestyle of the women in these organisations. Vicinus (1985) also undertook a similar exercise from the perspective of the individuals in the sisterhoods. However, neither of them considered, as a central feature, the place of faith, spirituality and ministry in the lives of these women. Both writers approached the subject from a sociological rather than a theological perspective. Nevertheless, both writers' work will be drawn on extensively to consider the work and lifestyle of the sisterhoods in terms of ministry.

These three forms of literature will inform the study of Sister Dora. It should be noted also that there is some work on the Roman Catholic women's orders, which provides helpful reflection on the issues within the Protestant Churches. Examples of this include O'Brien (1990:110-140) and McAdam, (1998:411-440) who considered the reasons for the growth of Roman Catholic convents and aspects of the lives of individual nuns with reference to their work, their relations with clergy and their understanding of their personal identity. There are, however, very significant differences between the growth of Roman Catholic convents and Anglican orders. McAdam (1998) demonstrated that most of the former originated within mainland Europe and were effectively branch houses. Indeed she referred to only eight orders of English foundation from a total of 114 orders operating within England. There was also a class distinction between Roman Catholic orders and Anglican sisterhoods revealed by O'Brien (1990:110-140), in that there was a greater preponderance of middle and upper class women in Anglican sisterhoods than in Roman Catholic orders. However, she pointed out similarities with the Anglican situation, including the fact that "traditional Christian responsibilities of religion were put into the hands of women", that is to say the functions of teaching and parish work in particular

(O'Brien, 1990:119). She also described some of the issues contained within the relationships of these women within a male hierarchy. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic experience and history is significantly different from the Anglican experience, coming as it does from an existing background and from existing struggles such as the desire to force women into enclosure, which simply do not occur within the Church of England. Therefore, the writing on Roman Catholic orders, whilst providing useful reflection, comments on a very different situation than that of the women within the Anglican orders. To add to this distinction, it needs to be noted that there was a significant anti-Catholic feeling in most of Britain during the nineteenth century and much of the contemporaneous material was written within this context. Although this had an impact on the Anglican sisters, who were either sometimes mistaken for Roman Catholic sisters or believed to reflect a movement of the Church of England towards Rome, the impact was obviously greater on those who were actually Roman Catholic. This was demonstrated in the fiction of the time: for example Petchier (2005:121-122) explored how Charlotte Bronte, in *Jane Eyre*, used an anti-Catholic discourse to create an underlying discourse of "alienation, repression and desire".

However, much of the modern work on the area of women's religious history including that on the 'feminisation' of religion has been done from the perspective of the evangelical wing rather than the High Church wing. Examples of this are Hall (1979) and Krueger (1992) although it should be noted that there are exceptions such as Smith-Rosenberg (1975:1-29). Hall (1979) and Krueger (1992) both wrote about the experience of women in the evangelical wing of the Anglican Church and of the nonconformist churches, as did the majority of those who have written about women's religious history in the nineteenth century. Smith-Rosenberg (1975:1-29), in her article on women in the High Church wing of the Church of England is the only major contribution from this area of church history and this was from the American experience. The issue that most work has been undertaken from an evangelical perspective is compounded, because where work has been undertaken in relation to church history and women's religious history without an evangelical perspective, it is largely silent on the subject of sisterhoods (for example, Loades, 2001 and Inglis, 1963). This study is intended to provide a corrective to this one-sided

perspective and will consider the ministry of women within the High Church movement.

There are restrictions in the work which can be undertaken in this area. It has already been noted that much of the contemporaneous written material is from middle class sources, and, of course, Sister Dora was herself middle class, as the daughter of a priest. In addition to that, the writing of the period was based in particular perspectives. Blodgett (1998:5) commented on this when she compared an autobiographer (and presumably also a biographer) to a novelist who "necessarily" depends on "artifice – shaping, inventing, selecting, omitting – to achieve effects", although she did not raise the issue of self-selection by literacy.

A study of Sister Dora can provide a corrective to studies which either focus on Florence Nightingale or else adopt essentially secular critiques of sisterhood nurses. A further issue which will be developed within a consideration of Sister Dora's life is the contribution of nursing to the development of sisterhood and the theology of the work of nursing to the development of sisterhood.

2.8 The Sources for Sister Dora's life and work

Sister Dora was something of a legend in her own lifetime. Initially, her presence was unrecorded except in family papers. One might expect some material about Sister Dora within the archive of her Order, the Coatham Sisterhood. However, this archive seems to have been largely destroyed as to its early history, apparently by Sister Frances who was Sister Dora's older sister. Sister Frances was the second Mother Superior of the Order after the Mother Foundress, Teresa Newcomen. The Pattison papers held at the Bodleian Library are a collection of the Papers of Mark Pattison, the elder brother of Sister Dora and a member of the Broad Church movement who became Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford. He was influential in Sister Dora's life before she entered the sisterhood and the Papers include references to Sister Dora and correspondence with her. Sister Dora had no formal education, receiving some teaching from her older sisters who had been to boarding school for a short time and some teaching from her brother, Mark Pattison. They also offer a reflection of the view taken of sisterhoods and their place both

within the Church and within society, at the time of their inception and early history, for Mark Pattison had strong views on this and on Sister Dora's role within a sisterhood. However, the primary material about Sister Dora is relatively scarce. There are the references in the Pattison papers and the Baptismal register of Hauxwell Parish Church. There are also the Annual Hospital Reports of the Walsall Cottage Hospital and there are letters written by Sister Dora, which have been left by her correspondents. Nevertheless, the Pattison papers provide a fascinating insight into the relationship between Sister Dora and her brother. They offer an illustration of the hierarchical relationship between her and her brother and the impact of education (or the lack of it). This study will consider the early life of Sister Dora, in relation to her educational and familial background. It will consider whether this affected the ministry in which she engaged. It may be that the educational background of these women operated as a limitation upon what they could achieve. Alternatively, it may be that their educational and social background permitted them to offer a radically different ministry from that presented by men, particularly since they could not be ordained and therefore, of necessity, their ministry was different from that of men. The nature of that difference will be explored in this study.

During the first part of her nursing career, after the time she had left Middlesbrough, Sister Dora was simply one of the sisters at the Cottage Hospital in Walsall. However, the Annual Hospital Reports increasingly referred firstly to the sisters and then to Sister Dora, both in terms of nursing and in terms of hospital management. For example, the 1871 report referred to the "Sisters whose names are household words in Walsall" (Walsall Cottage Hospital Annual Report, 1871). This demonstrated the increasing dependence of the hospital upon Sister Dora, as she continued to spend her life in Walsall, and offered a view on the extent to which a gender hierarchy or distinction in fact operated. It also demonstrated the increasing extent to which Sister Dora was seen as a "queen among women", as page 1 of the *Walsall Observer* for 28 December 1878 referred to her around the time of her death, and separated from the norm. This kind of tribute was repeated in the local newspapers and especially after her death, for page 1 of the *Walsall Observer* for 9 November 1878 cited the mayor referring to Sister Dora as a "ministering angel to the sick

and poor". The Annual Hospital Reports however, also gave very useful figures in terms of numbers of patients treated, both in-patient and out-patient, together with the condition or disease type and treatment outcomes. These can be compared with other hospital reports with regard to the assertions made in these partially self-advertising documents and with regard to the comments in relation to Sister Dora, particularly in relation to economy of management and nursing efficacy.

The local newspapers also reported a certain amount of information about the Hospital. However, since much of this is available within the Annual Hospital Reports, this is not particularly helpful. What is helpful within these newspapers is the amount of space offered to the hospital and the other issues raised. It is clear that within the period leading up to the foundation of the hospital, this was not a particular priority; greater priority was offered to such issues as education and public health. The importance of individuals in the prioritisation of social issues is demonstrated here. Samuel Welsh became editor of the *Walsall Observer* in 1863 and it was at this point that the Cottage Hospital became a serious issue, rather than a hoped for foundation, and that the Coatham Sisterhood was requested to provide nursing, including hospital management. This study will consider the way that the sisterhoods operated. Their nursing seems to have been undertaken in various ways. Some of the nursing was undertaken by direct commencement of institutions by the sisterhoods, such as the North Ormesby Hospital (founded by the Coatham Sisterhood) and the Bradford Children's Hospital (founded by the All Saints Sisterhood) whilst in some hospitals, sisterhoods were contracted to undertake nursing and hospital management, such as the Walsall Cottage Hospital (nursed and managed by the Coatham Sisterhood) and the Doncaster infirmary (nursed and managed by the Mildmay Deaconesses). The rationale or strategy for this provision of contractual services will be considered in terms of the extent to which this was, or could be, regarded as ministry.

Two biographies on Sister Dora were published almost immediately after her death. These were by Lonsdale (1880) and Ridsdale (1880). The former was regarded within Walsall as disgraceful because it was critical of Sister Dora and of the town, and this criticism was considered to be unwarranted. However,

perusal of Lonsdale (1880) makes it quite clear that this work is overwhelmingly hagiographical, although at times derogatory of Walsall and its people, stating that “her life would be spent among people inferior to herself in education and position and her singular talents would be wasted” (1880:7). Ridsdale (1880) was not so criticised at the time and both works produce examples of Sister Dora’s life which are of doubtful veracity to establish the Madonna-like qualities of Sister Dora, for example Lonsdale (1880:7), referred to the ‘high bred’ country background of the Pattisons, which was not correct. They were biographies of their age. However, they are clearly part of the material which allows a critical analysis of the life of Sister Dora and its environment. Davidoff and Hall (1987:51) warned against the use of popular publications and fiction as a source for sociological analysis. Nevertheless, these works should not be excluded since they provide a useful insight into the perspectives of their time. They demonstrate the extent to which women such as Sister Dora were held up as both an example to women and as separate from women. In this regard letters have been discovered, written by Sister Dora, which would negate such a view. These letters were discovered when a house in Walsall was being refurbished during the 1960s and are now held at the Local History Centre in Walsall. This aspect of Sister Dora’s life and the extent to which she offered it priority is an important critique on the separation of women such as Sister Dora. They may also illustrate the requirements made of women like this, which may go some way to explain the mental health problems that are a feature. Sister Dora had an interesting ailment of the leg, which seemed to undergo an unlikely and very rapid cure. Priscilla Lydia Sellon also seemed to have mental health problems and other members of sisterhoods demonstrated physical ailments which may have had a psychological or psychiatric derivation. This seemed to be particularly marked with Mothers Foundress. Peter Francis Anson (1964:313) gives an example of Mother Harriet of the Community of St John the Baptist who died in 1883 “worn out by nearly a quarter of a century of active labour for the good of souls while yet in the prime of life”. This area was reflected upon by Caine (1964:253), when she considered the cost of self-emancipation to these women. There must be a real possibility that there was a psychological element in this illness.

Subsequent to these two books almost immediately after her death, very little was written about Sister Dora for almost the next century, with the exception of works such as Chappell (1908) and Baring Gould (1900) which were common Sunday School prizes. However in 1971, Manton's work was published. This was a substantial biography of Sister Dora, which was published in connection with a television series and brought together an overview of much of the existing primary and earlier secondary sources. It provided a helpful biography of Sister Dora. However, notably, it did not provide a critical assessment of Sister Dora's life or indeed a contextualised assessment of her life. In her acknowledgements, Manton (1971:13-14) made it clear that her intention was to write a biography. Importantly, in the context of this study, Manton (1971) did not attempt to approach this subject theologically. She did not address the contribution Sister Dora made to an understanding of the ministry of women. She used no books of theology as her sources, save some primary or early secondary sources. Such was not her intention, and she wrote before the area of feminist theology became widely studied, which means modern gender perspectives were not applied by her to Sister Dora's life. It is the intention of this study to apply such perspectives and to approach the life of Sister Dora from a theological viewpoint.

Sister Dora was a woman who lived during the nineteenth century. Her life derived from, amongst other aspects, her background and upbringing and the society in which she lived. She was certainly a woman whose story is important in terms of her career as a nurse and the developments in nursing to which she contributed and of which she was an example. However, she was also important for an understanding of sisterhoods – the way they lived, their aspirations and their connectedness with their faith and theology. Far from inhabiting a purely domestic world, or a world which could be defined as domestic such as a hospital, as the critics of the time, such as Lonsdale (1880) and Ridsdale (1880) would suggest, women like Sister Dora, it will be argued, influenced local and national politics and Church hierarchies. They affected the thinking of the Church in terms of its own self-identity and in terms of its mission.

The lives of women like Sister Dora offer an opportunity to consider the ways in which women were viewed in the Church, and inevitably therefore within society and thus the ways in which the Church viewed itself. The identity and work of women in the Church necessarily acts as a commentary on the Church's self-image. There is a need to consider the extent to which the work of women was recognised as more than simply an ontological part of being a woman in order to consider this aspect as a commentary on the Church's self-image. This work has not been done and would be an important progression of the work which has been undertaken on women in the Church, for if this work was recognised (rather than being considered as ontologically part of being a woman) then this would lead to the work of women being regarded as socially acceptable. There are however two alternative positions. One of those is that the work was not accepted, but was condemned as being unwomanly or disregarded as being of secondary importance to marriage and family. The other position is that such work was identified as important, but was distanced from the expectations of ordinary women by being regarded as beatific. Consideration of these possible positions gives an insight into how the Church saw itself and its continuing theological identity.

This development of the ministry of women in the Church at this time provides an essential background to this study. Sister Dora's life offers the opportunity to consider how women saw themselves within the Church. Their methods of organisation, based principally on the family model rather than the efficient or functional model, and their life style, demonstrate their view of the ministry of women at this time, together with, importantly, their relationship with the institution and hierarchy of the Church, which, it will be shown, was highly complex. Their practice of faith may offer both a reflection on accepted practice and a criticism or movement within it. It will also be possible to explore the issues for women of this time relating to women's duties and rights: that is the extent to which women were declaring complementarity and addressing the issues of women's rights for themselves and other women. The principal primary and early secondary sources may be used, because of the time of their writing, to allow some assessment of the extent to which these were issues at the time rather than issues which have been superimposed from a twenty-first century perspective, although this clearly cannot be disregarded.

Sister Dora had a significant amount written about her at the time of her life and shortly after her death, although this material does not contribute directly to critical analysis of her work. However, this body of work offers a reflection on her place within her society and thus the opportunity to reflect on the ministry of women at this time. The later work, principally contained in Manton (1970), did not offer such a critical analysis, but drew together most of the available sources on Sister Dora and so forms a highly useful reference. It also provided a very helpful overview in a detailed factual biography.

2.9 Summary

From this factual base and from the base of a contemporary commentary it will be possible to explore issues within the life of Sister Dora and the position of women in the Church in the middle of the nineteenth century. This exploration in turn will allow a reflection upon the way the Church of the middle of the nineteenth century was developing in its understanding of the roles of women and indeed of men also. These roles clearly differ according to the part of the Church which is being considered. They also differ according to the geographical area of the country which is being considered and according to the class of the women being studied, as Levine points out in her study of radical nonconformity in areas such as London, Birmingham, Bristol and Lancashire (Levine, 1990).

Sister Dora's story is the story of a particular woman in a particular place. Her life allows the opportunity to look at issues of women, Church and ministry in the middle of the nineteenth century and its developmental indicators.

3.0 SISTER DORA: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF HER LIFE



Portrait of Sister Dora at Walsall Hospital
(in Latimer, 1988 front cover and Lonsdale, 1880 frontispiece)

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has demonstrated that there has been a significant tendency to develop a stereotypical approach to the history and theology of the position of women during the middle of the nineteenth century. This has been in part because of a 'monochrome' approach. Emphasis has been placed on

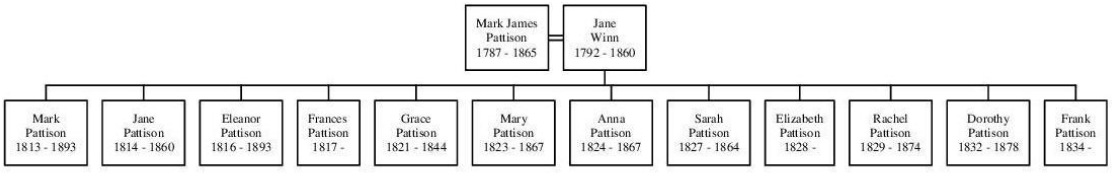
specific issues, such as the development of the franchise and on particular women, such as Florence Nightingale, as well as on an approach which has often been hagiographical. Women have not been treated as "neither great saints nor great sinners, simply people, ordinary apples of God's eye" (Carmody, 1995:53). This chapter will consider the extent to which Sister Dora may be seen in the light of this quotation from Carmody with a view to reflecting on this in later chapters.

Sister Dora is a woman of few certainties. One certainty is that she was the daughter of an Anglican priest in a remote North Yorkshire village. What is not at all certain is her status with her sisterhood. She considered herself a sister until her life's end and yet her final words were, "I have lived alone. Let me die alone. Oh let me die alone" (quoted in Manton, 1971:21, 337).

3.2 Early Life

Dorothy Wyndlow Pattison was born on 16 January 1832, the eleventh child and tenth daughter of Jane and Mark James Pattison, known as Dora. She will be referred to as Dorothy until she entered the Sisterhood and thereafter as Sister Dora. She was seen by her mother to be intelligent, pretty and engaging (Manton, 1971:29). She valued this description and indeed retained the uniform of a novice (as shown on the illustration at the beginning of this chapter) because she thought it suited her. She was baptised by her father at the age of six months. Just over a year after her birth, the last child of the family, Frank was born. Below is a genogram of the family of Dorothy Pattison:

Descendants of Mark James Pattison



Mark married Frances Strong in 1861.
Eleanor married Frederick Mann on 25.1.1853 and produced one daughter.
Sarah married Richard Bowes on 11.12.1864.
Rachel married Robert Stirk on 5.1.1858 and produced five daughters.
Frank married Margaret Lever (date unknown).

3.2.1 Mark James Pattison

Her father, Mark James Pattison, was an Evangelical priest who had married Jane Winn in 1811, when he was ordained Deacon. He was priested in 1812 at Exeter. Jane Winn, her mother, was also an Evangelical. She was an educated woman who had small independent means, which became highly significant to the lives of her daughters upon her death in 1860.

Mark James Pattison was an ambitious man who believed the living at Hauxwell was a first step in his career. Unfortunately, it proved to be his final move. This was a parish of 300 (of whom many were Methodists) which was given to him in 1815 and, as the photograph below shows, the church building was large and dominant in the community. This fact, together with serious mental illness, was a dominating factor in the lives of his wife and children. In June 1834, he suffered what was apparently his first episode of mental illness. This took the form of outbursts of rage and paranoia, such that the threats to his wife caused his doctors to advise her not to visit him when he had been removed to a private madhouse in York. Subsequent to his discharge on 19 November 1834, he suffered further episodes in 1842, 1853 and 1860. He was left with lingering paranoia and depression.



St Oswald's Parish Church, Hauxwell (2006)

Shortly after Dorothy's birth, Mark, her elder brother, went to Oriel College Oxford in April 1832, where he was later to become Rector of Lincoln College and a controversial member of the Broad Church movement. He had been educated by his father until he went up to Oxford and his father was extremely anxious that Mark should achieve the social heights that he had failed to reach. However, Mark James Pattison did not educate his daughters. The elder girls, Jane, Eleanor and Frances, went to boarding school in Doncaster as their mother had done and Mark directed the studies of all the girls from Oxford. The elder girls also taught the younger ones. Mark's comments on the girls were terse: "Desultory reading will never do for you what persevering hard study will, if you avoid your old snare of thinking you have actually *done* much when you have read over a certain number of pages or chapters" (Montague, 1934:34).

Their father played little part in their general education, but was concerned, with their mother, for their upbringing in the Church. This involved extemporary prayer and a strong emphasis on biblical teaching considering particularly issues of sin and punishment. Mark Pattison (junior) considered that in his family, "religion almost narrowed to two points, fear of God's wrath and faith in the doctrine of atonement" (Pattison, 1885:326). Although there are no letters extant from the early period of Dorothy's life, this information must have come from the sisters, as Mark Pattison himself was in Oxford. One should perhaps be wary of these, on occasion, partisan recollections. Nevertheless, they give a flavour of an extremely difficult family life.

As the girls grew up, they continued their efforts for their education, with the help of Mark. The area in which they lived allowed little or no social life, for its small population was scattered and was judged by their father to be socially unacceptable to them. He had a rigid sense of class, having been said in his younger days by his son to be more knowledgeable on Debrett than the Bible (Pattison, 1885:24) and despite his Evangelical priorities, his pastoral engagement was limited and declined over time.

3.2.2 Dorothy's childhood and development within the Parish

Throughout her life, Dorothy had a profound sense of her own shortcomings. However, it is clear that Dorothy was strong-willed as a child. On one occasion,

she and her sister Rachel had been given ugly bonnets which they hated. On a rainy day when their parents were out, Dorothy soaked them, so they could not be worn. When asked where they were the following Sunday, she told her mother they were ruined. Her mother made the girls wear the bonnets anyway (Lonsdale, 1880:4-5). It may be that this apparently indomitable will, despite its shortcomings, was important in Dorothy's survival of her family life and the development of her resilience.

As they grew up, the girls themselves developed pastoral care within the parish. This was obviously encouraged within the framework of their parents' theology, but is also to be seen against the background of their father's practice. Their father undertook little parish work or indeed services (his confirmation of Dorothy in 1850 was one of the last times he completed the parish registers). However, he was involved in the restoration of the Church in 1860 (rebuilding the chapel on the north side of the chancel and the porch on the south side of the nave, removing the gallery erected in 1700 and adding buttresses to the tower; Mark James Pattison himself paid for the restoration of the Chancel). The pastoral work the girls undertook was described in Lonsdale (1880). The context of this book was that Lonsdale was a woman who had been a lady probationer of Sister Dora in Walsall. She wrote a biography of her very shortly after her death and it was published in 1880. Her book was badly received by the people of Walsall because they felt it disparaged Sister Dora and also because it disparaged Walsall and its people. The former of these two propositions is somewhat odd since this seems to be a hagiographical biography and Mark Pattison was reported by Lonsdale in her second edition as having described this as "Miss Lonsdale's romance" (Lonsdale, 1887:6). She described the work of Dorothy in Hauxwell. It included a clothing club, running a voluntary school (which was closed by their father in 1842) and (from 1843) nursing. Dorothy herself seemed to have been involved in scarlet fever nursing although without permission in 1843 or 1844. At that time she was thirteen or fourteen years old and in recounting this story, Dorothy did not indicate that her nursing was untrained – indeed she described herself as "really and truly a nurse" (Ridsdale, 1880:6). Nevertheless, this episode clearly caused her anxiety and she is quoted as saying, "Of course I was full of the vaguest terror, thinking whatever should I do if I was never allowed to go home again,"

(Ridsdale,1880:7). Chappell (1908:96) stated that Sister Dora later wanted to go with Florence Nightingale to the Crimea, but her father refused.

Clearly, parochial work of this kind was an important formational influence on her life. Less positively, but also important was the family's increasing interest in the Tractarian controversy as described to them by their brother Mark (to whom they referred as the 'Oxford oracle') and by relatives. Their father was vehemently opposed to this and refused for a time to confirm his younger daughters. He would rant from the pulpit about the papists in his midst, "Will you join the papists in the dining room or the poor solitary persecuted Protestant here?" he would shout at visitors. Mary Pattison described the situation in 1844 (Pattison Papers, vol. 50, folio 282):

> I can hardly describe our Easter Day… we could only celebrate the religious festival ─ it will be long before I forget the sensation of our breakfast on Easter morning ─ almost every eye was filled with tears. Papa was in the book room an alien and an enemy.

His deep suspicion of his family's espousal of Oxford Movement views led him to refuse his wife communion on her deathbed.

During the 1840s and 1850s, Dorothy and her sisters suffered increasingly from their father's rigidity of attitude toward them and oppression of them and from his mental illness which led to irrational and violent outbursts lasting up to several weeks. Their mother, believing in a patriarchal hierarchy within the family, was powerless to protect or support them through the oppression of their father's attitudes and behaviour. The girls became increasingly distressed, with some becoming apparently clinically depressed. Anna and Frances became depressed; Anna would never recover and died at 43. Frances recovered only after medical treatment in London in 1862.

During the 1850s, Eleanor and Rachel married – Eleanor at the age of 36 on 25 May 1853, to her father's curate and Rachel on 5 January 1858, at the age of 28. These events provoked huge rage in their father, who seemed to want to keep total control over the female members of his family. He refused to have anything more to do with Eleanor and Rachel after their marriages. In view of his attitude and behaviour, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that the other daughters did not leave the family home. However they had no means of their

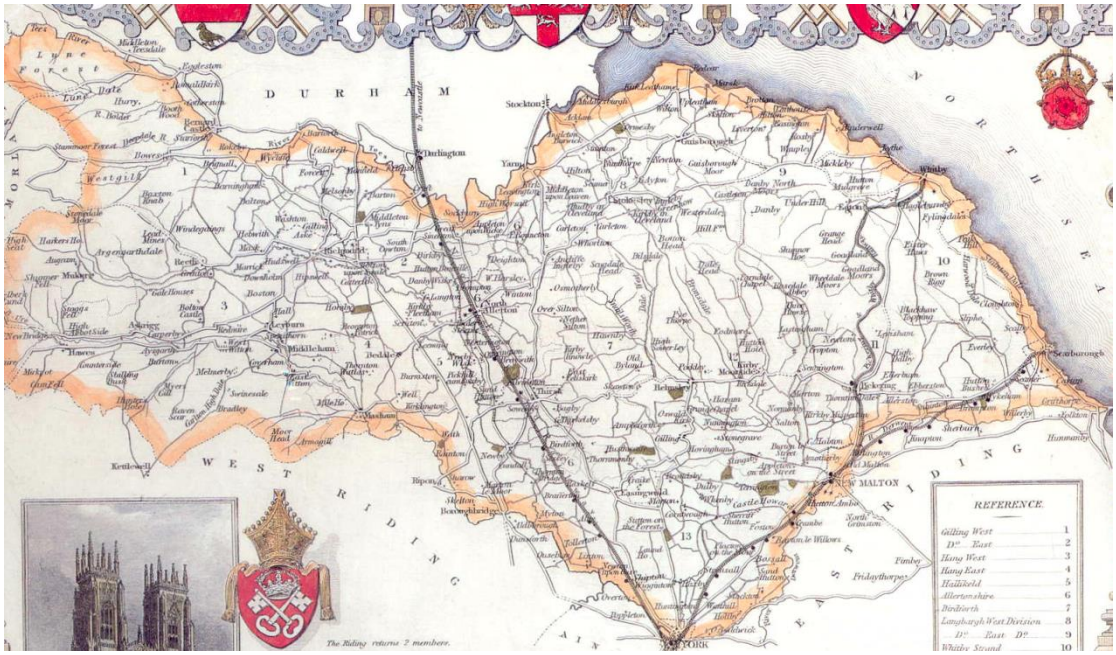
own whatsoever, their father having even stopped their dress allowance years before, although Baring Gould (1900:355) described this as a decision of the sisters themselves to give this up to the poor rather than the decision of a despotic man. The sisters wrote rather more realistically to their brother, Mark Pattison, “The jailor has taken a new phase in tormenting us. He will not pay for anything, not even necessary items of clothing” (Pattison Papers vol. 51, folio 94).

The *Walsall Observer* of 20 October 1886 wrote that “her father called her his ‘Sunshine’”. It is interesting that this attempt to turn Sister Dora into a perfect specimen of womanhood during her later life and after her death extends also to her family, even though the letters of Dorothy to Mark Pattison paint a very different picture. Does a Madonna need to have a perfect family?

3.2.3 Context of Dorothy’s development within society at large

During this period of the nineteenth century, there was little in the way of suitable employment for women in this position (women in the middle classes but in poverty and unsupported by family) and such employment as there was, was heavily oversubscribed. To such an extent was this true that it was regarded as charitable endeavour to provide employment for women. For example, the Burlington Arcade was opened in London in 1819 commissioned by Lord George Cavendish for the sale of ‘fancy articles of fashionable demand for the gratification of the public and to give employment to industrious females’. (This information was obtained from ‘Livewire’, in 1985, the house magazine of GNER, and the source is unknown). There was also a strong social and familial imperative to remain at home and in particular to care for their increasingly sick mother. Nevertheless, it is clear from available written material that this situation was regarded as highly emotionally distressing to all the family except apparently their father. Home life “lays upon us all like a chain of iron” wrote one of the sisters (Pattison Papers, vol. 52, folio 506), in terms reminiscent of Florence Nightingale in *Cassandra*. Dorothy commented of their mother, “She seems to care about nothing.” (Pattison Papers, vol. 52, folio 651). The sisters also found the situation highly frustrating. They felt time was passing and they had taken no useful occupation in their lives nor were likely to do so.

The early life of Dorothy was a life which was relatively common. There were clearly elements which stood out as distinctive and certainly elements of her life which had an impact on her later life. There were elements of her life and experience which were used by those who wrote about her later, whether correctly or to make particular points. However, in terms of her education, her upbringing, her expectations and occupations, it was a life which was unexceptional. Her social isolation was increased by the scattered population of North Yorkshire shown in the map below. The childhood home of Dorothy Pattison can be found at a point south of Richmond and west of Northallerton with little in the way of easy transport links to the towns and close only to other small settlements.



Nineteenth century map of Yorkshire North Riding

3.3 Independent Life

The lives of the sisters changed markedly, however, on the death of their mother. Jane Pattison died on 4 October 1860, distressed because her husband had refused to allow her to see Mark and had withheld Communion from her. However, she had made it clear that she intended to leave her independent means equally between her daughters. Her husband was enraged by this and attempted to dissuade her, but she refused to change her will.

The results of these bequests of £90.00 made an enormous difference to her daughters' lives. Elizabeth sought and obtained a position as a nursery governess in the autumn of 1861. Dorothy herself obtained a position as village schoolmistress at Woolston (with the assistance of Mark) in November 1861 and Frances was removed by her doctor (Dr Bowes who later married Sarah) in 1862 for treatment for depression. Thus by late 1862, only Jane, Mary, Anna and Sarah were left in the household (Grace having died in 1844 and Rachel and Eleanor having already married) and Sarah married in 1864. Anna was gravely ill with depression. Dorothy herself in later life did not consider her actions laudable and said of this, "I was very wilful, I did very wrong; let no one take me as an example" (Lonsdale, 1880:17). The influence of a legal and social system which allowed women to be deprived of the means of supporting themselves was enormous for these women.

3.3.1 Work as schoolmistress at Woolston

In the autumn of 1861, when she was 29, Dorothy obtained the position of village schoolmistress at Woolston, a village close to Newport Pagnell, which, combining the populations of Great and Little Woolston, amounted to fewer than 200 people. The money for the school and its tiny schoolmistress's house had been raised by the vicar, Reverend Edward Hill. Dorothy remained there for three years until September 1864. In 1861, of course, education was not compulsory and was by no means universally available. In 1856, the Registrar General's return showed several areas of the country which achieved only 40% literacy in children (for example, 61% of children in Lancashire and Staffordshire were unable to write – a statistic of the Registrar General's return which was noted in the *Walsall Free Press* of 21 February 1857). In 1861, a Royal Commission on the state of elementary education in England (of which Mark was a member) showed that one in seven children attended school. Nevertheless, this was obviously an area of public interest in the Midlands at any rate. It was mentioned in the *Walsall Free Press* on a large number of occasions during the 1850s, much more so than the issues of health and hospitals. The Woolston school was within the auspices of the National Society, so Dorothy's job included instruction in the catechism and escorting the pupils to Church.



Woolston School, from Latimer (1988:13)

Although teachers had a system of training, either within denominational colleges or as pupil teachers, Dorothy appears to have had no training. Nevertheless, as previously when nursing, she seems not to have recognised the need: "I have undertaken nothing I cannot do. I like teaching and think I am competent to teach all that village children require" (Pattison Papers, vol. 54, folio 497). In teaching, Dorothy was, as with nursing later, taking a task which was common to charitable Christian ladies in a voluntary part-time capacity, but regarded as a job suitable for much lower class women. For example, Cherry Elwood in *The Daisy Chain* (Yonge, 1888) was a domestic servant until an accident made that impossible and she was only able to be a teacher. However, for Dorothy, as a teacher and subsequently as a nurse, her occupation allowed her social freedom to live by herself and go about at all hours of the day and night by herself. As the photograph of the school shows, and the population figures evidence, the numbers in the school would have been low. She was thus permitted to be socially autonomous.

There is no external information about Dorothy's abilities as a teacher. She herself believed in her competence and Lonsdale, who was not necessarily a reliable judge in such a matter as her work, presented an almost wholly positive view of her. Dorothy's sister, Eleanor, visited and commented in a letter, "She is well off, being almost worshipped by the farmers and their wives and happy in her work" (Pattison Papers, vol. 55, folio 250; a letter from Eleanor to Mark).

Within her occupation as a teacher, Dorothy began to visit sick children. This visiting expanded to nursing generally, again without training although some of her later comments indicate she may have read Florence Nightingale's 1860 publication of *Notes on Nursing.* Manton (1971:217) asserted she had done so but provides no evidence of this. She certainly corresponded with Florence Nightingale and notes receipt of a letter from her in a letter to Kenyon Jones of 14 November 1876.

3.3.2 Development of faith

It is clear that Dorothy's work was influenced by her faith. She wrote that her ideal was "using all the talents God has given me in his service" (Pattison Papers, vol. 54, folio 502; a letter from Sister Dora to Mark). Subsequently as a nurse in Walsall she was known for her use of the 'Inasmuch'. This was inscribed as a full text at the convalescent home at Coatham: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me", Matthew 25:40. After her death, she was found to have written in her Bible,

> God's intention in the creation, He himself has declared, is that man should be in His image and likeness. This intention appears to me to be the keystone of life's work, to help restore and build up what is mined in ourselves and others, to love and help others and so have the blessed life originally intended for us.

However, it is also clear that prior to her entry into the novitiate, she was struggling to develop her faith. In particular, she doubted her Evangelical upbringing – "her mind was filled with doubts relating to the authenticity and inspiration of holy Scripture", she later said (Lonsdale 1880:23). Mark had influenced her in terms of a Tractarian view of God and the Church and in 1863 Mark wrote in emphasis of the Tractarian view of the mission to the poor of "how the church may be brought home to classes which have never yet been at home within it" (Pattison, 1889:263-308), although it should be noted he had been a leading light of the Broad Church movement since 1845 when he wrote this. Maybe also other influences from her upbringing were brought to bear on her thinking at this time.

As a result of these developments, Dorothy decided to change her way of life in 1863 to respond to the question she asked herself, "Have I given my heart to God? Is every action of my life done with a single eye to God's service?" (Pattison Papers, vol. 67, flyleaf), for she was clearly uncomfortable with what

she was doing, believing that “I am not doing my utmost; I should have more time more opportunities for doing good and in the better ways if I went into that sisterhood” (Lonsdale, 1880:20). Manton (1971:153), in the only modern biography of Dorothy, suggested Dorothy’s vocation was as a nurse, not a Sister. She stated that the Coatham Sisterhood offered “everything for which the two lonely young women hungered, a shared ideal, faith, the care of children for Fanny [her sister Frances], for Dora real nursing at last”.

However, in view of her engagement with her faith and her religious sense of vocation this would seem questionable. There are various strands of theology and doctrine spanning a spectrum, which at times seems confused and unclear. Certain practices and principles appear evangelical (for example, the use of text as demonstrated in the importance to her of the ‘Inasmuch’) whereas other areas appear ritualistic (for example, the view adopted of practice which is not necessarily inspired by a sense of personal salvation). Her later attendance at worship was within the Catholic practice at St James, Wednesbury, although her offering of worship within the hospital was more evangelical. However, her Tractarian basis was revealed by her strong sense of being part of a sisterhood.

This process seems to have been affected by a developing connection with what was then the Christ Church Sisterhood at Coatham. In 1862, Dorothy had visited Coatham and seen these women. In the summer of 1863 she accompanied Frances to Coatham to convalesce. Frances was recovering from depression after treatment by Dr Bowes and subsequent treatment in London at Dr Bowes’ behest.

Both women became inspired by the life of the Christ Church Sisterhood and Frances stayed, offering for the novitiate. Dorothy returned to the school at Woolston and went back to Coatham in the summer of 1864. She spoke with the Chaplain of the Sisterhood, in particular about her evolving faith, and he advised her as Keble had advised Thomas Arnold “to turn oneself more strongly than ever to the practical duties of the holy life” (Stanley, 1845:19). In refraining from placing such emphasis on the issue of personal conversion, as the Evangelicals did, the Tractarian view allowed Dorothy to develop her faith without being confronted by its lack.

3.3.3 Entry to the Christ Church Sisterhood

In September 1864, Dorothy entered the Christ Church Sisterhood as a novice, for a period normally lasting two years, and became Sister Dora. None of her family, except Frances and Sarah who became an Associate Sister later, ever found this acceptable to them. Rachel, however, was a donor to Walsall Hospital in 1872, the Annual Hospital Report of the Walsall Hospital for 1873 giving her name in the list of donors.

At this time this sisterhood was undertaking hospital and convalescent nursing in Middlesbrough, North Ormesby and Coatham, and as the photographs show, amounted to a small group of women undertaking their work in small buildings. The history and development of the Sisterhood will be considered later. However, in this period the Sisterhood comprised professed sisters (the Order did not take full vows until 1871), novices and associates. Each sister was expected to be financially self-supporting in the Community. This was a problem for Frances and Dora who could not support themselves. The result for Dora was a renewal of a dependent status.

As a choir novice, Sister Dora was expected to participate in the Offices, to be trained in all household duties and to be of a decorous and courteous manner, unquestioningly obedient to the Mother Foundress, Theresa Newcomen. She found decorum and obedience difficult and the story is told of her exploits in riding a donkey with a reputation for bucking. She was eventually thrown off, leaving her knees bruised and swollen so that it hurt to kneel in chapel. She said, “I dared not confess the reason, for the horror of the Chaplain and the Sisters at such a prank would have known no bounds” (Ridsdale, 1880:22 and Lonsdale, 1880:32). Chappell (1908:100) wrote that “everyone knows of the severe drilling in absolute submission and unquestioning obedience to which members of these Sisterhoods, whether Romish or Protestant, are submitted”’. This story then can be used to illustrate different views of the life and vocation of Sister Dora.

She was, as always, captivating to the Community and she enjoyed the becoming nature of the novice habit for the rest of her life, as she was never professed. Manton (1971:302, note 20) suggested she became an Associate

Sister, but there is no evidence to suggest she ever changed status from a novice, save for her resignation in 1875. Nevertheless she continued to refer to herself as Sister until her death.

3.3.4 Nurse training

The first stage of her nursing training began at Coatham Convalescent Home, which had 45 beds (significantly bigger than the hospital shown in the photograph in North Ormesby) and took men, women and children who each stayed about a month. It was over the door of this building that the 'Inasmuch' was engraved. After working in the kitchens and laundry she worked in the children's ward.

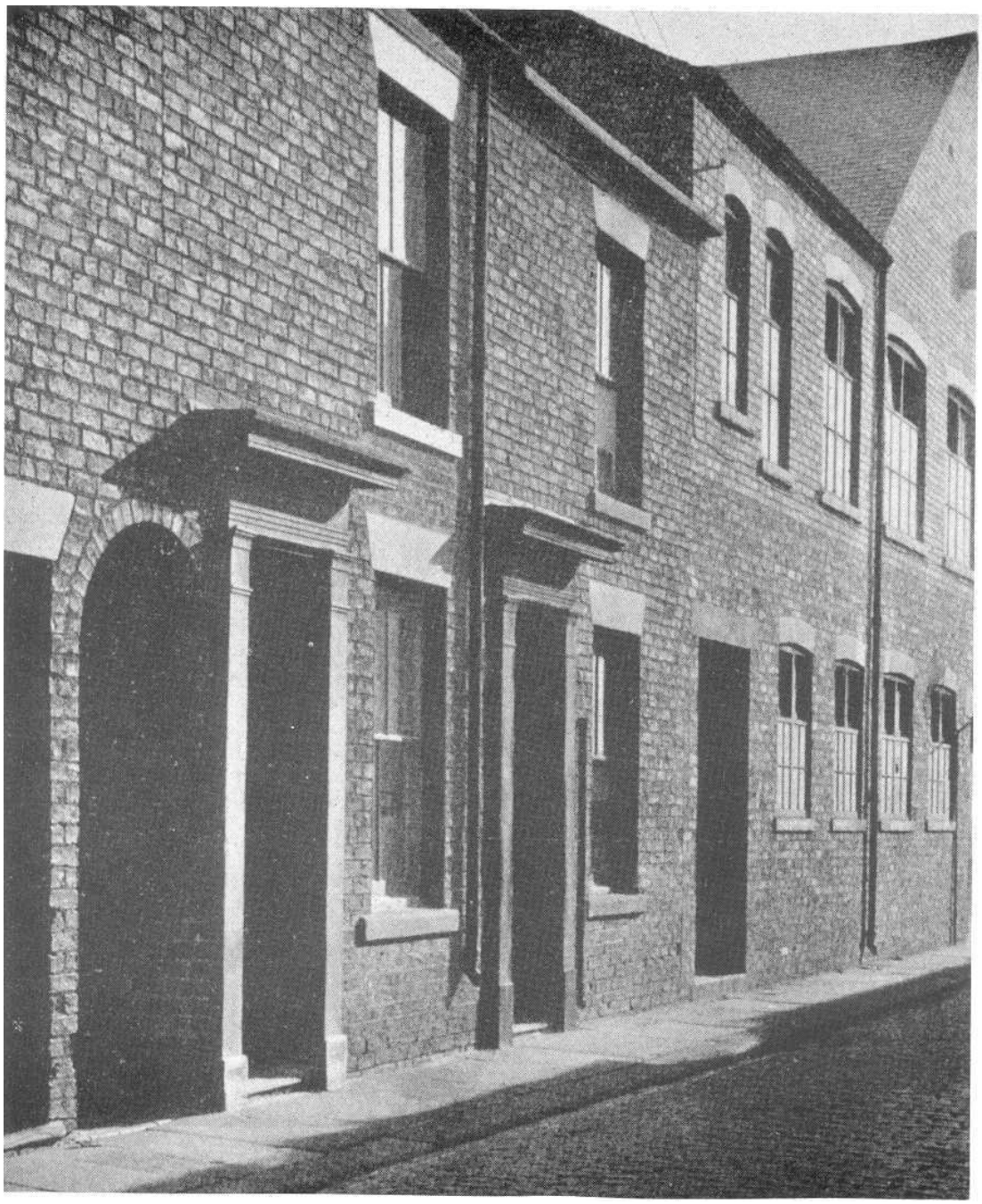
However, during the winter of 1864-1865, there was an outbreak of scarlet fever in Middlesbrough which infected the Community. As a result, after about three months in the Community Sister Dora was sent to the North Ormesby Cottage Hospital. She then caught scarlet fever herself and convalesced at Coatham. By the New Year of 1865, she returned to North Ormesby.

She was trained particularly by Sister Mary Jacques, who had founded the hospital after a boiler explosion in the town. In 1859 Sister Mary Jacques had trained with the Deaconess Institute at Kaiserswerth as Florence Nightingale had done. However, this training was of a basic nature and Sister Dora learned more about spirit and attitude from Sister Mary Jacques than about practical nursing skills. When Sister Dora asked about dressings, Sister Mary Jacques said, "It can only be done in the name of Jesus. We see his divine face in the persons of all the poor and suffering and it is that which helps us" (Burnett, 1886:119-148). In 1873, Sister Dora answered a similar question, "As you touch each patient, think it is Christ himself you touch, then virtue will come out of the touch to you." At this time, in 1866, Sister Mary Jacques was dividing her time between North Ormesby and Walsall.



A later picture of the Sisterhood
showing Theresa Newcomen in the centre and Sister Frances to her left
From MS 3967 Holy Rood archive at Lambeth Palace Library

Sister Dora had developed an independent lifestyle which followed a process that was largely within acceptable norms. She worked in areas which were respectable for women at that time in the way in which she was involved. However, although her engagement of her faith within her lifestyle was wholly in keeping with the period, the development of a membership of a sisterhood was not generally accepted for women, as will be explored later, and neither was her description of her doubts of faith, although again this will be seen to be not uncommon amongst these women.



The original buildings of North Ormesby Cottage Hospital.
The five cottages first used as England's first public cottage hospital opened in Middlesbrough in March 1859. Removed to North Ormesby July 1861
From Document 3969 Holy Rood Archive Lambeth Palace Library

3.4 Experience at Walsall

3.4.1 Development of the hospital at Walsall

On 12 October 1863, a new Cottage Hospital for accident and surgical cases was opened in Walsall, a town with a population of 35,000, and the Coatham Sisters were asked to provide nursing and institutional management. The opening of the hospital was a culmination of increasing interest in public health both nationally and locally. The Health of Towns Act 1858 was an example of

this nationally and this issue was taken up locally by the Press. On 12 February 1859 an editorial in the *Walsall Free Press* argued against shared toilets and noted that water mains were being laid in the town. On 20 August 1859 the *Walsall Free Press* reported an outbreak of cholera and the editorial related this to the issue of public hygiene. When the hospital was opened, the reason the Sisterhood was asked to provide nursing and management was that the local newspaper editor, Samuel Welsh, was hospital secretary and he had previously worked in Middlesbrough, thus having an awareness of the Coatham Sisters. The *Walsall Free Press* of 12 October 1863 described the object of the hospital as "to furnish in case of accident prompt and skilful surgical aid and tried and experienced nursing". There were initially no medical cases but such were anticipated as soon as funds permitted. In fact medical outpatient work commenced in 1868. The hospital opened with two surgeons and several consulting surgeons. None of these was resident, unlike the Sisters. The same newspaper related that

> in order to carry out this object …. while Sisters of the Home of the Good Samaritan at Coatham and Middlesborough who are ladies of education and whose services to the hospital are purely voluntary and benevolent have been induced to undertake the nursing and internal management of the institution.

Sister Mary Jacques and an Associate Sister, Sister Elizabeth, went to Walsall and the hospital opened on 12 October 1863. Later Sister Louisa joined them. The hospital opened with four beds at 4 Bridge Street, which increased to 14 beds by 1864 and by 1868 had removed to The Mount, which had a floor area of 8107 square yards. The hospital dealt with local industrial accidents, particularly mining injuries. Samuel Welsh was quoted by Baring Gould (1900:361) as saying,

> When the cottage hospital, which was the second of its kind in England, was opened, the system of voluntary nursing was unknown, the only voluntary nurses heard of then being those who had gone out to the Crimea with Miss Florence Nightingale; consequently the dress of the Sisters was uncommon, and the name of Sister strange.

This was not of course true, as the Sisters who went out with Florence Nightingale to the Crimea demonstrate.

There was a level of local opposition to the Sisters, as Walsall was largely dissenting and Nonconformist (this was referred to in the *Walsall Free Press* of 22 May 1858, in an article protesting about the Free Grammar School, which

required attendance by its pupils at the Church of England; the article reminded readers that the "dissenting portion of the inhabitants of Walsall" formed "a very large majority of the inhabitants"). The Hospital Committee attempted to counter this opposition by policies of openness and non-denominationalism, although the Sisters themselves were Anglican, as the Hospital report of 1862 reports. Nevertheless, there was hostility, including stone throwing. However, by 2 January 1869 the *Walsall Observer* reported on Dr Pusey in neutral terms and the *Walsall Observer* of 26 December 1868 reported "a conversation at the Walsall Church Institute in which the majority strongly opposed Ritualism but gave credit for its honesty of purpose". Thus the hostility to High Anglicanism seemed to have abated.

3.4.2 Sister Dora in Walsall

On 8 January 1865 Sister Dora was asked to go to Walsall, as Sister Mary Jacques had become ill. According to the *Walsall Observer* of 20 October 1886, she came as "an assistant lady-nurse". This was three days after her first experience of night duty alone, in which she had felt inadequate to the task. Lonsdale (1880:35) stated that by this time "she had received no regular training in the art of nursing". As Sister Dora herself said, "Nobody could possibly be more ignorant than I was. I had everything to learn" (Lonsdale, 1880:37). Her work involved staffing the wards and handling outpatient clinics including home visits. It also included administration and financial and hospital management.

During the first two months, Sister Dora caught smallpox and was herself nursed in the hospital. In April 1865 she was recalled to take a private nursing case near Coatham. Her family thought this was demeaning and she herself did not see this as the fulfilment of her vocation to serve the poor. In November 1865 she returned to Walsall and remained there for the rest of her working life although she would have volunteered for the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 and the Russo-Turkish war in 1877. She clearly felt that Walsall was where she wanted to spend the rest of her life and was quoted in 1876 in Ridsdale "From Coatham I came here and here I hope to stay till the end. I never want to go away (Ridsdale, 1880:19).

On 30 December 1865, her father died. She had become aware that he was dying on 28 December 1865 and asked for permission to see him, but did not receive it. It is not clear whether this was refused or whether events overtook this. Samuel Welsh (in the General Baptist Magazine, 1889) denied that the Order refused to allow the visit to her father on his death bed. However, when she was granted leave to go to the funeral, she said "When he was alive you would not let me go. Now he is dead, I no longer care to" (Lonsdale, 1880:36).

During her time at Walsall, Sister Dora's relationship with her Order altered markedly. Unfortunately, many of the early records of the Order have not survived – they were probably destroyed by Sister Frances. Sister Dora is not referred to in the Chapter Minutes even upon her death. (Document 3936 is part of the Holyrood Archive held at the Lambeth Palace Library and lists deceased sisters of the Order. It does not mention Sister Dora). The Order of the Holy Rood was originally the Christ Church Sisterhood in the 1850s, comprising seven women, and became the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. Sister Jean (1981) told the story of the Order as a member herself, some fifteen years before it ceased to exist. In 1863, the Order split into two charities with different chaplains. By 1865 the Coatham Sisters (with whom Sister Dora remained) were under the chaplaincy of Reverend John Postlethwaite and the Community of the Holyrood continued with Mother Theresa and Sister Frances. The latter Order took full vows in 1871. The Orders had Associates of both genders who came from all over England. Sister Dora's relationship with her Order was distant although Father Postlethwaite periodically said he would withdraw her. She resigned from the Order in 1875 after nursing at the Epidemic Hospital without consent. However, despite the fact that she had never become professed and she had resigned, nevertheless, after 1875 until the end of her life she referred to herself as a member of a sisterhood.

As she remained at Walsall, Sister Dora developed a reputation for her nursing, but seems to have had little training, nor was she working with a nurse senior to herself. Indeed throughout her life she remained sceptical about the value of training. Lonsdale (1880:223) quoted her as saying, "Do not go so much for training as for experience". She spent two periods nursing away from the Cottage Hospital. From March to October 1868, she nursed at the fever

hospital and again from 27 February 1875, in both cases after smallpox epidemics. It was on the second occasion that Father John Postlethwaite remonstrated that he could not care for her if she did not ask his consent on such matters. As a result of this, she resigned. However, in 1870 she received further training from one of the Consultants, Dr MacLachlan. In 1870, Dr MacLachlan suggested she go to Edinburgh and qualify in medicine (Elizabeth Garrett had just qualified, in France, as the first English woman doctor). Edinburgh was regarded as the best training institution (Woodward, 1974:23). However, she declined, apparently seeing nursing as her own unique vocation. Dr MacLachlan then started to instruct her himself. He taught her anatomy and physiology including dissection and attendance at post mortems. Subsequently in 1873 she applied for permission to attend dissections and see cases at the Eye Infirmary in Steelhouse Lane Birmingham. As a result, Sister Dora was able to perform minor operations herself. Notwithstanding this, the only other training she seems to have received was at the end of her life when she travelled to Paris and then to London to observe antisepsis practised by Lister. However, her skills, attributed by Dr MacLachlan to minute observation and practical experience, were perceived by her patients to be supernatural and womanly.

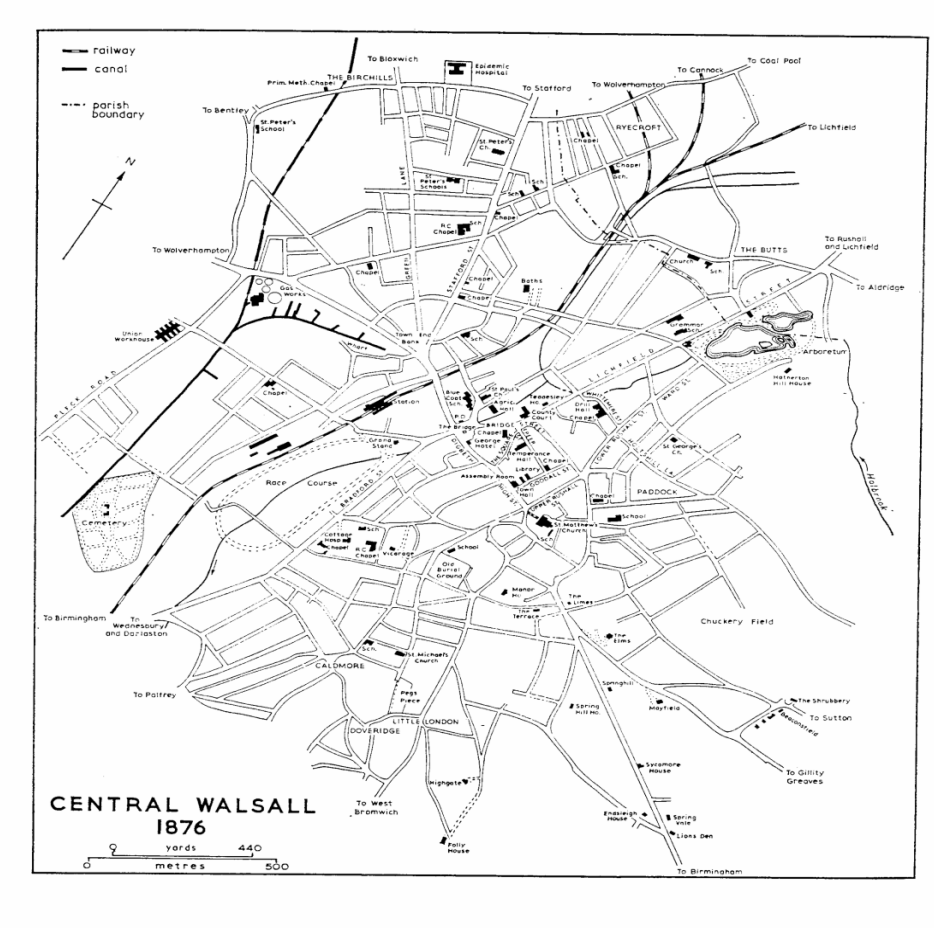
During 1872, she established a training institution at Walsall for nurses. It is unclear what training was offered or the length of the training period, although it was probably two years as she felt able to take former patients away in September 1874 for a day. The training does seem to have involved in its first stage housekeeping, then routine care of patients and the care of children as a special subject. Sister Dora was regarded as good with children, who often spent long periods in hospital. Baring Gould (1900:373) wrote of an occasion:

> Once a little girl of nine was brought into the hospital so badly burned that it was obvious she had not many hours to live. Sister Dora sat by her bed talking to her of Jesus Christ and His love for little children, and the blessed home into which He would receive them. The child died peacefully and her last words were: 'Sister when you come to heaven, I'll meet you at the gates with a bunch of flowers'.

The final part of the training was assisting with dressings and assisting with operations.

As she remained at Walsall, she developed a strong position. Initially, she seems to have worked with Sister Louisa, Sister Mary Jacques (who had left by January 1867) and Sister Elizabeth and, between 1866 and 1867, six Sisters seem to have been sent and withdrawn. At that stage, the hospital had 14 beds (Annual Report of the Walsall Hospital, 1867). However, by 1868 there seems to have been herself and Sister Louisa, as Sister Louisa is said to have caught measles, leaving the new hospital building at the Mount to Sister Dora, and by 1869 Sister Dora seems to have persuaded Father Postlethwaite to cease to send Sisters. The *Walsall Observer* of 20 October 1886 reported that by 1868 when the new hospital opened (on Easter Monday, 13 April 1868) with 28 beds "she undertook the nursing with the assistance only of an old servant of the family and of lady pupils who went to her from time to time". Lonsdale (1880:57) was critical of the training they received: "It was a strange kind of desultory training they received". Nevertheless, the lady pupils must have gained significant experience, for the hospital was clearly quite small in relation to the size of the town shown in the map below.

Sister Dora herself did not figure individually in the hospital Reports until the 1871 Report, although the 1870 Report indicated thanks "to the Sisters whose names have become household words in Walsall". In 1871, the Annual Report referred to "the unwearied devotion of the Sister in Charge" and from this year her influence, as shown in the Reports, grew. This increased as she reorganised the nursing in a way which left the situation more dependent on her. For example, when she began nursing at Walsall, the night nursing was undertaken by hired servants. She instituted a system of fewer (probably two) more skilled women with herself on call at all times.



Walsall centre (The County of Staffordshire Victoria History of England [1908])

However, when she decided to undertake the nursing at the epidemic hospital, when an epidemic of smallpox broke out in 1875, she left the hospital for three months to three lady pupils of whom two were only beginners. Lonsdale (1880:57) indicated that she gave them no guidance but simply expected them to deal with the situation.

3.4.3 Management of the hospital

Her nursing day was described in Lonsdale (1880:84). She went to the wards at 6.30am and made all the beds and gave breakfast until her own breakfast at 7.30am. After this, she read prayers and conducted ward work until 10.30am when repeat out-patients arrived. Ward round occurred at 11.00 to 12.00 when she served the patients' dinner after reading prayers. She read prayers in the nurses' sitting room and had dinner with the nurses. Outpatients arrived at 2.00pm until up to 4.00pm or 5.00pm. At 6.00pm there was nurses' tea and at 7.00pm she spoke and prayed with the patients individually. At 8.00pm wounds were dressed, supper was served and she read prayers.

Regarding the number of patients and finances the following is an example
The Annual Report of the Walsall Hospital of 1 October 1866 showed the following levels of patients treated in 1865:

In patients – 95 treated

54 cured 22 relieved 7 left 1 discharged for misconduct 11 died

Outpatients – 642 treated

The Annual Report for the Walsall Hospital for 1867 showed that by 1866 the average in patient stay was 18.42 days.

This compares with the following levels of patients in 1870 reported in the Annual Report for the Walsall Hospital for 1871:

In patients – 139 treated

Outpatients – 2318 treated

In 1864, the accounts indicated income of £970-2-4½ and an almost equivalent expenditure of which £401-9-4½ related to food, washing and wages.

In 1865 the accounts indicated expenditure of £778-9-10½ with a positive balance of income over expenditure of £98-5-8½. There were also a significant number of donations in kind, especially coal.

This compares with the Annual Hospital Report for 1872 which recorded the following for North Ormesby Hospital in 1871:

Inpatients – 225 treated of which 59 were medical and 166 were surgical

191 cured 24 relieved 6 died

Outpatients – 340 treated

In 1880 the Annual Report indicated the average in patient stay was 40 days.

In 1871 the accounts indicated expenditure of £2809-3-10½ with a deficit balance of £601-16-8. Again there was a significant level of gifts in kind.

The 1866 Annual Report of the Walsall Hospital gave the following breakdown of the nature of injuries treated:

Abscesses	15		15 cured	
Amputations	6		6	
Apoplexy	1			1 died
Burns and scalds	24		24	
Cancer	2		2(removed)	
Cuts and bruises	46		44	1 left 1 discharged
Clubfeet	2		1	1 relieved
Contracted finger	1		1	
Crush	1			1 died
Dislocation	4		4	
Diseased joints	20		20	1 relieved
Distruction	1		1	
Tonsils	1		1	
Excision	1		1	
Fistula	2		2	1 relieved
Fracture	34		33	1 died
Falls	2		2	
Gun shot	2		2	
Foreign body in eye	1		1	
Hair lip	1		1	
Foreign body in limb	1	1		
Opthalima	1		1	
Poisoning	1		1	
Run over	4		4	
Tumours	6		6	
Squint	1		1	
Hernia	1			1 died

The outpatient work, according to the same Annual Report consisted of abscesses, bruises, burns and scalds, cancer, carbuncle, club feet, diseases and injuries, dislocations, etysepelas, fractures, hernia, paralepis, paraphinosis, protapsis, ramula, sprains, tumours, ulcers, varicose veins and wounds.

Sister Dora also took responsibility for household management of the hospital and the budgeting. She cut night nursing bills by reorganisation from paid servants to a smaller number of trained night nurses. This also involved being on-call herself. She reduced expenses including laundry costs generally so Walsall was one of the cheapest hospitals at £34.00 per bed per year and in 1870 15/6d per patient per week (Annual Hospital Report for 1871).

This was not simply about reducing expenditure. She wanted the hospital to be pervaded with a sense of God. Baring Gould (1900:369) quoted her as saying to a prospective lady probationer, “Tell her this is not an ordinary house, or even

a hospital. I want her to understand that all who serve here, in whatever capacity, ought to have one rule, *love for God,* and then, I need not say, love for their work".

3.4.4 Development and outworking of personal faith

Her faith always remained an integral part of her work. Lonsdale (1880:104) said that when she was dressing a difficult wound she would say, "Well we must pray" and would often come to a ward at night to pray with an ill or unconscious patient. One patient was quoted by Baring Gould (1900:383) as remembering coming round after an operation to Sister Dora sitting by his bed saying, "They climbed the steep ascent of heaven, thro peril toil and pain, O God to us may grace be given To follow in their train" (from the hymn by Reginald Heber, Bishop of Calcutta). However, the hospital was non-denominational.

Sister Dora was also involved in the neighbourhood, both in terms of district and home nursing (including the period in 1878 when the hospital was closed). The Order of which she was a part until her resignation in 1875 was formed for "nursing of the sick poor in hospital and homes; education of poor girls and training for occupation and mission among the poor where sought by parochial clergy" (reiterated on 21 February 1885 in the Rules and Statutes) (The Holy Rood Archive: Document 3917, Lambeth Palace Library). Sister Dora in Walsall pursued these objectives. In 1875, she became involved in rescue work with Reverend Edward Fitzgerald, the vicar of St Paul's, Walsall, to which Church she had presented an engraved alms dish. In 1875, she suggested a parish mission should make an effort to reach those women who engaged in occasional prostitution to relieve the poverty of their household. She held late night services, which about 35 women attended. Ridsdale quoted Sister Dora as writing, "I went out amongst my poor outcast sisters and brought them in; and had midnight services all the week. I had long looked after their bodies, now Jesus had sent me seeking their souls" (Ridsdale, 1880:52). For she believed the "image of God [is] impressed upon every living soul" (Lonsdale, 1880:202) and although "it is difficult to recognise the Master in such poor degraded creatures as come to be cleared up and yet the 'Inasmuch' stands" (Ridsdale, 1880:20). She firmly believed that the example she offered of faith and its outworking would be important for those she treated. She recounted a

story of a man who had thrown a stone at her and whom she later treated: “You see it was his first practical experience of good returned for evil and he didn’t know what to make of it” (Lonsdale, 1880:31). In a letter she wrote in 1876, she stated “I feel He has sent me and He has blessed it to my own soul” (Lonsdale, 1880:161). In 1876, according to Latimer (1988:28), she was engaged in missions with the Evangelicals and with the Methodists, including visiting and attending services. She was also involved in prison visiting for those detained from the neighbourhood. She provided financially for some, including redeeming pledges of work tools and paying passage for emigration. Interestingly, although she preferred nursing men and children, she worked in the district among women. In the hospital it was her custom to read the morning and evening office. She also led Sunday afternoon hymn singing which developed a community focus as well as being available for the patients. She clearly believed a sister was of a different order than the nurses previously employed. This was consonant with the views of other Orders and had an impact on the development of nursing which will be explored later.

In terms of her own worship, she attended St Paul’s early service each Sunday morning and there was a short service at the hospital each Sunday afternoon with community hymn singing. Sister Dora’s preference was Wesley hymns. Her favourite was ‘Then let us attend’ (Ridsdale, 1880:38). She clearly found Church worship important. Her driver was quoted in Price (1908:54-55) as describing an occasion in 1874, “Once we drove to Lichfield to a midnight service in the Cathedral”. On Sunday evenings, she attended St James’, a very poor Church in Wednesbury for Evensong conducted by Reverend Richard Twigg, a Tractarian priest who had begun life as a member of a poor mill family in the West Riding and who had become a priest, supported by Reverend W.F. Hook of Christ Church Leeds. Sister Dora would then go to Reverend Richard Twigg’s house afterwards where her charm delighted his children. “She was a lovable creature, so gay and winsome” (Welsh, 1889). However, Lonsdale (1880:115) reported that she also went to hear Moody and Sankey in Birmingham and introduced their hymn book onto the wards. Since she was on good terms with several clergy, she was regarded as belonging to several denominations. The Methodist Ridsdales and the Roman Catholic priest of St Mary’s believed she could have been one of their own. James McCarthy, in a

letter to the *Walsall Observer* of Christmas Day 1879 wrote, “On Christmas Day 1872 or 1873 the late Sister Dora requested an interview with me in the Cottage Hospital. Upon that I heard from her own lips the declaration that she knew it was her duty to become a Catholic”. She also fasted on Fridays and during Lent, although this was a custom of both High Church Anglicans and Roman Catholics. She was a woman who thought carefully about her faith and its practice and continued attending classes given by various members of the clergy. A reflection quoted by Lonsdale is an example of this thoughtfulness: “I have learnt more and I think I have learnt to love God more. Eternity has become real” (Lonsdale, 1880:29).

Her theology is revealed by her strong adherence to the biblical norm described by her ‘Inasmuch’. Ridsdale (1880:23) quoted Sister Dora as referring to the ringing of the night bell: “The Master calleth Thee and it is difficult to recognise the Master in such poor degraded creatures …. and yet the Inasmuch stands good” and this was clearly also mirrored in her ecumenical relationships – well before her time. This will be explored later. She believed in an immanent God (in terms of her dedication to the service of those with whom she came in contact), maybe a God with a bias to the poor, to use a late twentieth century phrase, and a God of infinite love – a God who is revealed by Scripture.

In one of her last letters written shortly before death to a former pupil, she said

> It is 2.30am and I cannot sleep, so I am going to…… write to you. …. I was anything but ‘forbearing’ dear; I was overbearing and I am truly sorry for it now. I look back on my life, and see ‘nothing but leaves’. Oh my darling, let me speak to you from my death-bed and say Watch in all you do that you have a single aim, God’s honour and glory. I came not to work not my own works but the works of Him that sent me. Look upon working as a privilege. Do not look upon nursing in the way they do so much nowadays, as an art or science, but as work done for Christ. As you touch each patient, think it is Christ Himself and then virtue will come out of the touch to yourself. I have felt that myself, when I have had a particularly loathsome patient. Be very full of the Glad Tidings, and you will tell others. You cannot give what you have not got.

Reverend Richard Twigg of St James’, Wednesbury, whose Church Sister Dora attended for early Sunday communion and evensong and whose classes she attended said (quoted in Baring Gould, 1900:364):

> The struggle through which she had passed, the sense of *need* in her own soul for all that Christian Church supplies in teaching and in Sacraments had a great strengthening and confirming effect that never left her, and the love of Jesus

> Christ became an abiding personal devotion that nothing could shake. It was this ─ the love of God ─ that made her what she was and endure what she did.

Her favourite hymns were Wesley hymns and those of Frederick Faber, an Anglican priest who converted to the Roman Catholic Church in the mid-nineteenth century. She said in a letter, "I am rejoiced that you are enjoying Faber's hymns; they always warm me up". Faber was born in June 1814 at Calverley, Yorkshire, the son of an Anglican Priest. He was educated at Shrewsbury School and Harrow School and then went to Balliol College Oxford. He became an Anglican Priest and converted to Roman Catholicism. He headed the London branch of the Oratorians and died in 1863. He wrote some 53 hymns, although many of these are now unused (for example, the 1983 Methodist *Hymns and Psalms* uses only two of his hymns). Perhaps his most famous hymns are "My God how wonderful thou art" and "There's a wideness in God's mercy". His hymns seek to link the vision of a transcendent God and God who is immanent – God who is present and reminds God's people of their own experience. They seek to declare a God who is infinitely mysterious and infinitely present, so that God's people will be inspired to recollect the image of God in all God's people – to love and serve all people to the uttermost because there is no distinction and because the sense of the Immanent and the Transcendent cannot be separated. Faber wanted to make clear the drawing in of all people and all human possibilities. Thus he drew in contrasting emotions: a sense of the presence and the mystery of God (for example in "Sweet Saviour bless us ere we go" and "Thou art our Jesus and our all"). "There is plentiful redemption" he says in "There's a wideness in God's mercy".

Several of his hymns referred to the particular female role in the story of the Incarnation – for example – "by the people's cruel jeers, by the holy women's tears..." "by thy weeping mother's woe, by the sword that pierced her through, when in anguish standing by, on the cross she saw Thee die". Several of his hymns had a distinctively individual view of salvation. Perhaps it was thus she straddled the Oxford Movement view and the Methodist/Evangelical view of salvation as an individual relationship with Christ as a personal Saviour. No wonder she was adopted by both the High Church of England and the Methodist church embracing, as she did, the view of a Transcendent God and a God who is present to the individual. (A substantial part of this section on Faber

is to be found on the HymnQuest software, a production of Stainer and Bell from the Pratt Green legacy).

Considering her view of God as present to the individual and regarding the theology of Frederick William Faber, as evidenced by his hymns (the only part of Faber's theology Sister Dora appeared to know about), it is interesting that Faber took a view of the individual. "Dear angel ever at my side, how loving must thou be, to leave thy home in heav'n to guard A simple child like me" and later in the same hymn, "Then, for my sake, dear angel! Now more humble will I be, But I am weak, and when I fall, Oh weary not of me". This was reflected in her sense of the individual identification of God with human need. She took seriously the power of prayer and on one occasion was clear that the recovery of an individual from illness in 1866 was the result of the prayer of the congregation of St James, Wednesbury (Ridsdale,1880:45). She participated as a leading member of a mission to the town centre in Walsall in 1876 and wrote, "We have had such a wonderful mission throughout the town from the 18th of November to the 27th. I can truly say whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, but I was caught up .... I felt so full of Jesus that I could go up to anyone" (Ridsdale, 1880:47). She believed in a God who did not require intercession for access (Lonsdale, 1880:235) and she maintained a sense of God with an individual identification of human need.

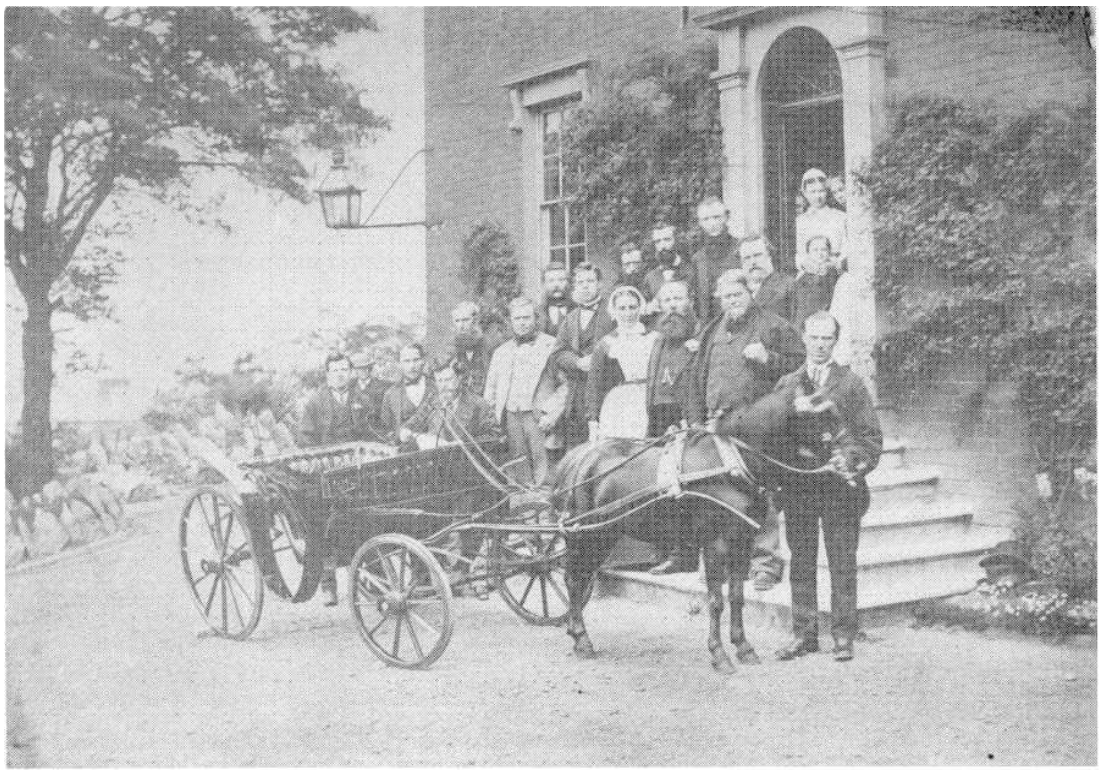
Interestingly, her brother Mark Pattison, who was such a strong influence upon her development, took the view that the Church needed to be lived and dynamic rather than institutionalised. The Church needed to be lived particularly amongst the poor who had not been touched by it.

3.4.5 Sister Dora's physical and mental health

Sister Dora's health was generally robust. Indeed she prided herself on her physical strength. However, in November 1866 she developed a strange illness. This lasted six weeks. It began with a faint and developed into a fixed knee joint which prevented her sitting up and was acutely painful. By 1 – 2 December 1866, she appeared much worse and amputation was feared. She refused consent to this. Sister Dora's sister, Mary, came to look after her and Mother Theresa sent an experienced nurse from Coatham. On 19 December

1866, her brother Mark visited – the last private meeting with him of her life. By 29 December 1866, Dr Burton (one of the visiting doctors) still believed she might die, but she suddenly arose to see a patient. She appeared to have no further symptoms after that. This obviously gave rise to stories of miraculous cure, but Mr R.C. Lucas of Guy's Hospital believed this was a neurosis – its symptomology did not fit with physical illness – and he called it a "hysterical knee joint" referring to her "endurance and her desire to die a martyr with all the mental strain involved" (Lucas, 1880:161). Such a disorder was seen similarly in Priscilla Lydia Sellon. Notably toward the end of her life, Sister Dora attempted to give herself diphtheria in 1878 by clearing the throat of an infected patient. This wish for death was also seen in 1868 when she threw herself into the care of patients in a smallpox epidemic with a "scarcely veiled longing for some hope forlorn enough to throw away her life upon" (Lonsdale, 1880:53). She herself later admitted she wanted to catch a fever and die. In 1878 whilst in her last illness she was asked if she suffered. "Yes," she replied "but I want it all: the more I suffer the more I feel I need it. I am in God's hands now" (in a letter from Sister Dora, quoted at Latimer, 1988:34).

These incidents give rise to questions about Sister Dora's mental health and the impact of her life on this. She obviously lacked self-esteem and did not count the work she was doing highly. As an example, when she undertook the Epidemic Hospital work in 1875, she left the work at the Cottage Hospital to the three lady probationers who were there, without adequate instruction. Lonsdale (1880:139) considered this was intentional and designed to prevent anyone emulating her skills. She clearly had a sense of unworthiness which she seemed to hope could be expiated by constant activity and mortification of the flesh, for example, by deliberately staying awake all night.

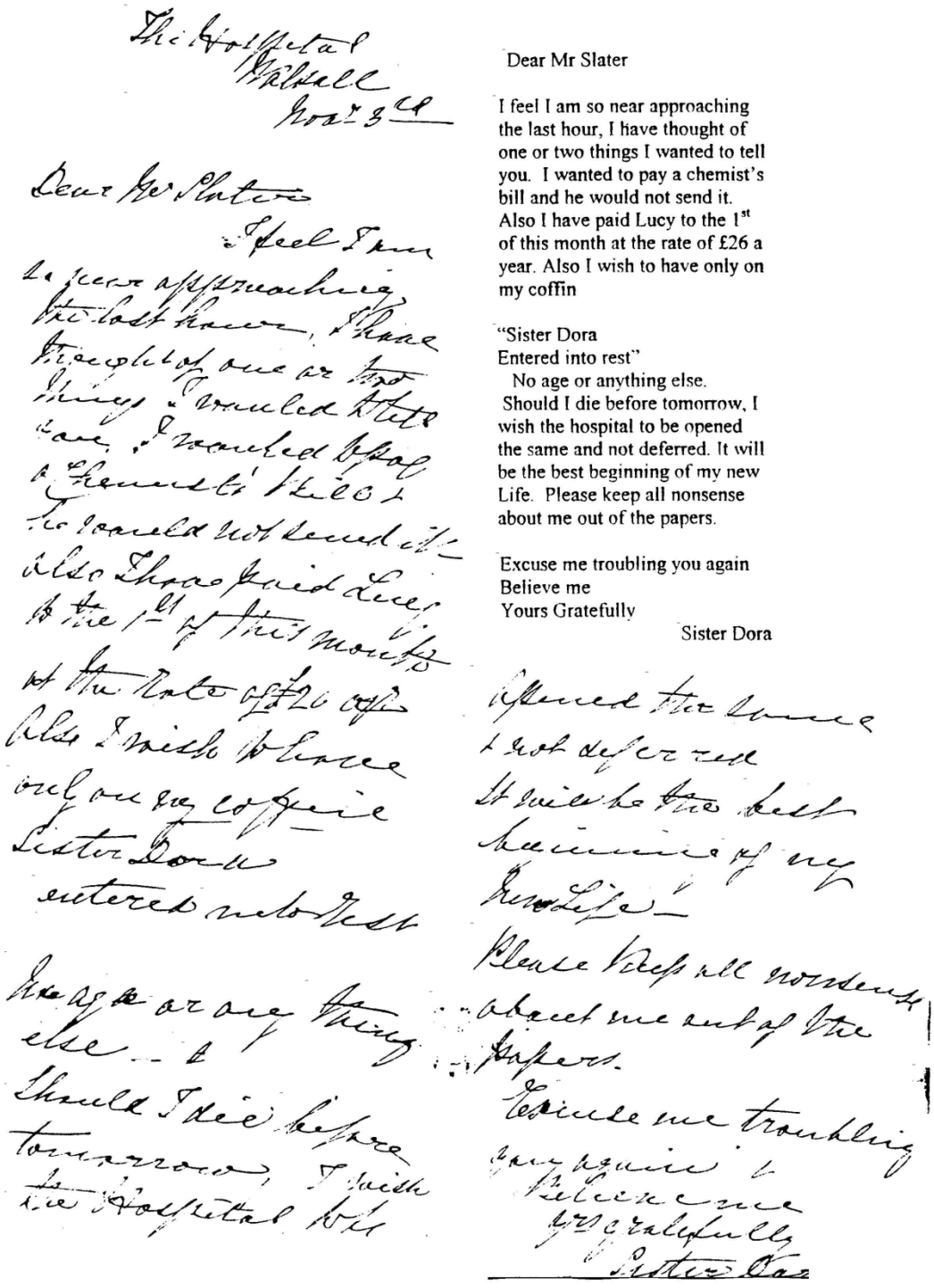


The pony and trap provided for Sister Dora by grateful workers
From Latimer (1988:22)

3.4.6 Relationships with the family

Sister Dora's relationships with her family were distinctly ambivalent. Once she had moved to Walsall, she rarely saw her family except for her annual visits to Rachel's family. Indeed, at the end of her life, from 1874 to 1878 after Rachel's death, she refused contact with them until the very last months of her life. Her correspondence with her family was quite distant (although quite assertive). An example of a letter to Mark can be seen in the Appendix. She had declined to go to her father's funeral (although it is notable that her sister Eleanor refused to wear mourning at her father's funeral). She largely separated herself from her Order although she always saw herself as a member of a sisterhood. One of her last letters is signed 'Sister Dora' as was almost all her correspondence apparently.

Last known letter of Sister Dora recently acquired by the Local History Centre (Acc 993)



Dear Mr Slater

I feel I am so near approaching the last hour, I have thought of one or two things I wanted to tell you. I wanted to pay a chemist's bill and he would not send it. Also I have paid Lucy to the 1st of this month at the rate of £26 a year. Also I wish to have only on my coffin

"Sister Dora
Entered into rest"
No age or anything else.
Should I die before tomorrow, I wish the hospital to be opened the same and not deferred. It will be the best beginning of my new Life. Please keep all nonsense about me out of the papers.

Excuse me troubling you again
Believe me
Yours Gratefully
Sister Dora

Last known letter of Sister Dora dated November 3rd 1878
Held in the Walsall Local History Centre

The letters in the Appendix show her signature (with one showing D Pattison) and the last copy is a copy of her usual signature.

3.4.7 Relationships with the people of Walsall

Her relationships with the people of Walsall and in the hospital appear to have been assertive – on occasion challenging medical opinion (famously in 1866 when she believed and proved amputation was unnecessary in a young man by treating the injury and healed what was thereafter known as 'her' arm) and on occasion to the extent of being acerbic, making nursing with her a challenging occupation (Lonsdale, 1880:122). This highly professional and caring, competent manner reflected her predecessor Sister Mary Jacques, of whom it was said, 'If you meet a lady at both ends of the hospital at once that will be our Sister Mary'. It also reflected the myth of nursing, although it should be noted how small these hospitals were (Walsall had various numbers of beds from 4 to 24, although there was always a high number of outpatients). Nevertheless, it is clear that she was held in high esteem in the town as is shown in the photograph commemorating the gift of the pony and trap and the numbers of people shown in that photograph.

3.4.8 Relationships with men

However, her relationships with men were of a different order. During her time at Walsall, there was a clear difficulty in that she was committed to nursing and this was incompatible with marriage. Thus, her relationships were ended by her when this choice became necessary, even though she thought, "I feel more inclined to harangue about woman doing tasks more at home being the helpmeet for men which God ordained" (Lonsdale, 1880:115). Lonsdale (1880:40) quoted Sister Dora as saying towards the end of her life, "If I had to begin my life over again I would marry because a woman ought to live with a man and be in subjection". This of course reflected society's view that women's best place was in the home (for example, the *Walsall Free Press* of May 1857 reports a lecture at Wesley Chapel on women's principal function being in the home). However, it is notable that the style of her relationships did not alter through her life. The pattern seems to have been an intense affection for a man, which worried her family in terms of Sister Dora's reputation and safety and which was ended by Sister Dora in a way which may be regarded as less than sensitive and on occasion with prevarication.

Her first relationship seems to have been with Purchas Stirk, the brother of Robert Stirk whom Rachel was to marry. Both men were working farmers. She met him in 1855 and maintained the relationship until 1861, almost at one point intending to marry him. Also in 1855, she commenced a relationship with James Tate, the son of the head teacher at Richmond School whom she had known for some years because he went to school with her brother Frank. In 1858, James Tate asked permission of her father to marry Dorothy. It was refused and Dorothy was humiliated that James Tate accepted this. There was an argument but, in June 1859, Dorothy renewed her engagement with him and in May 1860 he was presented to a living. However, by March 1861, Dorothy had broken the engagement and Rachel wrote to Mark, "now she tells me she fears she prefers PS" (Pattison Papers, vol. 54, folio 281). However, it seems she did not intend to marry Purchas Stirk.

In November 1862, Dorothy went to Redcar to convalesce from pleurisy. She met James Tate again and renewed the engagement, but he broke this after his parents' highly adverse reaction.

In 1866, Sister Dora began a relationship in the hospital, possibly with Redfern Davies, a surgeon at the hospital. The relationship was one so passionate it was noticeable to others as such. They became engaged but Sister Dora broke the engagement and he subsequently went away in the autumn. She considered she had behaved badly (Lonsdale, 1880:40). Her illness of November 1866 followed this. He died of a 'false aneurism' on 3 March 1867 after a fall.

She then had several close professional friendships with doctors and priests. In October 1875, Sister Dora met Kenyon Jones, a man fifteen years younger than her and the owner of a blast furnace, which exploded on 15 October 1875. The relationship became very close and there remain over five hundred letters written by Sister Dora to Kenyon Jones. Examples of the letters can be seen in the Appendix to this Chapter and show an affection and even flirtatiousness about the relationship. By February 1876, it was clear they were in love and they exchanged several gifts. She made comments indicating strong sexual feeling for him (see letters in the Appendix, which were found in Walsall in 1952

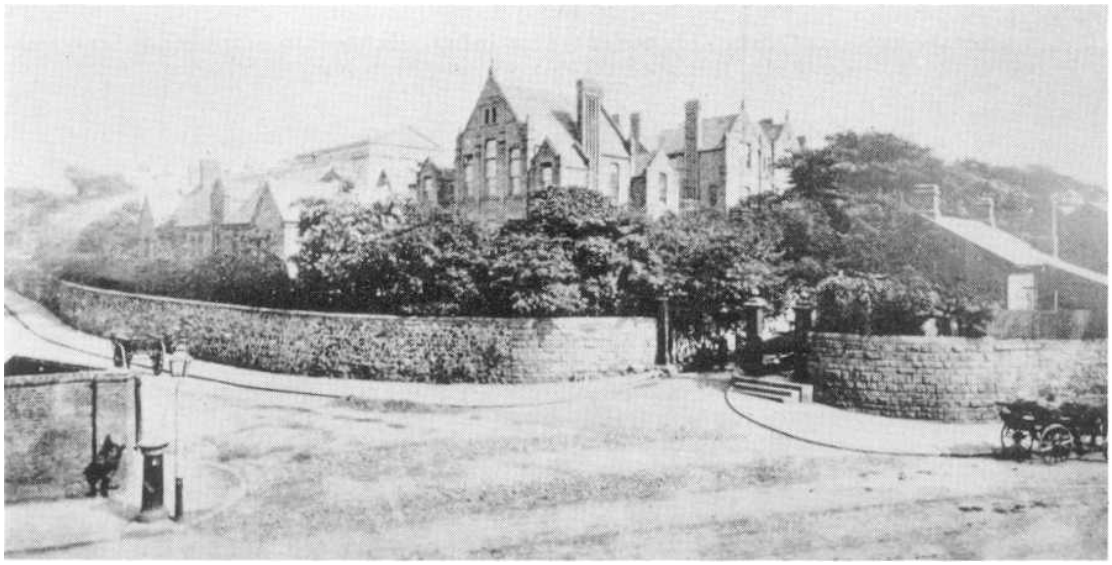
and April 1966 and are now held at the Walsall Local History Centre). However, the relationship threatened to cause scandal to the hospital and was disapproved by Kenyon Jones' family. So in 1877, the relationship ended. However, she continued to write to him almost until her death. Until the period shortly before her death, he visited her daily until she released him from this on 30 October 1878. The pattern of her relationships clearly shows neither lack of sexual feeling nor necessarily an emotional problem, but a conflict between marriage and professional/vocational life.

3.4.9 Last part of Sister Dora's life

During Spring 1877 Sister Dora was aware of a loss of physical strength. At that time the hospital had moved to Bridgeman Place, which had twelve beds (Ridsdale, 1880:51), after infection at the Mount had caused its closure with a view to rebuilding. Bridgeman Place temporarily held four patients in an inconvenient building. This also necessitated an increase in home (district) nursing. Sister Dora finally sought medical advice and became aware during 1877 that she was suffering from breast cancer. She refused a mastectomy as it would only have prolonged her life for months or maybe years and was likely to have left her unable to work. Such an operation was, as she knew, highly risky. She continued to work at Bridgeman Place until it closed in June 1878 to prepare for the delayed opening of the newly built hospital at the Mount in November 1878. She had had considerable involvement in the design and equipping of the new hospital. As is shown in the photograph, the building was a clear improvement on the original buildings, perhaps showing the increasing status of the hospital within the town and its ability to attract financial giving.

The *Walsall Observer* of 2 November 1878 described the hospital as being three buildings and an outpatient department. The left wing comprised three female wards (two, eight and four patients) and five male wards (totalling twenty four patients in wards of eight, two, two, four and eight). Each ward had a bathroom, an earth closet, a lavatory and a sink. The larger wards had a nurses' room and a day room. The hospital also had a Sister's room, reception room, surgery, consultation room, nurses' room, a board room, a linen closet, two stairs to the Sister's and nurses' bedrooms and bathroom and beyond a kitchen, scullery, pantry, stores and larder with offices and an Inquest room.

Below the Board Room there was an operating room and splint room. Separately, there was an outpatients' building and a mortuary (Walsall Red Book, 1877).



The new hospital at The Mount when it was completed (Latimer, 1988:33)

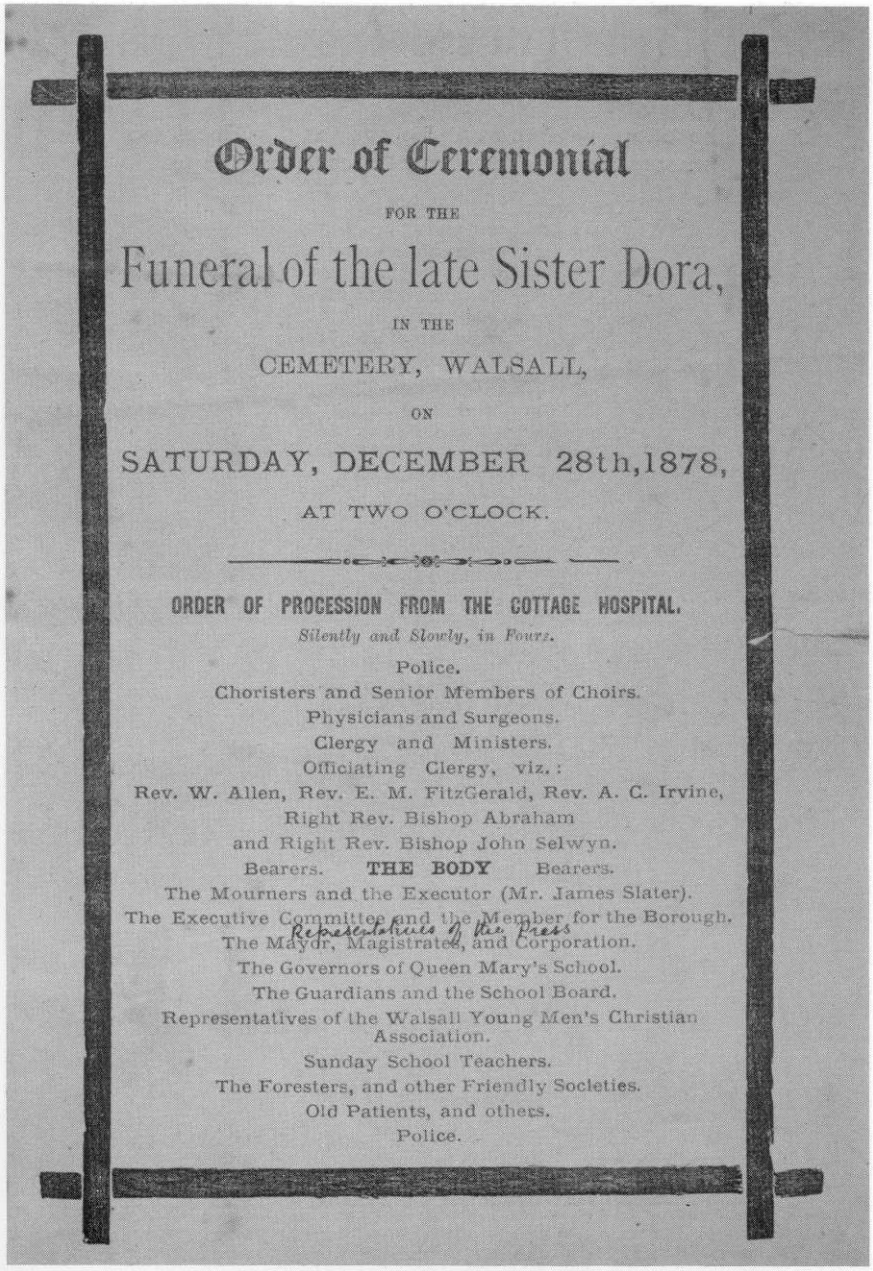
3.5 Death

During the summer of 1878, she went to see Rachel's family, then to her sister Frances at the convent in Middlesbrough. She then went to Paris and to London, for further training particularly with Lister in antisepsis. She returned to Walsall to see the new hospital on 29 October 1878 (the hospital annual report of 1878 referred to this as 31 September 1878) but it was clear the cancer was very advanced. She was unable to conceal this any longer and within two days, the Committee arranged lodgings and nursing for her, at her request, in Walsall.

The hospital was opened on 4 November 1878 on her behalf by the mayor of Walsall, and Sister Ellen (possibly an Associate of the Holy Rood Community), then working at the Talbot Wards in London, was appointed to be responsible for nursing at the hospital. This appointment became permanent on Sister Dora's death and Sister Ellen was also responsible for Sister Dora's terminal care for the last few weeks of her life. She died on Christmas Eve 1878 at 2.00pm.

Sister Dora left careful instructions for her funeral, asking that it should be plain and that her headstone should say only, 'In memory of Sister Dora who entered

into rest on 24 December 1878'. The townspeople added to this plan for the funeral as is shown in the order of procession, which was gathered very rapidly over a four day period after her death.



Order of Ceremonial

FOR THE

Funeral of the late Sister Dora,

IN THE

CEMETERY, WALSALL,

ON

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28th, 1878,

AT TWO O'CLOCK.

ORDER OF PROCESSION FROM THE COTTAGE HOSPITAL.

Silently and Slowly, in Fours.

Police.
Choristers and Senior Members of Choirs.
Physicians and Surgeons.
Clergy and Ministers.
Officiating Clergy, viz.:
Rev. W. Allen, Rev. E. M. FitzGerald, Rev. A. C. Irvine,
Right Rev. Bishop Abraham
and Right Rev. Bishop John Selwyn.
Bearers. **THE BODY** Bearers.
The Mourners and the Executor (Mr. James Slater).
The Executive Committee and the Member for the Borough.
Representatives of the Press
The Mayor, Magistrates, and Corporation.
The Governors of Queen Mary's School.
The Guardians and the School Board.
Representatives of the Walsall Young Men's Christian Association.
Sunday School Teachers.
The Foresters, and other Friendly Societies.
Old Patients, and others.
Police.

Order of ceremonial for the funeral of Sister Dora 28 December 1878

Her funeral was held on 28 December 1878 at 2.00pm with a foot procession including clergy of several denominations and an ecumenical choir. It processed through the streets of Walsall from the house rented for her to the burying ground where a large crowd attended (not as large as expected because it was a Saturday afternoon, according to the *Walsall Observer*), but

only one representative of her family. The body was borne by workmen. At the same time (because the procession was late) there were four pauper funerals waiting. These therefore took place at the same time as Sister Dora's funeral. The following day, sermons were preached in her honour at the Parish Church entitled "A Princess among Nurses". The previous Sunday also a sermon had been preached on her. Her death and funeral were reported in the *Midland Counties Express* of 28 December 1878; the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* of 30 December 1878; the *Walsall Free Press* of 28 December 1878; the *Walsall Observer* of 28 December 1878; the *Church Times* of 3 January 1879 and the *Guardian* of 1 January 1879.

After her death, several views were held as to a memorial, and individual memorials were raised (for example, a stained glass window was made in St Matthew's Church in Walsall). Lonsdale offered some of the profits of her book to pay for a statue, but this was rejected. In the end a statue was erected in 1886 and a fund for convalescence for the poor was established. Florence Nightingale (referred to by the *Evening Express and Star* of 11 October 1886 as her friend, but there appears almost no evidence of this save one letter was invited to unveil the statue but declined by letter of 27 September 1886. 40,000 were present at its unveiling on 11 October 1886.

The death of Sister Dora and her funeral, together with the events after her death, emphasise the extent to which she had been placed on a pedestal and turned into a Madonna.

Sister Dora was seen as a Madonna within Walsall, particularly toward the end of her life and subsequently. Baring Gould (1900:253 footnote) in opposition to Lonsdale (1880:354) referred to the comments of Reverend Edward Fitzgerald who was vicar of St Paul's Walsall during the life of Sister Dora, "No Walsall friend of Sister Dora ever thought that the book [Lonsdale] exaggerated her virtues or her achievements. We found fault because it did her injustice in attributing to her some mean faults of which she was incapable". He exaggerated the negative impact and characteristics of others to exaggerate in turn the virtuous aspects of Sister Dora. For example, he referred to Mark Pattison as a "cold and soured man, wrapped up in himself, he could not

appreciate the overflowing charity and devotion of his sister" (Baring Gould, 1900:354). Her physical beauty was highly regarded: "her beauty was very great ... a fascinating creature to behold" (Baring Gould, 1900:357). He paid tribute also to her intellectual ability – "nor was it ever many moments before she had grasped the whole question" (Baring Gould, 1900:365). Nevertheless, Baring Gould did not regard factual accuracy as supremely important. For example, he referred to Sister Dora as being abroad on the continent when she was in Hauxwell (Baring Gould, 1900:356). Sister Dora appeared to fulfil a stereotype Madonna for Baring Gould and the story is more important than factual accuracy, "Nor was she ever wrong" said Baring Gould (1900:366).

This theme was repeated by the *Walsall Observer* of 20 October 1886 as it quoted *The Standard* of 11 October 1886:

> One of the secrets of her success was that she was essentially feminine in all her instincts ─ not the prim irreproachable and somewhat cold person whom people often picture to themselves when a nurse is mentioned, but a warm hearted, tender, unaffected woman, who was loved ─ as Charles Lamb was said to love his friends ─ not in spite of her faults, but was loved faults and all … Much of her strength lay in this womanly feeling, which was, perhaps, the spring and secret of those contained acts of thoughtfulness that, perhaps, did as much as surgery and physic to restore her patients ….. all the inhabitants of Walsall, indeed, without distinction of class or creed, revered and nearly adored the gentle Sister. She was safe in the worst haunts of crime, to which she would fearlessly go on errands of mercy, for there was not a criminal in all the town who would not uncover his head in her presence. The poorer and ill-educated people invested her with almost Divine attributes, believed that she had the power to work miracles and could hardly be brought to understand that such a calamity as her death had been ordained.

The *Walsall Free Press* of 28 December 1878 said her death had "deprived Walsall of one of its greatest and best benefactors, the sick and wounded of a most skilful nurse, and the poor of a loving and generous friend". She was "a noble example of self-abrogation, patient endurance and cheerful resignation". *The Guardian* of 1 January 1879 wrote,

> All her great gifts, her personal security and strength her charm of manner and personal intercourse, her cultivated mind and brilliant intellect. her wit and humour, but not least her gift of healing, were dedicated to one object: the glory of God and the bringing of her sinful and suffering fellow creatures through her own deep love and sympathy for them to the practical knowledge of the love of God and the love of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Ridsdale (1880:22) recalled that Sister Dora's face was "beautiful with the light of holiness", and Lonsdale (1880:11) referred to her as "a fascinating creature to look upon".

3.6 Summary

The life of Sister Dora demonstrates some interesting areas for consideration. The way she was seen during her lifetime and later reflection upon her life reveals the way in which women like her were viewed by others, and the impact of this will be considered. Her earlier life was unexceptional and her decisions only began to show some unusual choices and attitudes when she became independent. This is demonstrated by her decisions in relation to marriage. However, once she moved to Walsall there began to develop clear strands of decisions and choices in her life. These are shown in the way she related to other people and the extent to which her lifestyle affected those choices and indeed her lifestyle was affected by those choices. An area which will be explored later is the stress this sort of lifestyle placed on these women, which is shown by some of her actions and by some of her health issues. She had a visible dedication to the work she was doing, although something of a lack of an ability to work cooperatively with others, and the whole area of relationships with other people was obviously problematic. Her faith became a clearer matter during this time with some interesting exposition of this in written material about her and by her. This faith was absolutely intrinsic to her work, in contrast to the place of faith in her earlier years, but it is clear that she was not wedded to Anglican doctrine to the exclusion of other flavours, nor was she wholly persuaded by Tractarianism, although she found some of this practice and doctrine attractive. She was a fascinating woman demonstrating a faithful life; a woman who could perhaps be described as an "ordinary apple of God's eye".

4.0 SISTERHOODS: THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF SISTERHOODS IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY – AN ASSESSMENT

The Anglican Sisterhoods which developed in the middle and late nineteenth century were a new phenomenon in the life of the Church of England. However, they drew their inspiration from other institutions' ways of living and ideas and developed those. They also began within a context of the exploration in the Church of England of ways of being in response to the evangelical movement.

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The state of the Church of England during the first half of the nineteenth century

The Church of England had suffered a difficulty during the eighteenth century in determining its direction. There were issues of simony and pluralism and as a result non-residence was a problem. In 1832, over 3,000 clergy had two jobs and 59 had five jobs or more (Brown, 1968:13). The growth of the evangelical movement (intended at least by some of its proponents, such as the Wesleys, to be a force within the Church of England) served to make more visible the difficulties in which the Church of England found itself.

In addition to this, the Industrial Revolution and the various agricultural problems meant that there was a massive shift of the population to the urban areas of the United Kingdom. The parish system of the Church of England was not amenable to change within the timescale of this population movement and this led to an uneven distribution of priests and resources (Brown, 1968:14). The 1861 census clarified this by showing that the rural population was 7,500,000 with 10,398 priests whilst the urban population was 13,500,000 with 2,431 priests (Moore, 1988:262, quoting J.J. Halcombe on church extension from 1874). Thus, two out of three priests were based in rural areas whilst two out of three of the population was based in urban areas. Similarly, the finances of the Church were skewed because endowments were rare in respect of urban churches but more common in respect of rural churches.

Nevertheless, there was a significant impetus to change these problems. There was a large amount of alteration work undertaken with church buildings, often financed by the priests themselves. Dean Hook raised money for 21 churches in Leeds (Brown, 1968:24) and Pusey donated £5,000 to the Metropolitan Churches Fund (Brown, 1968:23). The parish church of St Oswald at Hauxwell was altered by Reverend Mark Pattison (Green, 1977:20). There was also thinking about the means by which the churches could become more attractive to the poor within the urban areas: as an example, Mann in 1853 commented on the 1851 religious census by suggesting that it was important to take religion to the poor and not to expect them to come to the Church (Moore, 1988:324).

Thus the Church of England found itself in difficulties as the nineteenth century unfolded and seemed to be increasingly unable to meet needs. The use of women's labour was an obvious way to do so and particularly so since some of the need fell within the 'female sphere'.

4.1.2 Women

The role of women in the nineteenth century Church was ambivalent, for women as well as men. On the one hand there was the issue of society's expectations of women that they should marry. However, on the other hand there was the issue both of 'redundant women' and of the expectation of (middle and upper class) women to take a certain role – the 'female sphere'.

During the nineteenth century marriage was regarded as the norm for women. Table XXI of the census of 1911 shows that by the age of fifty, 850 women out of every 1000 had been married during the period 1850-1852 (Branca, 1975:53). However, at the same time, men were postponing marriage, for before 1840 the average age of marriage for a member of the clergy was 28.85, but after that date it became 30.44. The same figures for lawyers are 28.24 and 29.54 and for doctors 28.36 and 29.48 (Banks, 1954:32-47 and Branca, 1975:48 quoting Ansell, 1874). When this postponing of marriage by men is added to the issue of 'redundant women' discussed in Chapter 2, clearly this is a significant matter.

Unmarried women over 45

Year	Total number of unmarried women 45+	Unmarried women 45+ as percentage of all women 45+	Total number of middle class women unmarried and 45+
1851	204,650	11.7	30,698
1861	225,183	11.2	33,777
1871	260,404	11.2	39,061
1881	292,147	11.2	43,882
1891	342,072	11.6	51,311
1901	421,549	12.4	63,232

Reproduced from Vicinus, 1985:294

However, unmarried women, especially of the upper and middle classes, were regarded as having a role to fulfil in terms of offering an example of Godly life to the poor and vulnerable, and in terms of care for those people. The position of unmarried women in this area was regarded as important because they would be likely to have more time (Florence Nightingale may have disagreed with this!) and were required to be more self-sacrificing: “and she began to understand that the unmarried woman must not seek … return of affection and must not set her love with exclusive eagerness on aught below” (Yonge, 1888:593).

Women were becoming a real resource within the work of the Church, especially unmarried women, but also in certain areas this was true for married women. The priest’s wife was seen to have a role. There were duties incumbent upon a clergyman’s wife: an anonymous publication in 1832 (reproduced in Moore, 1988:245) stated that “the distinguishing characteristics of the female are tenderness and compassion” fitting her for the role of “visitation of the sick … cottage readings and … Sunday School” for which she “needs to have the Christian virtues of life”. This role of the priest’s wife was one for which women in general were regarded as well fitted to the exclusion of other roles occupied by men. E.J. in her little book ‘Hints to mothers and teachers on the best way of making the Sabbath Day pleasant to children’ (E.J., 1846) offered advice to women who would be involved in child care and teaching of children in the area of religious instruction and nurture. Yonge in her publication of 1876 *On Women and the Church* (reproduced in Moore, 1988:95-7) stated that “woman was created as a help-meet to man” (Genesis

2:18) but this did not necessarily mean to an individual man and therefore the Church may allow a role to the otherwise useless. Thus the issues within the Church of England and the demographic profile of women together with the expectations upon women meant that the use of female labour was likely to be an attractive proposition in several ways.

Yet Florence Nightingale felt that the Church of England 'gave me neither work to do for her nor education for it' (Woodham-Smith, 1950:9).

4.2 History of the inception of sisterhoods

4.2.1 The historical context of sisterhoods

Sisterhoods were not a traditional part of the Church of England. There were, of course, Roman Catholic sisterhoods and during the nineteenth century these began to be established in the United Kingdom. However, most of these were Branch Houses from Orders based in continental Europe (McAdam, 1999:417).

Nevertheless, there had been some consideration of the establishment of sisterhoods or institutes of deaconesses since the Reformation. Luther had expressed himself opposed to monastic orders (Luther, 1521) and had expressed the belief that monastic vows were:

1. Contrary to the word of God and scriptural support
2. Contrary to faith as they were held to be sources of sanctification
3. Contrary to evangelical liberty which should be bound by conscience
4. Contrary to the commands of God because they could support the existence of 'counsels' in addition to the Commandments
5. Contrary to reason because of their unreasonability (Luther, 1521)

Calvin, too, opposed monasticism because he felt that those involved considered themselves to be an elite, although this concept had been reviewed. As an example, in 1734 the non-juring bishops of Scotland had wanted to revive the concept of deaconesses and develop this as an Order for service (Fliedner Archiv). There were in fact some groups of women living a communal life of service for others during the nineteenth century. An example of this was the Royal Hospital of St Katherine, founded in 1147 in Regent's Park for the maintenance of 13 poor people and staffed by three Sisters (with others also) (described in Williams and Campbell, 1965:3).

4.2.2 The importance of the Oxford Movement

The Oxford Movement began with the Tractarians in the early part of the nineteenth century based in Oxford. This period from the end of the eighteenth century was regarded by some as a poor part of Anglican history (Pattison, 1862:236). Mark Pattison (the brother of Sister Dora) saw the period 1714-1750 as the "dark ages" and wrote that "the oblivion into which the remains of Christian antiquity had sunk until disinterred by the Tractarian movement, is well known" (Temple, 1862:315). This is probably a fairly disinterested comment as it was written after he ceased to be a member of the Oxford Movement and had become a significant part of the Broad Church Movement. The Oxford Movement became particularly visible with the publication by Newman of 'Tracts for the Times' beginning in 1833, although there had been indications prior to this of the beginnings of the movement and its thinking. Keble in 'The Christian Year' emphasised the importance of the sacramental system and sacraments as the effectual means of grace (Keble, 1827:b,c). John Henry Newman in fact resigned his benefice in 1843 and in 1845 converted to Roman Catholicism, to which he was followed by a number of other men including Frederick William Faber (whose hymns appealed so much to Sister Dora and who founded the London Oratory in 1849). After this, there was a view that "The Oxford Movement having lost its greatest intellect carried on under lesser leaders increasingly preoccupied with questions of ritual" (Moore, 1988:9). Chadwick (Chadwick, 1990:46) indicated that in his view adorning the Church became a feature of the movement when the leadership of the movement transferred from the intellectual to the pastoral.

4.2.2.1 The doctrinal basis of the Oxford Movement

The Oxford Movement emphasised the importance of the sacraments and apostolic descent. This was of course during a period when the Church of England was concerned about the foundation of its doctrine (examples of this are found in the Gorham case heard in the Privy Council on 5 March 1850, in which Gorham as a Priest said that baptism was not sacramentally effective without an accompanying declaration of faith in the baptised, and in Maurice's denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment in *Theological Essays,* 1853 which caused him to be removed from his post at King's College London)

Liddon in his life of Pusey described Puseyism (Liddon, 1861, vol.1: 345) as

1. High thoughts of the two sacraments
2. High estimate of episcopacy as God's ordinance
3. High estimate of the visible Church as the body wherein are made and continue to be members of Christ
4. Regard for ordinances as directing our devotions and disciplining us such as daily public prayers, fasts and feasts, etc.
5. Regard for the visible part of devotion such as the decoration of the House of God which acts insensibly upon the mind
6. Reverence for a deference to the ancient Church of which our own Church is looked upon as the representative to us and by us

4.2.2.2 Development of sisterhoods in Oxford Movement thinking

The Oxford movement revived interest in both community and celibacy in respect of both women and men. This concept was being developed by several people. J.M. Neale in 1843 in his novel *On Ayton Priory or the Restored Monastery* (referred to in Allchin, 1958:126) postulated children attending a priory school and in his preface (Neale, 1843:vi-vii) expanded the benefits of intercessory prayer constantly being made. He also referred to the benefits of a body of men well educated theologically and involved in the training of ordinands and holding of retreats, taking vows of up to five years.

Newman (1864:29) believed the clergy are in direct succession from the apostles and are priestly mediators between God and humanity. Thus women in sisterhoods would free priests for their true role. Newman took the view that the holy Church is a symbol of heavenly realities in her sacraments and her hierarchical appointments and sisterhoods form part of the symbol of heavenly realities by their place in the hierarchy.

The development of the concept of sisterhoods was a live issue amongst the leaders of the Oxford Movement. Thomas Robert Southey referred favourably to a revival of sisters of charity as sisters working amongst the poor. In 1829 in Colloquy XII he referred to the position of women in society "respectably born, carefully educated and left ill provided for or unprovided" and considered religious communities would deal with this issue. He questioned why there were no beguines or sisters of charity since they were so needed for hospitals and other nursing. However, he expected this issue to be taken up by the Society of Friends (referred to in Allchin, 1958:323). Southey wanted to emphasise that in his view "there is nothing Romish .. nothing but what is

righteous and holy" in the institution of sisterhoods (Allchin, 1958:330). Thus the view of community living for women was not regarded particularly denominationally or particularly theologically to be part of the Anglican Church and not all of its advocates regarded this as based on a life of worship.

Keble in his Assize sermon of 1833 advocated the development of sisterhood (referred to in Williams and Campbell, 1965:1). A letter from Pusey to Keble of 18 December 1839 included this: "N[ewman] and I have separately come to think it necessary to have some *soeurs de charité* in the Anglo-Catholic [Church] … My notion was that it might begin by regular employment as nurses in hospitals and lunatic asylums in which last Christian nursing is so sadly missed" (quoted in Anson, 1964:222). He made a similar reference in a letter to Hook at the same time extending the work of such women also to female prisoners (Williams and Campbell, 1965:3). Pusey wrote to Hook in December 1839 "I think them desirable (1) in themselves as belonging to and fostering a high tone in the Church (2) as giving a holy employment to many who yearn for something (3) as directing a call" (quoted in Anson, 1964:222). Hook took the view that sisters should wear distinctive dress, but not sufficient to subject them to remark (Anson, 1964:227).

The first woman who was seen to put herself aside for God in the beginnings of the development of sisterhood was Marion Rebecca Hughes, who later founded the Sisterhood of the Holy and Undivided Trinity in 1849 and who took a vow of celibacy at Oxford on Trinity Sunday 16 June 1841 (referred to in Williams and Campbell, 1965:2). However, Pusey's young daughter Lucy had previously had in mind to set herself aside for the service of God. Unfortunately, she died at the age of 13.

This consideration of sisterhoods was likely to prove productive, for the Oxford Movement was disproportionately attractive to women and it is clear the Oxford Movement churches had a high level of female adherence. The *Daily News* 1881 religious census shows, for example, that St Barnabas Pimlico (an Oxford Movement congregation) had a 75% female congregation whereas the general Anglican congregation in Pimlico was 66% female and the Wesleyan congregation was 58% female (quoted in Reed, 1998:216).

4.2.3 The Evangelical route

At the time the Oxford Movement was developing and gaining ground, the Evangelical Movement had been developing for about sixty years. It had drawn on continental Protestantism, but the matters relating to the distinctive ministry of women had not come to the fore in its thinking. There were instances of women beginning particular ministries, but these were not generic. A particular example of this is the preaching ministry of women in the Primitive Methodist Connexion during the early years of the nineteenth century.

However, a major influence in the ministry of women in both the Evangelical Movement and in the Oxford Movement was the work at Kaiserswerth. Theodor Fliedner was the Lutheran Minister of Kaiserswerth from 1821 until his death. He developed an asylum for former female prisoners which grew to encompass a hospital and school and the Institute of Deaconesses. The deaconesses were trained for two years as probationer sisters before they became full deaconesses. Some trained as nurses and some as teachers whilst some became parish deaconesses. Fliedner himself was the financial director of the Institute and became the founder and secretary of the Rhenish and Westfalian Prison Society and the Secretary of the Rhenish-Westfalian Society for the Education and Employment of Protestant Deaconesses. He also developed a number of books which he wrote and published, including hymn books and a picture Bible for infants. (Sticker, 1972 is a short pamphlet describing the development of the Deaconess Institute at Kaiserswerth). This clearly became a very large community as can be seen from the size of the mother church illustrated below.



The Deaconesses' Church at Kaiserswerth (2004)

The impact of this work on the United Kingdom was twofold: firstly that the English people were encouraged to consider that communities of women working together professionally in faith were not necessarily a uniquely Roman Catholic concept, and that a community incorporating the features of a Roman Catholic sisterhood could be envisaged and put into operation within a Protestant context, without this community being a sisterhood. Secondly, he publicised the training available to women from England in the deaconess institute at Kaiserswerth and encouraged women to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by such training to further their vocations.

Fliedner was an effective publicist for the work at Kaiserswerth. He made a number of journeys to the United Kingdom for the purposes of raising funds for his work. Kaiserswerth itself was a poor area apparently having only a failed silk mill, and the work, which was very great, required more money than the district could support. During these trips, he undertook many visits and speaking engagements and engaged in large amounts of correspondence. His Collections Book held at the Fliedner Archive at Kaiserswerth refers to some of that correspondence. An example of this is a letter from Agnes Mills to Mrs Andrews of 4 Devonshire Square, Bishopgate Street in 1853, in which she wrote "Will you allow Mr Fliedner to see your institution and give him any information about your rules and the nurses? He is at the head of the great

German institution for deaconesses at Kaiserswerth". This publicity and correspondence removed the sense in Britain that communities of women undertaking work was necessarily a Roman Catholic idea. However, it also allowed a repudiation of sisterhoods within the Church of England, whilst providing an alternative way of using female labour respectably and ensuring necessary social welfare work was undertaken. Fliedner emphasised this when he called for the founding of deaconess institutes in the United Kingdom. His Collections Book held at the Fliedner Archiv included a call to the Church of Scotland in 1853 to found an institute of deaconesses. In 1878 an address was given by him (which is in the Collections Book held at the Fliedner Archiv in Kaiserswerth) in which he called for "institutions for the extension of His kingdom and for spreading more Bible knowledge amongst the poor and sick," in which the women would be called deaconesses "because they may go in the footsteps of the deacons of the apostolic church". He himself sent four Kaiserswerth deaconesses to staff the German Hospital at Dalston London in 1846 (Wessel, 2002:188).

The second impact of Fliedner's work in the United Kingdom was to emphasise that, whilst training in Kaiserswerth was open to those who were accepted as Probationer deaconesses, it was also available to those who wanted some experience of this sort of life or who intended to nurse or teach in another institution. A significant number of British women, including Agnes Jones, Elizabeth Ferard and Florence Nightingale, received some level of training at Kaiserswerth. The visitors' book for Kaiserswerth (held at the Fliedner Archiv in Kaiserswerth) gives the following numbers of women by nationality for the period 1851-1870:

English	24
German	77
Russian	2
Dutch	3
Swedish	1
Luxembourgian	1
Scottish	2

Almost all the Englishwomen came from London or the South of England, with the exception of Miss Mary Jacques, who was to be instrumental in founding the sisterhood at Coatham, of which Sister Dora became a member.

Interestingly, there were a number of women who became part of a sisterhood who had initially been attracted into this sort of work through the knowledge of the Kaiserswerth deaconesses. This raises issues in relation to the theological considerations and the extent to which these women considered Anglo-Catholic thinking to be central to what they were doing in their work. The theology of these women will be explored later in Chapter six.

4.3 Development of communities and structures

4.3.1 The foundation of sisterhoods

The origin of most sisterhoods is found in the commitment of one or two women and a charismatic priest, although not all sisterhoods were co-founded. The Sisters of Bethany was not co-founded (Mumm, 1999:153) nor was the Sisters of the Church. It was generally considered, however, that a priest was useful to deflect criticism. (Mumm, 1999:153). This could not have been universally effective since some of the founding priests had a poor reputation. For example, John Mason Neale was already inhibited (a disciplinary reduction of the rights of a priest imposed by the bishop) when he founded the East Grinstead sisters. It was also the case that not all communities were founded with the intention of creating sisterhoods. In other words, there was not necessarily a clear vision or intention at the commencement of some of these communities. Father Herbert was the father founder of the Community of the Mission Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus (initially St Peter's Mission Sisterhood). Father Herbert did not intend to create a community, but rather a group of dedicated women to work in the parish and observe a rule of life (The Community of the Mission Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus, 1950:11).

The priest would often make a financial input to the sisterhood. For example, the Coatham Sisterhood was founded by Theresa Newcomen, who endowed Christ Church and appointed Reverend Adam Clarke (Sister Jean, 1981:2). Subsequently Father Postlethwaite was appointed to the living and he paid a sum of £4,100 toward the buildings. (Mss 3917 LPL Holy Rood Archive) Further donations by Father Postlethwaite are referred to in the Annual Hospital Reports of both North Ormesby and Walsall.

The relationship between the Mother Foundress and the priest differed, probably inevitably in view of the strong characters involved in founding these communities. At Coatham, Father Postlethwaite disagreed with the Mother Foundress Theresa Newcomen, but she forced his hand (Sister Jean, 1981:21,24,31). This relationship could also depend on the nature of the priest. For example, John Mason Neale, the founder of the East Grinstead Sisters, believed it was better that the sisters managed the institution (Lawson, 1910:323).

Once the concept of sisterhoods was established and in the situation in which a woman wished to found a sisterhood, it became possible for a novitiate to be served with an established sisterhood or deaconess institute and upon profession to leave that sisterhood for the purpose of establishing a new sisterhood. This occurred in relation to the Sisters of Bethany (Mumm, 2001:22) and in relation to Elizabeth Ferard, who founded the North London Deaconess Institute at 50 Burton Crescent (which became the London Diocesan Deaconess Institute and later the Community of St Andrew). Elizabeth Ferard trained at Kaiserswerth for a period prior to 13 August 1856 until 28 August 1856 and conducted a correspondence with Theodor and Fredericke Fliedner upon organisational matters thereafter (Letters in the Fliedner Archiv at Kaiserswerth), as did others with whom she was in communication, for example, the letter of Caroline E Stephen to Theodor Fliedner dated 27 October 1868 asking for a copy of the *hausordnung* to discuss with Elizabeth Ferard and Florence Nightingale and a letter from Mrs Cay of the Coldstream Guard Hospital dated 14 March 1878 to Frau Fliedner, asking for a copy of the rules of the institution for sick nursing and a request for the rules of the deaconess institute. (Both of these are held at the Fliedner Archiv Kaiserswerth). Thereafter, Elizabeth Ferard spent some time working with the Sisters of the All Hallows Community in Ditchingham, Norfolk. This again questions the theological issues for these women, for the deaconess institutes are markedly different in their theological origin from the sisterhoods.

4.3.2 Mother House

The mother house became an important concept for sisterhoods. It was to be regarded not “as a super mission house but as the centre of inspiration where

all were received and trained and professed and mostly returned and died" (The Community of the Mission Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus, 1950:41). This view followed the development of the concept by Theodor Fliedner at Kaiserswerth of a motherhouse for refreshment and for retirement, if the women are working there "it is our duty as parents to provide for these good sisters" (Collections Book of Theodor Fliedner held at the Fliedner Archiv Kaiserswerth).

4.3.3 Structure and hierarchy of communities

The structure of the communities as they developed was varied. The communities all started from small beginnings. Park Village Sisterhood, the first community, had three members initially, as did the community of St John the Baptist. Some of the communities, such as the All Saints sisters, the Sisters of the Church and the Community of St John the Baptist grew rapidly. Others, such as the Coatham sisterhood, remained small. A small sisterhood tended to have a shorter hierarchy than a larger sisterhood and its structure was often less stable.

The membership of sisterhoods tended to be unstable. Women were encouraged to put their families first and therefore if a family member required assistance, a sister would leave or take unplanned leave of absence to deal with this (Mumm, 2001:69). Furthermore, sisters would become married on occasion: for example, one of the sisters, Sister Isabel, married Father Postlethwaite (Manton, 1971:179). Sisterhoods were also discouraged by the bishops from taking vows and certainly from taking life vows and it may be that this exacerbated the instability of the sisterhoods. The Coatham Sisterhood did not take life vows until 1875 (Holy Rood Archive, Lambeth Palace Library).

Most communities operated with two orders: choir sisters and lay sisters. The Community of St Mary the Virgin at Wantage was an exception to this in that it had a single order (Mumm, 1999:8). Lay sisters were generally a small minority in the community comprising less than 10% on average (Mumm, 1999:46). It was usual for a woman to enter the community initially as a visitor for six weeks and then to become a postulant for up to six months. She would then be clothed within a service of worship and become a novice for up to two years. Thereafter she would be professed. The hierarchy of the communities

developed. It was common for the Mother Foundress to be a lifelong office, although some retired. However, thereafter, the office of Mother and other offices were generally subject to triennial election.

4.3.4 Development of communities

Many of the communities commenced work in different centres. The All Saints sisters and the Mission Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus opened a large number of branch houses or other facilities such as hospitals and schools. The sisters were moved from one task to another and indeed this was an issue when the sisterhoods took over nursing and hospital management. It had previously been the case that the nurse in charge of a ward remained on that ward throughout her career whereas the sisterhood nursing model moved the nurses throughout their training and then moved them after training to different tasks (Goodman, 1862:229). Some sisterhoods also became involved in Parish work where they would work in twos generally. The All Saints sisters had a number of centres of work and as part of their work they had a base in Bradford for a short number of years. There was therefore an inherent instability in the communities, since sisters moved from one area to another, some sisters leaving and work opened up and closed down. In Bradford, the parish priest changed and the All Saints sisters' work ended partly as a result of this. This movement of sisters was perceived as a virtue, because it reduced the risk of sisters developing earthly relationships, rather than focussing on the heavenly. This model of itinerancy was relatively common in the church at this time and was of course institutionalised by the Methodist Connexions, where it remains a feature of ordained ministry, for other theological reasons. As in Methodism, this is likely to have had the result of reducing the ability of the organisation to act strategically or to plan for the future in any realistic way.

4.3.5 Buildings and use of resources

Many of the buildings erected by the sisterhoods were on a grand scale, and as is shown by Clewer, in advance of their financial ability to deal with this. The illustration of the Clewer buildings below shows a grand set of buildings, but Clewer (1992) related that the committee of men managing the finances was not prepared to pay for this because the Order could not afford to do so, but the Mother, Harriet Monsell, decided to fund this herself. This begs the question of

payment for continuing running costs of such a large set of buildings. In conjunction with this, several of the sisterhoods opened branch houses, thus further stretching financial and human resources.

4.3.5.1 Buildings as a statement of mission

The illustrations of two of the sisterhood main buildings below show that the buildings are clearly demonstrating a point visually. Part of the point is the visual perception of the practice of faith. However, since the sisterhoods are clearly incarnational, it is slightly odd that these buildings demonstrate something of transcendence and distance rather than connectedness. This sense of majesty in building links with the Oxford Movement wished to show the glory of God in every way. Many of these buildings were designed by architects such as Pugin who was deeply committed to a style of buildings that portrayed a sensory approach to religion – grand buildings for grand worship experiences (Moore, 1988:80).



Sisters of the Holy Name, Malvern Link

4.3.5.2 Projects and Branch Houses

In addition to this grand building style, many of the sisterhoods opened a number of projects and branch houses. The All Saints sisters undertook the following (assimilated from Mumm, 2001; Ackroyd, s.a.; and Allchin, 1958, various):

Mission Houses
1865-1950 St Peter's Vauxhall
1875-1877 St Andrew's Wolverhampton

1877-1911 St James Wednesbury
1888 - ? St Alban's Birmingham
1889-1894 St Paul's Walden Hertfordshire

Branch Houses
1879 – Home of the Good Shepherd Malvern Link
1880-1933 Worcester Diocesan refuge
1890-1896 Home for Incurables Plaistow Dorset
1891-1889 Girls orphanage Malvern Link

There were also brief operations in various places such as the branch house opened in 1873 in Bradford until 1886 when a change of incumbent meant they were unable to continue their work.

4.3.5.3 Implications of work undertaken

The financial requirements for such operations were large. For example, the Mildmay deaconesses operated a hospital, an orphanage, a servants' home and registry, a home for invalid ladies, an institute for girls and a convalescent home, which together required £2400 annually to service. In addition to this in terms of human resources, these deaconesses were also managing hospitals such as Doncaster Infirmary. (M.F.G., 1883:3). This sort of operation was at the edge of available resources and meant that there could be a rapid turnover of work. Work would commence and cease for various reasons, as occurred with the All Saints sisters' work in Bradford, and work could be passed to other sisterhoods to continue. An example of this is the community of St Thomas Martyr which was assimilated into the All Saints sisterhood together with all the work they were undertaking. Another example was the buildings financed by Clarissa Powell for the Park Village Sisterhood in 1850, which passed to a Mr Palmer in 1877, who ran them as a cancer hospital dedicated to his wife, who subsequently died of cancer. Thereafter, it passed to the All Saints sisters and then to the Sisters of the Epiphany and to the Community of the Presentation before it was demolished in 1964 for the Euston Road underpass (Williams and Campbell, 1965:86). This transfer of buildings continued throughout the history of the sisterhoods; an example being the transfer of the Mildmay building to become the Diocesan Deaconess House for London in 1923 (fund raising leaflet for Diocesan deaconess house held at Fliedner Archiv). Some of the work was also taken over by other organisations. The Bradford Children's Hospital was founded by the All Saints sisters in 1883, but during that year the citizens of Bradford decided it should have a broader base and it was taken

over by a committee headed by the Mayor. When it was rebuilt in 1888, the finance was provided by Mr Cunliffe Lister to the extent of £5000 as private philanthropy, although by 1900 it had a debt of £2000.(Hamilton, 1968). It should not be forgotten that much work was undertaken by other bodies than sisterhoods or other religiously bound organisations. So the Manchester Children's Hospital, although it utilised sisterhood training of nurses, was not a sisterhood or a religious establishment. Similarly, those organisations which contracted with sisterhoods to provide nursing and management (and this included many of the London and provincial hospitals) were not sisterhoods or religious organisations. Furthermore, not all sisterhood work was instigated by them. There have been a number of established hospitals which contracted with the sisterhoods to provide nursing and management, as indeed did the Walsall Cottage Hospital.

4.3.5.4 Other work

Of course some of the work undertaken by sisterhoods did not require these large resources and many sisterhoods undertook a significant amount of parish work, which involved one or two sisters, at the instigation of the priest. For example, the All Saints sisterhood commenced their work in Bradford at the invitation of Mr Redhead, the first priest in charge of St Mary Magdalene, which opened in 1871 as a mission house of St Jude's, with a large National School which had been erected in 1843 and became a parish in its own right at the opening of the church in 1878. This work also passed between sisterhoods on occasions. The All Saints sisters were only approached by Mr Redhead after the East Grinstead sisters had declined to become involved (Ackroyd, s.a.:32-35).

4.3.5.5 Summary

The use of resources by sisterhoods often seemed to outstrip their financial or personnel resources and this in turn led to a rapid turnover of work which increased the instability of planning for sisterhoods.

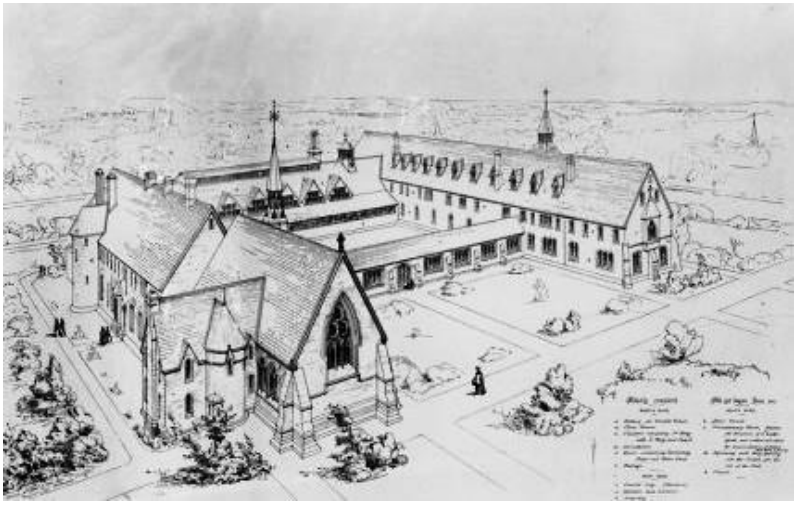
4.3.6 Financial management of communities

The management (and therefore the financial management) of sisterhoods was markedly different from the management of deaconess institutes. Deaconess

institutes were formed with the blessing of the bishop of the diocese and under his authority, the women being “set apart by a Bishop under that title for service in the Church” (Mother Clare, 1952:4) whereas sisterhoods were founded upon the decision of individuals and independently of diocesan hierarchy or structure. Indeed Pusey argued for the independence of sisters from parochial clergy because he denied the clergy had “any right to interference or check or wish to control any work which religious women wish to set about in their parish” (Gill in Mews (ed), 1993:157, quoting from G.W.E. Russell writing in 1917). This rather extreme view is at odds with the prospectuses of some of the sisterhoods which advertised that sisters undertook parish work “under the direction of the parish clergy” (Coatham Sisterhood from a notice published in the *Middlesbrough Weekly News and Cleveland Advertiser* 15 November 1867) and indeed it is clear that without the goodwill of the parish clergy it is unlikely that sisterhood work could be sustained, as is shown by the fact that the change of clergy in Bradford caused the All Saints sisters to withdraw.

The financial management of sisterhoods was often separated, with some areas of management being held in the community and others by external committee (which was normally male). The division of these responsibilities varied between communities (Mumm, 1999:85). Such management varied in its competence and the St John the Divine sisters lost a considerable amount of money when they withdrew from the provision of nursing at King’s College Hospital because they had failed to separate funds appropriately.

However, there was a level of creativity in the provision of funding. Harriet Mansell, as foundress of the Sisters of the Community of St John the Baptist, in Clewer, was engaged in an ambitious building programme, as is shown by the drawing of the buildings below. Her committee declined to fund this to completion and she provided her own money for this purpose.



The Clewer House of Mercy 1855-1858
Bonham, 1992:146

Similarly donations could be made by sisters to particular projects, and in 1853 Clarissa Powell of the Park Village Sisterhood purchased the lease of land on Osnaburgh Street London where she built a home for 14 sisters, 40 orphan girls and 15 servants 'out of place'. The lease cost £2600 together with a rent of £100 per year. The building was designed by William Butterfield (a favourite Oxford Movement architect along with Pugin) and Clarissa Powell gave a further £2900 toward the building work (Williams and Campbell, 1965:73).

Specific funding was also used. William Butterfield, the architect, would on occasion donate his services, as he did for the chapel of St Dunstan of the Devonport sisters (Williams and Campbell, 1965:73). Funding would be sought for specific projects, such as building projects, and for specific purposes such as sponsoring a bed in a hospital (Barnes, 1999:49).

General funding was of two different varieties. Sisters were expected to make contributions both on entry to the community and on a regular basis, if they were choir sisters. In some communities this was a particular minimum sum, but this was clearly open to variation. Sister Dora was unable to make the appropriate contribution to her sisterhood and it was waived by the Mother Foundress, Theresa Newcomen (Manton, 1971:154). In some communities this was a very significant part of their income (Mumm, 1999:82). However, this form of funding had the adverse effect that upon leaving the order, a sister would take her contribution with her and this had a destabilising effect on the

communities and their development. Planning for expansion was rendered more difficult if finance and personnel were unpredictable. The remaining part of income was that derived from voluntary funding. This took various forms. A considerable amount of funding in the form of donations in kind or of services was received and the accounts of the hospital annual reports outlined these. Funding would also be sought for normal running costs of the order and its work. This fund-raising would take the form of occasions such as bazaars or regular giving such as Hospital Sunday. For example, the *London Mirror* of 11 October 1873 reported that the German Hospital Dalston had received £278-10/- from the Metropolitan Hospital Sunday Fund (records of the German Hospital Dalston held at the Fliedner Archiv Kaiserswerth). Within this category, there would also be payment for services to the sisterhoods. For example, many sisterhoods did not offer nursing to the destitute, but to the working poor. This was because it was considered that workhouse nursing was offered to the destitute and the quality of this nursing rose because of the input of sisterhoods and other women (which is shown in Jones, 1871 as the work of Agnes Jones led to a requirement for qualified nursing in workhouses, and in Mumm, 2001, in the work of the All Saints sisters in the Chorlton Union workhouse). Thus there was a charge for nursing, which was levied either by the use of regular contributions, sponsorship or direct billing. In the German Hospital Dalston (run by the Kaiserswerth Deaconesses), the charge was in the order of 2/- per week, but this altered depending on whether the patient was a man, a woman or a child (Records of The German Hospital Dalston held at Fliedner Archiv, Kaiserswerth) and whether a single room was occupied (Wessel, 2002:190). The London Diocesan Deaconess Institute offered “to afford a refuge to the better class sick poor in their last hours” at a cost of 7/- per week, beginning in 1862 (Mother Clare, 1952:2). Some sisterhoods also offered training to ‘lady probationers’ whom they charged. Within some sisterhoods, such as the Coatham sisterhood, in addition to this training, the sisters were hired out for guinea nursing – that is to say, they undertook private nursing for a guinea a week. Sister Dora undertook this on one occasion (Manton, 1971:173) and found it most distasteful. She considered it was not what her calling was about, nor what she wished to do with her life. However, such sources of income were necessary for some of the sisterhoods to maintain their core work.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the sisterhoods developed diverse methods of encouraging income. The sisters were drawn from women who were used to raising money for causes and were used to managing finances within households. Nevertheless, the unstable and short term nature of much of the income must have produced an effect in terms of the development of the sisterhoods and must have reduced their ability to manage long term aims and projects, as did the unstable nature of their membership. The relationship of this instability to faith and its outworking will be considered in Chapter 6.

4.4 Lifestyle and Vows

4.4.1 Rules and Constitution

Most sisterhoods developed a constitution early in their development. Several of these were adopted from the constitution of the French Visitation sisters or the Augustinian sisters and most of the rules were initially written by men. The Park Village Sisterhood Rule was written by Pusey and adapted from the Augustinian and the Visitation sisters founded by Francis de Sales (Williams and Campbell, 1965:130). The East Grinstead Sisters' Rule was adapted by John Mason Neale from that of the Visitation sisters (Hutchings, 1903:102). The extent to which the Rule or Constitution was a dynamic instrument can be seen from the progress of the Rule at the Coatham Sisterhood. An early Rule which is undated, but probably written in 1870, is available in the Holy Rood Archive (mss 3917 LPL). A further lengthy document incorporating the Rules and Constitutions is dated 1875 and entitled 'Rules of the Sisters of Charity of the Holy Rood as re-established on the Feast of the Epiphany 1875 at the Cottage Hospital North Ormesby Middlesbrough' (mss 3919 LPL) and more specific rules are also available, together with documents such as Minute Books relating to the events at Chapter (mss 3936 LPL Chapter Minutes 1872 to 1934) which add to the rules, an example of this is the Rules for lay or serving sisters which is undated but probably written in the 1870s (mss 3922 LPL).

These Rules also developed in accordance with need, as an example of this the issue of vacations was often missing from the original Rules but later added. Vacations were usually for a month and sisters would be expected to spend this time with their family and to continue to behave and dress as a sister. However, some communities only allowed such visits every third year (Jones, 1871:136).

A further example of such development is seen in the issue of cash and provisions for sisters. Most sisterhoods and deaconess orders seem to have given the sisters money to spend on underwear and shoes, at least after a period of time in the community (an example of this is the Evangelical Protestant Deaconess Institute who provided seven guineas each year to the deaconess for the purchase of outerwear, boots and underwear after her probation which was a minimum of one year (Watkin,1967:7).

4.4.2 Habits

The matter of the habits to be worn was usually developed very early. This is unsurprising in view of the fact that the habit was the visible face of the order and was a controversial issue. The habits adopted by sisterhoods varied. However, they had common intentions. They were intended to instil a sense of belonging in the women and were intended to identify the woman as a member of a sisterhood to the wider community. The habits were intended to make a statement about the position of the women. For example, the habits of the deaconesses at Kaiserswerth were a brown dress and brown apron with a white tied bonnet. The nursing uniform was a blue dress. This habit was the clothing habitually worn by married women in the Lower Rhine (Collections Book of Theodor Fliedner held at the Fliedner Archiv, Kaiserswerth). A very similar habit was adopted by the London Diocesan Deaconess Institute at the behest of Elizabeth Ferard, being a blue gown with brown bonnet. It seems likely she adopted this habit as a form of allying herself with the deaconess institute at Kaiserswerth.

In most communities the habit also had an internal function as an indication of status or function in itself. Choir sisters would wear a particular habit, lay sisters another, novices another and associate sisters another habit, so in the Devonport Sisterhood, the choir sisters wore a black habit with a white veil, the lay sisters wore a brown habit with a black veil and the associate sisters wore a blue habit (Williams and Campbell, 1965:121). In some communities whose functions varied, such as Ascot Priory, the habit denoted the part played by the sister, so that sisters in the active work wore one habit and contemplative sisters wore a different habit.

It was usual for the habit to be sober in colour and design, with no features of transitory fashion. Many sisterhoods chose black, but the East Grinstead Sisters chose grey because they considered black would frighten the children and their major work was domiciliary nursing. (Lawson, 1910:336) Some sisterhoods however chose more vivid colours or styles and one sisterhood, the Order of the Visitation had a turquoise habit (Mumm, 1999:76) whilst the Mission sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus had habits with angel sleeves (The Community of the Mission Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus, 1950). The choice of sober habit was in keeping with the custom across the denominations when a woman dedicated herself to working for the Church. A contemporary work notes that pastoral visitors were to wear “a close bonnet, black preferable, a black cloak and plain black dress made to clear the ground with no trimming” (Anon, 1890:54-5). Similarly Mart Dornell is noted in her obituary to have changed her dress to a plainer style on her conversion to Wesleyanism in 1827 (Wilson, 2000:266)

The habit was also intended to dispel vanity (Mother Millicent’s habit was chosen by Father Pritchard deliberately to be an agent of mortification, and Ridsdale describes how Sisters of Mercy “made themselves hideous frights in their bibs and bands across their forehead” (Ridsdale, 1870:6). However, it is notable that many habits bore small examples of vanity. The Park Village Sisterhood in 1848 had a plain black dress with a little white at the neck (Williams and Campbell, 1965:38) and Sister Dora rejoiced in the fact that the apron of her habit showed off her waist (Manton, 1971:158). This deliberate sobriety of style and colour bears an interesting contrast to the movement towards colour in worship within the Oxford Movement, such as the vestments of priests which can still gloriously be seen at St Paul’s Buttershaw in Bradford. This issue of the deliberate removal of beauty from the dress of these women even to the extent of attempting to remove the women’s own beauty will be considered in Chapter 6 as an issue for the ministry of women as it developed in the nineteenth century.

4.4.3 Vows

The sisterhoods had a level of ambivalence about vows, many believing the vows formed the natural expression of religious life for them (as R.M. Benson suggested, quoted at Hanbury-Tracy and Carter, 1900:166). The bishops were adamantly opposed to perpetual vows, whereas many of the sisters themselves wished to make their vows lifelong (Gill in Mews, 1993:155). There was often a dissonance between the bishops and the sisterhoods as a result of this disagreement, the sisters themselves believing that their vows expressed their commitment, whereas the bishops considered that this set the sisterhoods against the sisters' primary loyalty to their family of origin. Within the community of St John the Baptist, the members were very keen to take lifelong vows, but Bishop Wilberforce would not countenance it (Hutchings, 1903:104, quoted from a letter from Carter "they doubt if thought worthy to be a sister at all it must be for life. They have taught it me, not I them"). Some sisterhoods took no vows at all although generally sisterhoods took periodic vows for up to five years at a time, or made simple promises of obedience to the Pastor and the Mother Foundress, as did the Coatham Sisterhood (Sister Jean, 1981:2). The Park Village Sisterhood took no vows at all but countenanced privately that sisters may make lifelong vows in their own hearts (Williams and Campbell, 1965:64) although the first two sisters professed by Pusey at the Park Village Sisterhood made a formal professions of vows (Williams and Campbell, 1965:64).

However, through the development of sisterhoods during the nineteenth century, vows became increasingly common. By 1869 three out of four of the sisters of the Coatham Sisterhood wanted to take perpetual vows and did so before Father Grafton of the Society of St John the Evangelist in Oxford in 1871 (Sister Jean, 1981:3). The sisters of the Society of St John the Baptist and the sisters of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage took perpetual vows in 1891 (Hutchings, 1903:83). Nevertheless, this remained an area of dispute between the sisterhoods and the bishops. Interestingly, although the sisterhoods were not under the control of the bishops, and indeed resisted such control in many areas, within this area they seemed to have accepted the decision of the bishops. This may be because vows needed to be taken before a priest and a

priest who was willing to disobey his bishop fundamentally would be difficult to find.

4.4.4 Worship and its role

Most sisterhoods had a clear timetable for the day including significant episodes of worship. However, most sisterhoods also took the view that worship came second to work and if it was not reasonable to attend worship because of the demands of the work, that was acceptable. The Coatham sisters took the view that sisters could absent themselves from offices "which would interfere with other duties" (mss 3941 LPL Holy Rood Archive). The daily routine of the Park village Sisterhood was:

5.00 Rise
5.01 Lauds
6.45 Prime, Breakfast, Terce and morning prayer
9.00 School
12.00 Sext
12.40 Dinner then recreation
3.00 None
6.00 Supper
8.00 Compline in the Church
9.20 Mattins

(Williams and Campbell, 1965:37)

A similar pattern for the day is described by other sources (Goodman, 1862:14 and documents in the Holy Rood Archive in respect of that order at mss 3941 LPL Holy Rood Archive).

The worship used by the sisterhoods tended to be carefully devised. Several of the sisterhoods translated the ancient offices from Latin for their use. The environment was also carefully considered and, for example, the Park Village Sisterhood always ensured there were candles and flowers on the altar (Yates, 1999:v). Many sisterhoods became expert in Church needlework. This use of a multi-sensory approach to worship is consistent with other aspects of the Oxford Movement.

The Oxford Movement regarded the sacraments as fundamental to the Church and to the individual and the sisterhoods regarded Eucharist as extremely important and attempted to celebrate daily. This was of course dependent on the availability of a priest. The East Grinstead sisters went for several months

without Eucharist because their priest, John Mason Neale, was away. The celebration of Eucharist daily was rare in the parishes and the number of churches in London celebrating daily was counted in single figures in the 1870s (Yates, 1999:91). This problem was rendered more difficult since most of the bishops declined to allow the sisterhoods to have a reserved host: this was not introduced into the All Saints sisterhood until the 1880s. It has to be said that the reserved host was extremely rare in the parishes before the beginning of the twentieth century (Yates, 1999:82). In this concept of worship women were demonstrated as powerless and excluded. They were consecrated but not ordained and were reliant on men for the central part of their worship, a reliance which was exacerbated by the use of male power in refusing reservation of the host.

There may be an argument that worship for the sisterhoods was in the context of the daily tasks. It was certainly true that prayer and reading the gospel was an integral part of the tasks undertaken. Sister Dora would say "Well we can only pray" and Mary Jacques made a habit of saying prayers at the bedside of each patient every night, as well as ensuring morning and evening prayers in the hospital chapel (Sister Jean, 1981:92). However, it does not seem that the sisters consciously undertook a model of worship which assimilated it with the daily tasks. Still less did they seem to believe that the daily tasks were themselves part of worship. In other words, a traditional model of worship was maintained even though this was to their detriment in terms of autonomy of spiritual development. This area will be developed further in Chapter 6.

4.5 Membership

4.5.1 Membership and Class Division

Membership of sisterhoods generally took three forms. Choir sisters formed the majority of the resident sisters and were generally more than 90% of the total (Mumm, 1999:46). Choir sisters came from the middle and upper classes and at the Community of All Hallows Ditchingham, 35% of the choir sisters came from clergy families (Mumm, 1999:38). Most sisterhoods also had lay sisters. These were working class women and were sometimes the servants of the choir sister with whom they joined. Lay and Choir sisters underwent a similar novitiate and the average age of profession was 34 (lay sisters on average were

professed slightly younger) (Mumm, 1999:42). Some sisterhoods allowed movement from lay sister to choir sister. These included All Hallows Ditchingham, St Thomas Martyr. The Community of the Holy Name and the Community of the Holy Family (Mumm, 1999:40). A few sisterhoods such as the community of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage, had only a single order. A few sisterhoods such as the Community of St John the Baptist also developed a group of Magdalen sisters who were women who had been part of the rescue work of the community and had subsequently wanted to become sisters. Most sisterhoods also had associates. These were usually women who could not become full-time sisters for various reasons, although some sisterhoods also included men as associates (mss 3933 LPL Holy Rood Archive is a list of associates which shows men as well as women). Some of these (who were women) subsequently became sisters in the community, usually because their family circumstances changed, allowing them to become full time sisters.

Sisterhood conferred class on its members. This was regarded as particularly significant for lay sisters. A story was told by the Community of the Mission Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus of a lay sister who went to deliver a message to Lady Frederick Cavendish: the latter stood to greet the woman who was her former cook (The Community of the Mission Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus, 1950:28).

4.5.2 Membership and stability

The membership of sisterhoods was unstable. A number of sisters were subject to family pressure to leave and some also transferred to Roman Catholicism (Mumm, 1999:51). Some sisters transferred to other orders (Goodwin, 1851:79).

Nevertheless the growth in the numbers of women becoming sisters was rapid during the period from 1845 to 1900. Allchin quoted a figure of 86 women for 1861, rising to 700 in 1878 and 2000 to 3000 in 1900 (Allchin, 1958:120). However, he did not say how he arrived at these figures. Nevertheless, Mumm also believed the figures rose strikingly during this period (Mumm, 1999:3).

Thus the membership of sisterhoods retained a certain stability in terms of class division, but remained unstable in terms of membership numbers, although the number of sisters generally increased rapidly during this period. However this conceals the number of very small communities. It also conceals the turnover of sisters demonstrated in the next chapter within section 5.4.

4.6 Work

4.6.1 The Work of Sisterhoods

Dean Church preached a sermon at the Wantage festival in 1875 on the ministry of women to the Community of St Mary the Virgin at Wantage. In it he said,

> For a long time among ourselves at least it seemed as if there was no room for any special application to the service of the gospel of the gifts and faculties of women … here the plan of a life of labour for women ─ intelligent, beneficent, fervent labour for Christ ─ labour serious, habitual, sustained like the labour of men (Church, 1895:269-73).

This link with the gospel was very much a part of the vision of sisterhoods. Liddon said, "... for it is not apart from but in and through the particular circumstances of a particular place and age that the glory of God is revealed" (Liddon, 1861:95). He suggested that "a sister's vocation ought to be recognised not as a mere useful mode of spending her energies but as a calling of the grace of God like other spiritual … within the kingdom of Christ" (Liddon, 1861:144). Furthermore, "various forms of activity were undertaken not in spite of but rather as a result of the communities' primary vocation to a life of complete dependence on God in corporate and private prayer" (Liddon, 1861:251). There is perhaps a dissonance between this view of vocation and the attitudes of the sisterhoods toward worship and the view of the individual sisters toward faith (Mumm, 1999:13,15). As mentioned above, many of the sisterhoods placed the work ahead of worship and sisters were excused attendance at worship if the work required their presence. Further, there are several examples, including that of Sister Dora, of sisters who were very unsure of their faith and were advised to practise the sisterhood life notwithstanding this doubt.

4.6.2 The social context of sisterhood work

The sisterhoods began their work within a society which was vividly described by Engels as “the poverty of working class Britain” (Engels, 1888). He described slums without drainage “supplied with foul stagnant pools” (Engels, 1888:19). He spoke of the destitution of the poor (Engels, 1888:21, 22) and the proximity of poor lodging houses to “the regal grandeur of St James” (Engels, 1888:23). He commented on a similar situation in other cities where “many rows of houses were found to have been built over shallow drains covered only by the board of the ground floor” (Engels, 1888:26). There were dreadfully overcrowded conditions: “for each one hundred and twenty persons one usually inaccessible privy is provided” (Engels, 1888:41). There were falling wages and increased begging (Engels, 1888:60). He spoke of an increase in disease and very poor diet (Engels, 1888:68). He spoke of the attempts of the Churches to meet the need and the difficulty of children trying to learn at Sunday School when they could not remember the lesson from one week to the next (Engels, 1888:74). He commented on the Children’s Employment Commission, which reported poor educational standards and a high level of accidents (Engels, 1888:75). This was a society in which poverty which was an affront to the affluence of the upper and middle classes and which many saw as difficult to accept without either protests or attempts to improve the lot of the very worst off in the country.

It was to this society that the sisterhoods wished to address their work. A high number of ragged schools were founded and organised by sisterhoods addressing the educational needs of those who were not well enough dressed or did not possess the 1d or 2d a week needed for the National and British Schools, as well as addressing the nutritional needs of these children. The schools founded by the sisterhoods were both managed and operated by them, as were the hospitals and orphanages. Many of the sisterhoods worked in London and offered health and social care as well as education. This was often done in an imaginative way and educational provision included not only day and Sunday schools but classes for young people and adults in the evening and for mothers during the day. These classes covered not only issues of basic education, but also elements of nutrition, sewing and needlework in ‘dorcas’ classes where cutting out and sewing were taught and paid for within a credit

union style of payment. Many of the sisterhoods prided themselves on meeting the needs of the very poorest. For example, the Community of the Mission Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus worked mostly in Vauxhall “for the most part made up of rough elements” (Community of the Mission Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus, 1950:3). However, a significant amount of this educational work was undertaken, not with the destitute poor, but with middle class children, especially girls. Ackroyd (Ackroyd, s.a.,:3-4) said that the All Saints Sisters opened a small ragged school and operated a large guild system. They also opened a boarding school for girls, but this came to an end upon the opening of Bradford Girls’ Grammar School in 1868. Now the Bradford Girls’ Grammar School catered for middle class families and therefore presumably this was the market with which the All Saints Sisters were dealing since the opening of the Bradford Girls’ Grammar School caused the All Saints Sisters’ school to close.

Alongside this educative work, there was an intention to offer religious education and to attract people to church and to baptism and confirmation. Bibles and tracts were often given out by sisterhoods as well as by District visitors and indeed by many women (Jones, 1871:53, 194).

4.6.3 The financial context of sisterhood work

Most of the sisterhoods also became involved in rescue work, which included not only women who had become prostitutes but also those who had been sexually abused (Bonham, 1992:16). Some sisterhoods such as the Community of St John the Baptist were founded for this function (Community of St John the Baptist, 1952:18-25). This community known as Clewer was begun by a widow, Mrs Tennant, who offered to look after destitute women. After 18 months her health failed and the work passed to Harriet Monsell, who devoted herself to being a Sister of Mercy on Ascension Day 1851. There were a number of reasons for this emphasis on rescue work. Penitentiary work could be self-funding since part of the rescue was to teach the women skills to allow them to enter service, and many sisterhoods did this by taking in laundry and needlework to be undertaken by these women. Also it was possible to receive a grant for this work from the Church Penitentiary Association. However, there was a certain romance to this work as the sisters were seen as conducting a noble and self-sacrificing work, and even a work carrying a risk from these

women who had fallen, offering their finer natures as ladies for the redemption of fallen women.

Many sisterhoods undertook orphanage work. Again this would often be for payment, as often these children were not orphans as such. The register of orphans of the Coatham sisterhood (mss 3950 and 3969 LPL Holy Rood Archive) showed many of these children had relatives who were unable to care for them, so the community provided care instead for a periodic fee.

Many sisterhoods undertook hospital and nursing work. For women to undertake this work it was crucial that it should have a moral and religious component. Consequently, the women who undertook the work were not paid. This point was made in several of the hospital annual reports (noting particularly the North Ormesby reports and the Walsall reports). This voluntary work added to the prestige of the undertaking and separated these women from the previous reputation of nurses, the work being conducted as self-sacrificing and with the intention of offering a higher morality than a salary could reflect. However, it is clear that the undertaking itself was paid for by or on behalf of patients.

As part of this work, sisterhoods would regularly take on the whole of the nursing and management of a hospital. Florence Nightingale noted that 26 religious organisations were involved in hospital management and nursing in London in 1860 (Webb, 2002:124). The All Saints sisterhood took on the nursing at University College Hospital and the Mildmay deaconesses took on the nursing of Doncaster Infirmary. Sister Dora arrived in Walsall because the Coatham sisterhood had taken on the nursing and management of the Walsall Cottage Hospital at the request of Samuel Welsh. Sick visiting was also undertaken on a domiciliary basis and the East Grinstead sisters undertook this work exclusively. This type of work also allowed further work to be undertaken, for example, the London Diocesan Deaconess Institute organised family relief under the aegis of sick visiting (Mother Clare, 1952:12). However, the hospital and other nursing work was not intended to be of primary benefit to the indigent poor. There was often a fee involved in the hospital work and the intention was that this service should be provided for the working poor who could not afford a

private nurse but who were not eligible for workhouse nursing. Hollis indicated that sisterhoods were loath to undertake workhouse nursing as it was seen to be socially inferior (Hollis, 1989:272). This was not wholly correct (Mumm, 2001:14-15). To undertake the role of nursing the working poor was to make an important contribution to the economy, for it was not in the interests of the country economically, or of the masters, for these working class people to be away from work for longer than necessary or for them to cease to be able to be productive. As such, this nursing could be said to be far from counter-cultural.

4.6.4 The cultural acceptability of the work of sisterhoods

However, it was clear that some of the work undertaken was counter-cultural. For example the Community of the Holy Cross opened a hostel for the elderly to prevent couples being separated in the Workhouse (Mumm, 1999:96). The Sisters of the Church also founded an orphanage specifically to combat baby farming in London (Mumm, 1999:112). These are clearly embarrassing foundations to the middle and upper classes and to the political classes and not necessarily to be expected of a group of women.

Nevertheless, all of the work undertaken by sisterhoods, with the possible exception of the printing press of the Ascot Priory and the training of boys for work at sea also by Ascot Priory (Mumm, 1999:112) was work which could be regarded as suitable for ladies. It was work which was regarded as best performed by women and work to which they could beneficially bring their innate higher moral tone. To that extent the work does not extend the boundaries of what is acceptable work for women. However, by undertaking this work on a full time professional basis to the exclusion of marriage, these women were extending the boundaries of acceptable conduct by women.

4.6.5 The skills and time brought to sisterhood work

The skills brought to this work by the sisterhoods were variable. In Kaiserswerth deaconesses were trained in either teaching or nursing, whereas in England the sisterhoods arranged for their members to undertake all manner of work (Mumm, 2001:80), which could be regarded as reducing the skills offered to each task. Goodman described this situation (Goodman, 1862:21-27). On reaching Plymouth she superintended three houses let to families with

a reading room and lessons. There was a school and eventually proper evening school for street 'arabs' (Goodman, 1862:27) together with the provision of lunch for 20 to 30 people on Wednesdays and Fridays. Subsequently she nursed cholera victims and was responsible for the removal of the dead bodies to the mortuary. It appears that this work was all undertaken without specific training or planning. Similarly, it was common in the sisterhoods for women to undertake several tasks at the same time. Mary Jacques organised evening classes for boys and singing lessons for St John's Church choir as well as nursing. This attitude and ability to approach a number of tasks meant that the sisterhoods formed a mobile workforce who were able to respond to situations quickly (Mumm, 1999:117). For example in 1856 seven communities (including communities who had been forbidden by the Bishop to enter London) were able to respond to the needs of the East End of London during a cholera epidemic (Mumm, 1999:117).

The timetable for the day has been shown above and it has been noted that vacation arrangements were made for sisters. It has also been noted that sisters routinely seemed to have attended to a number of different tasks and on occasion ceased to undertake their main task. An example of this was Sister Dora's removal to the isolation hospital for a number of weeks to nurse patients affected by the smallpox epidemic. This combination of circumstances leads to a consideration of the amount done by the sisters, for the work seems to have been continued even during prolonged absences by the sisters. This must have meant that either there was more assistance from employees (and less undertaken by the sisters) than is suggested by the literature, or that the work was less onerous than is suggested. It is particularly notable that some of these hospitals were very small indeed. Stout (1989:28) noted that the 1861 census reveals that the North Ormesby hospital had five members of staff, namely Mary Jacques, Jane Warburton aged 29 (housekeeper), Sarah Parkinson aged 20 (assistant nurse), Emma Hurst aged 35 (head hospital nurse) and Lucy Shields aged 18 (servant). There were six patients in the hospital. It may be that the level of work was suggested to be higher than it was either for the purposes of fund-raising or for the purposes of attracting women to the sisterhoods. It could be that, in addition to either of these possibilities, the literature was developing

the heroic in these women. This possibility will be explored further in Chapter 6 for it is an important issue in the ministry of women.

It was clear that several sisters died in this work. For example, Sister Dora advanced in her nursing training because two sisters died of scarlet fever (Manton, 1971:168). It was also the case that some sisters found the regime too difficult and there was some discussion that sisters such as Amy Scobell died as a result of this, nevertheless Mumm suggested that the lifestyle was generally healthier than that of the general population (Mumm, 1999:54). She said the average life expectancy was six years higher than that of the general female population. However, it is not clear whether she had adjusted her figures for deaths in childbirth. If she had not, then this would suggest that this was an unhealthy occupation since there was a percentage of female deaths in the general population which was pregnancy or childbirth-related. In the 1870s the census revealed that this could be up to 60%.

4.6.6 Summary of sisterhood work

The work undertaken by these women was largely within an area which would not have provoked criticism in itself – it was womanly work. However, the generation of communities to the exclusion of marriage would be regarded as highly critical, so it is perhaps unsurprising that these women kept to the sort of work which would itself not invite criticism. In addition, the work was largely within an area which did not set itself against the middle and upper classes (who would after all have been the major funders of their work). The work was also as expected of women and amounted to a level of multi-tasking (something about which Florence Nightingale complained), which may have been at a cost to the level of skill, although this had some benefits in terms of the provision of a mobile workforce. There was clearly a generation of myth around this work in that the level of work was portrayed as super-human, but appears not to have been so, and this is consistent with the portrayal of these women as super heroes with perfect families of origin. The rationale for this portrayal will be explored in more detail below.

4.7 Relationship with the Church

The relationship between the sisterhoods and the institutional church was volatile. Some sisterhoods were approved by the bishop for the diocese within which they were founded and this sometimes led to a decision about where a sisterhood would be founded. Bishop Bloomfield sanctioned the Park Village sisterhood and Priscilla Lydia Sellon was sanctioned by D.R. Philpotts, the Bishop of Exeter. However, the foundation of the sisterhoods meant that this sanctioning was not as critical to their continuation, as it was for deaconess institutes, which required authorisation from the bishop. Sisterhoods were established by individuals or groups outside the institutional hierarchy of the church and indeed, where they were reliant upon church hierarchy, they were weakened as a result. For example, the work of the All Saints Sisters in Bradford, being at the invitation of the parish priest, required the continuing support of the parish priest. When this support ceased because of a change of incumbent, it was not possible to sustain the work (Ackroyd, s.a., 34). They were also independent of the institutional hierarchy of the church for funding. Even where the sisterhoods were receiving grants from the Church Penitentiary Association for rescue work, this was centrally administered rather than being administered through the diocese. Nevertheless, although sisterhoods were generally independent of the institutional hierarchy of the church, they were reliant on a sympathetic priest for appropriate worship, especially regular celebration of Eucharist, and this usually required a sympathetic bishop as well.

4.7.1 Results of independence from the institutional church

This general independence was used by them to maintain and sustain their mission and ministry. The sisterhoods developed a sense of the priorities of their work and their way of life and this was shown by their avoidance of the authority of the bishop, when this was counter to their understanding of what was important for them. They would do this by such methods as indicating houses and work in different dioceses and therefore an inability to accept the authority of one bishop without precluding another. After all, work in one diocese accepting the orders of one bishop would have to apply to all houses and this would impose the order of the original bishop on the bishops in whose dioceses the remaining houses were established. If necessary, they would move from one diocese to another to obtain a more sympathetic hearing. By

these methods, they maintained their independence, but failed to build up a body of support for themselves within the church. By avoiding the institutional church, they were also unable to take advantage of the institutional power of the church and so they were unable to conduct a sustained national development working in concert with each other and with the church. One of the results of this was an overlap and concentration of work in one geographical area with gaps in other areas. An example of this is shown particularly in London where the vast majority of sisterhoods were based with only branch houses in other areas (Allchin, 1958 and Mumm 1999). The only sisterhood based north of the Midlands was the Coatham sisterhood. Thus, their independence meant that they did not have the benefits of cooperation between themselves as sisterhoods or between themselves and the institutional church. However, more positively, it also meant their creativity and vision was not bound to the conventional concepts of church work, and this allowed the sisterhoods to explore the boundaries of the work and of the groups with whom they could work, as well as their own spiritual boundaries.

4.8 Comparison of male and female orders

The female Anglican orders were well in advance of the male orders in terms of their foundation. The first female order was the Park Village sisterhood in 1845 whereas the first male order was the Society of the Resurrection founded in 1889, with four priests.

4.8.1 Membership of male and female orders

There were significant differences between male and female orders. Male orders seem to have been made up of priests and indeed in some orders only priests were eligible for membership. This meant that the communities were independent in a way that the female communities were not. It also had an effect on the worship. The male communities were self-contained and self-sustaining and used offices which were known to them. As priests, these were educated men, unlike the women in the female orders, who on occasion lacked even a basic education. Accordingly, the worship style tended to be conservative and used offices often in Latin. It also seems to have been the case that the male orders were more stable in terms of membership than were the female orders (Allchin, 1958). This may have been because many men at

this time had already sampled community living, for they had been to school or university or the armed forces, whereas the same was not true for the women.

4.8.2 Funding of male and female orders

The male orders also had a greater stability of funding. Men would generally be in control of their own finances, while many women were not. This meant that men could make financial decisions and the financial future of the orders could be more predictable than that of the female orders. It also seemed to mean that the poverty which sometimes overwhelmed the female orders did not occur. Perhaps it also meant that the risks taken by the female orders were not taken by the male orders.

4.8.3 Consideration by the orders of gender roles

The relationship between the female and male orders was different in female and male communities. The female orders on occasion used a member of a male order as chaplain or confessor (Benson was particularly used in this function from the Society of St John the Evangelist). The female orders of necessity needed a sympathetic priest in order that they could function. Nevertheless the women did not engage with men to continue other stereotypical roles, such as maintenance of the grounds of their properties, but dealt with these themselves. Further, some of the female orders also had male associates on occasion and the Coatham Sisterhood was one of those. The male orders did not seem to have female associates and when women had a function within the order, it was as female servants. Thus the relationship between the genders, from the perspective of female orders, carried an element of hierarchy, but was a more disparate form of relationship. The relationship between genders in the male orders seems to have been purely hierarchical and stereotypically rendered the women powerless. It did not explore the relationship or seek to change it in any way.

4.8.4 Comparison of the work of male and female orders

The work of the male orders appears to have been more limited than that of the female orders. The female orders engaged in district work, health work and teaching as well as parish work. However, the male orders seem to have engaged largely in overseas work and in work with training in ministry.

The Community of the Resurrection engaged in education and mission. This included the training and sponsorship of priests from poor areas. Here there was an exploration of boundaries for they found that priests did not need to emanate from the middle class. However, they did not consider a radical form of priesthood, but sought to offer middle class opportunities to working class men. They similarly undertook significant amounts of overseas mission work. At the Society of St John the Evangelist, work was undertaken in terms of spiritual progression of members and retreat for those members as well as offering spiritual oversight to others. However, it may be said that although the female orders worked with other classes, they were promulgating middle class norms. Thus the work of both male and female orders, whilst being clearly distinguishable, did not seek to challenge accepted societal norms generally, but to promote them.

4.9 Summary

The sisterhoods developed within a social and religious context. Women had become regarded in the middle and upper classes as having particular skills and graces, and in addition to this there was an issue of 'surplus women'. Within the evangelical churches, there had begun to be the development of work for women and this grew also within the Oxford Movement for different reasons.

However, the sisterhoods were inherently unstable for a number of reasons. They were not part of the institution of the Church of England and, because they were made up of women, the individuals were often not in control of their own finances. The sisterhoods tended to exacerbate this problem by the way they developed their work and their way of working. They over-stretched their resources and institutionalised a way of working which was in itself unstable.

Nevertheless, this development of the movement of sisterhoods liberated the women and the communities to work out different ways of being and of ministry from those which were conventionally used in the Church of England. This was in part because they were not priests, but in part because of their relationship with the institutional church. However, it is notable that some of the challenges

to middle class values which might have been part of this creativity were largely lacking and the sisterhoods' work focussed on the spread of middle class values to the rest of society. Interestingly, as religious communities, the sisterhoods seemed to have a focus on worship which was not necessarily central and a theology which often did not consider the specific issues of doctrine of the bodies of which they were a part.

5.0 WOMEN AND NURSING: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE OPERATION OF SISTERHOOD NURSES AND NURSES FROM OTHER CONTEXTS.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the self-identity of women in the Church – in an overt sense. What is it and is it different from being a woman out of the institutional Church? In looking at these questions, the nurse is used as the model. Nurses In various settings are considered and compared in this chapter in addressing the various issues, including nurses in sisterhoods, nurses in deaconess orders and Nightingale nurses, together with Florence Nightingale herself. This chapter will consider the training and education of nurses and their educational background. It will consider the class and status of nurses and their motivation. It will consider the nurses' own views of what they thought they were doing in being nurses, including a description of what this position entailed in terms of practical skills together with what the position entailed in terms of attitude and spirituality.

This chapter views nurses in different situations. Some nurses are clearly exceptional. Florence Nightingale is known as a woman who performed tasks well outside the remit of ordinary women of the time – she became a national heroine, well-known to most people both of her own time and later times. Sister Dora was not a national heroine, although she was taken to the heart of the people of Walsall. It is still the case that on Sister Dora's birthday (16 January) flowers are placed at her statue and people in Walsall will proudly relate their family's links to Sister Dora. As an example of this, this comment was made in a discussion at the Walsall Local History Unit in 2004 by a member of staff: "My great aunt was treated by Sister Dora". There were many nurses of many types during the latter half of the nineteenth century who did not achieve this sort of prominence. Therefore the questions addressed will review the situation both for the well known nurses and for those who were not so well known. However, in attempting to undertake this review, it has to be recognised that many of the

sources relating to direct experience are from those women who were prominent in the field, in terms of diaries or journals and recording of events. These are the women who were literate and had the need and custom to communicate in writing. It has to be accepted that the voices of those who were not in this position are largely communicated by others or by those who for various reasons describe them.

5.2 The occupation of Sisterhood and other Nursing in a Social Context

During the middle part of the nineteenth century, there were opposing views of nurses. Charles Dickens in *Martin Chuzzlewit* gave his readers the stereotypical picture of a nurse (Dickens, 1847). He described a woman with low pay, low status and lacking in either motivation or sense of responsibility. On the other hand, in contrast to this, the image shown by the sisterhood nurses and by Florence Nightingale was of nurses with high morals and motivations as well as high status. This reflected a view that this sort of nursing was about working hand in hand with God. Florence Nightingale stated that, "Disease is a reparative process to remedy ill given by God" (Nightingale, 1859:3 and 9). She wrote of a nurse cooperating with God and healing being the natural law of God (Nightingale, 1859:5). She saw nursing as a religious vocation and described nursing as "a means of harmonising oneself with the Divine service of all existence and thus it was a sacred process". She also said, about nursing, that "if nature is the manifestation of God, then cooperation with nature by facilitating the healing process, is also cooperating with God" (Nightingale, 1994:19).

This latter sort of nursing was regarded as a very womanly occupation. It was regarded as an extension of what women do and drew on what were regarded as natural female talents or gifts of caring and domestic management. Florence Nightingale described nursing as what women do, but was careful to say it is not intuitive (that is it was not something which comes naturally to women without the need for additional training) (Nightingale, 1859:5). This view was mirrored in the Kaiserswerth Institute, whose deaconesses wore the clothes adopted by married women in the Lower Rhine, as is shown in the photograph below. Theodor Fliedner considered it important that the deaconesses should not wear a sister's habit and that their uniform should make a clear visual

statement about status and position; in other words, they should have the respect due to a married woman and should be identifiable and that they should not be regarded as above or separated from womankind in general.





Diakonnisse nursing uniforms at Kaiserswerth in about 1850
Photographs taken at the Fliedner Archiv Kaiserswerth, 2004

By the time sisterhood nursing became significant it was important to note that nursing undertaken "for hire and not for love" (Nightingale, 1851a) was regarded as inferior to that undertaken purely on a vocational and unpaid basis, supporting the view that this was a truly womanly task. This view will be returned to, in considering motivation and status (at 5.6 and 5.7 of this chapter). However, the work of a nurse truly done was an unpaid task intrinsically to its quality and worth, once sisterhood nursing had become significant. Owain quoted Florence Nightingale's letter to the Probationers of St Thomas Hospital Nightingale Training School 1873; "it is what she is in herself", in summing up the nature of a nurse (Owain, 1882:1038).

Although nursing came to be regarded as an occupation that was female by its nature, nevertheless prior to the growth of nursing as a respectable work, nursing was not exclusively female. Nursing in civilian hospitals seems to have been female, the caricature of Sarah Gamp in Charles Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Dickens, 1847) was entirely female and he offered no male counterpart. It is not entirely clear whether nursing in the English workhouses was female, although it is known that workhouse nursing was undertaken by other residents of the workhouse, for Agnes Jones described the nursing in Liverpool workhouse, the organisation of which she took over in 1867. She described the poor quality of the nursing and the fact that it was undertaken by

those workhouse residents who were unable to do other work. She indicated this was undertaken by women and she described the lack of supervision. She stated they were “ignorant and worse than useless women” (Jones, 1871:287). In terms of mental health nursing, this work in the asylums was undertaken by men as well as women (Young, 2008:18-42). Nursing in German hospitals, prior to the growth of deaconess and sisterhood nursing, was apparently undertaken by people of either gender – nursing was simply undertaken by the less sick patients (Sticker, 1972:5). However, military nursing in Britain was a male activity (Woodham-Smith,1951:various). Florence Nightingale described the history of military nursing in the UK armed forces. Woodham-Smith in her history of Florence Nightingale went on to describe the resistance to female nursing and the extent to which there was a reversion to male nursing in the armed forces after the Crimean war (Woodham-Smith, 1951:205).

After the advent of the deaconess and sisterhood nursing, civilian nursing became predominantly a female activity. Sticker described the history of hospitals in Germany with the beginnings of diaconal nursing (Sticker, 1960: B1-V, 48-114). There seems to be little reference to male nurses in the UK within this sphere of nursing. However, a recent article by Young (2008) suggests that this presumption that nurses were female had become a culturally based description of the state of affairs and reflected the extent to which female nursing had become the acceptable norm. She suggested that male nursing still existed, particularly in the field of mental health nursing, but had become hidden. This area of nursing was little dealt with by sisterhoods and deaconess orders. Although Sisterhood and Deaconess nursing organisations’ prospectuses stated on occasions that they would undertake mental health nursing (for example, that of the All Hallows Order in Ditchingham), this seems to have been unusual in practice (Young, 2008:18-42). However, in the German Deaconess Institutes there was reference to a male auxiliary Order (Sticker, 1972:5) and, at Kaiserswerth, to five male nurses in the men’s wards under the charge of the Sisters (Sticker, 1972:9). In 1844, an auxiliary male Institute was created within the Prussian Rhenish Provinces at Duisberg to train men as prison warders and school assistants on the same lines as deaconesses. This was sanctioned by the Synod of the Rhenish Provinces (Collections Book of Theodor Fliedner).

Thus by the middle of the nineteenth century there had developed two strands of nursing. One was the strand which had existed for some time, which was that of the paid nurse with low reputation and status. The second strand was shared by sisterhood, deaconess and Nightingale nurses and was largely unpaid with a high moral reputation and largely female.

5.3 Education of nurses within Sisterhoods and other Institutions

Sister Dora was educated by her older sisters, who had been to boarding school, and by her older brother Mark Pattison, who was a significant influence on her. The context of this influence was that Mark Pattison had been a member of Newman's group at Oxford, when this was to risk serious censure and inhibition to one's career as an academic. Newman's group was criticised by many academics at Oxford at the time and it was well known that those in this group would be unlikely to be academically preferred. By 1845 Mark Pattison had moved away from Newman and had become one of the founding members of the Broad Church Movement. He was one of the contributors to *Essays and Reviews*, a published collection of essays written by several prominent Churchmen expounding the then new approach to biblical interpretation and challenging Church resistance to new scholarship, especially that of science and theology (Temple *et al.*, 1862). As a result of this work those contributors who were ordained, including Mark Pattison, were subject to sanction by the Church Courts, although this was later overturned by a secular Privy Council on appeal.

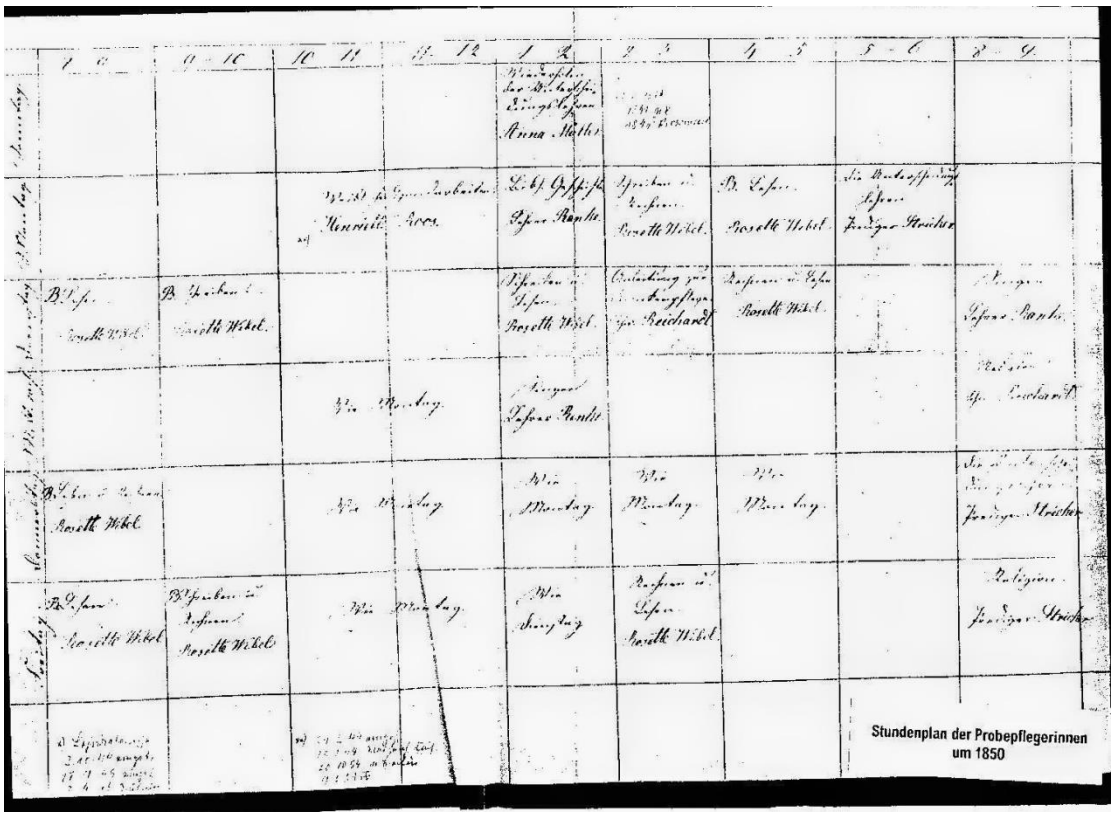
Sister Dora received an eclectic education, and was keen to absorb knowledge. When she became part of the Coatham Sisterhood, she had received basic education sufficient to equip her to become a village schoolmistress, in the view of herself and her sister, Eleanor (Manton, 1971:137,139) together with the education at Mark's hands which included a level of education in theology and in the arts. The benefit of this education was probably enhanced by her personality and willingness to learn as well as by the home circumstances in which she was surrounded by her older sisters, who were still educating her when she was well into her twenties. This type of education was not uncommon for entrants to both the sisterhoods and the deaconess orders. As a result, nursing education often included a level of basic education to ensure all nurses

had an appropriate foundation of literacy and numeracy. An example of this can be seen in the timetable of probationer deaconesses produced below.

Florence Nightingale, by contrast, was of a much higher class (as well as being much wealthier) than Sister Dora. She was educated by her father and by the age of 17 could speak and write in several languages. The teaching of women among the upper classes by their fathers seems to have been relatively common. It is to be observed in Florence Nightingale, in Josephine Butler and in Mary Sumner, the founder of the Mother's Union (Porter, 1927:6). Florence Nightingale was well read and had sought out teaching in science and mathematics. She had furthered her health education by studying the Blue Books which reported on various aspects of health care and indeed she continued this careful study and research in the areas upon which she wrote through her life, an account of this being given by Woodham-Smith (1951).

In terms of 'vocational' training, both Florence Nightingale and Sister Dora had worked with the poor and sick in their own settings: Florence Nightingale at Lea Hurst, Sister Dora at Hauxwell and at Little Woolston as a schoolmistress with a level of nursing. Again, this dedication to the disadvantaged in the local community seems to have been common. It is to be noted also in the lives of Josephine Butler and of Agnes Jones. The District Visiting scheme of the evangelical wing of the Church of England at this time became a large organisation, demonstrating to great advantage the harnessing of this willingness amongst women to work of this nature.

In contrast, the deaconesses of Kaiserswerth were generally recruited from the peasant classes (A Lady, 1857?:Appendix 3, 68 and Woodham-Smith, 1951:9). Their education tended to be almost non-existent upon entry and, as a result, part of the training of a deaconess was in basic education, although it appears to have been the case that those women accepted for training as *lehrdiakonissen* (teaching deaconesses) were required to have a higher standard of education at entry (A Lady, 1857?:Appendix 3, 68). The timetable for the probationer deaconesses, who were nursing, is shown below, and this demonstrates the extent to which basic education was offered.



Timetable for Probationer Sisters at Kaiserswerth 1850, held at the Fliedner Archiv Kaiserswerth (the original above, translation below)

	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	1-2	2-3	4-5	5-6	8-9
Sunday					Confess-ional differ-ences				
Monday			Women's Handwork		History of Bible	Writing and arithmetic	Reading		
Tuesday	Reading	Writing			Writing and reading	Nursing	Reading and Arithmetic		Singing
Wed			As Monday		Singing				Religion
Thursday			As Monday		As Monday	As Monday	As Monday		Confess-ional differ-ences
Friday	Reading	Writing and arithmetic	As Monday		As Monday	Nursing	Reading and arithmetic		Religion

It should be noted, however that in order to be accepted within the Institute an account of the life of the woman had to be given in her own hand. This was an exercise which Florence Nightingale was given by Theodor Fliedner when she was at Kaiserswerth and the copy of it is an extensive document (Nightingale,

1851a). It seems that the systematic religious education of those who entered the Institute was also of a low standard, since part of the deaconesses' training was in religious education. This may not be correct – it may be that the deaconesses were required to have a higher level of religious education than the population as a whole because of their vocation and that the religious education on the curriculum was of a more advanced nature than that which would be held in the general population. Unfortunately, there do not seem to be records of the curriculum in this regard. However, even if the level of knowledge and learning had been poor on entry in the German Institutes, this may not be true for all deaconess orders and sisterhoods. In 1886, the North London Deaconess Institute advertised for theological books for its library, which suggests that at some level this Institute at least was looking for more advanced theological or religious education for its members (Mother Clare, 1952:3).

However, Sticker pointed out that insofar as the Deaconess Institute at Kaiserswerth is concerned, there was the first big possibility or way of practical female education. It allowed women to learn reading and writing and to explore religious and biblical studies as well as nursing with friendly colleagues (Sticker, 1960:280-1).

For those who became lay sisters in the sisterhoods, or the nurses who were not trained as lady probationers, education would have been of a lower standard on entry as these were lower class entrants.

There was a real issue about the education of these women who became nurses, sisters or deaconesses. Education was not readily available for women. Where education had been obtained it was often of an eclectic nature rather than with any systematic style or curriculum. Thus, those who trained to be nurses arrived at the commencement of their training at different stages in their education and knowledge. Necessarily, the educational requirement for women's entry to employment or vocation was informal rather than the male requirements of formal education. Clergy of the Church of England would have progressed through a university with its formal requirements for entry and for completion of degrees, even though, as Mark Pattison pointed out, these were

sometimes not as rigorous as might have been expected. He described his early education from his father and then his visit to Oxford with his parents during which they sought a college for him. The process was relatively random and required his father to have an awareness of the people who worked in the colleges (Pattison, 1885:2ff). There was no equivalent formal standard of education for women. It is notable that this continues to the present day in certain aspects of ministry. For example to become a presbyter in the Methodist Church, an office only open to men, requires academic qualifications, whereas to be a deacon in the Methodist Church, previously only open to women, does not.

It is, however, clear that those who entered the sisterhoods and became nurses (but not those who entered as lay sisters), in contrast to those who entered the German deaconess institutes and those who were employed as nurses, had some level of education. This is also true of the Nightingale nurses. That education was not of a consistent quality or content, but was at least of a basic level. Thus the distinction in education appears to be in the area of class rather than the institution involved.

5.4 Training as a Sisterhood nurse contrasted with other forms of nursing

Kaiserswerth seems to have been regarded as the epitome of nursing and nurse training, although Nightingale was subsequently highly critical of it. It will first be described and then compared with other forms of nurse training. It was founded in 1836 by Pastor Theodor Fliedner and comprised unmarried women (either single or widowed) working in the Institute of Deaconesses. This Institute operated several projects without denominational bias, being a hospital for the poor, a nursery school, a teacher training school and a women's penitentiary. The Deaconesses worked both in these projects and in parishes. Qualification for entry to training was the following:

To be between 18 and 40
To present a Certificate of Baptism
To present an account of her life written in her own hand
To present a testimonial from her pastor
To present a certificate of good health
To present the consent of her parents
To apply in writing (A Lady, 1857: 13 and Appendix 3, 68)

Sticker stated in her quotation of the *Hausordnung und dienstanweisung der diakonisseanstalt 1837* that most Probationers were aged 18-22 and she expanded the qualifications to include a Christlike demeanour and a good life (Sticker, 1972:245).

5.4.1 Length of Training

The nurse training in Kaiserswerth lasted for one to three years (A Lady, 1857?:14) and comprised rotations in various wards and functions including male, female and children's wards, communicable diseases, visiting nursing, religious doctrine, ethics and pharmacy (to a level to pass the state examination for pharmacists). Work in the male wards was the last placement and was to be under the greatest superintendence. The beginning of the nurse training programme is shown on the probationer timetable, above. This period of training started at the ante-probationer house and lasted for a period from a few weeks to a year, depending on the woman and the needs of the Institution, and thus the length of training cannot be wholly divorced from its content. The content of the training inevitably had an impact on its length. A letter from Elizabeth Ferard to Theodor Fliedner in 1863 informed him that training at the North London Deaconess Institute was of two years duration (held at the Fliedner Archiv).

The ante-probationer period was followed by a probation of approximately a year during which the probationer wore a sister's dress. This period, if successfully concluded, resulted in ordination as a deaconess. The completion of the training could be extended or slightly curtailed depending on the needs of the particular deaconess and the needs of the Institution. This model of training was practised not only by other deaconess institutions, but also by the sisterhoods.

Rose stated that Baptist deaconesses received a three to six months' course in nursing training, together with experience in visiting and speaking at meetings (Rose, 1954:10) and Watkin stated that the Church of Scotland deaconesses, founded in 1887, trained its deaconesses for two years with two years' probation and service or seven years prior experience (Watkin, 1967:27). Watkin also stated that the Evangelical Protestant Deaconess Institute, founded

in 1868, had a minimum probation of one year and that the training included the domestic work of the wards (Watkin, 1967:27). He went on to state that all ranks had a probation of one year, as directed by the Director and Lady Superintendent, and after a year the probationer would be set apart as deaconess.

However, it is clear that the length of training could be altered depending on the needs of the institution both in deaconess orders and in sisterhoods. Sister Dora's training altered when she was needed to go to Walsall and this was a common practice. This was the model of training adopted by Florence Nightingale and is clearly visible in current nurse training, although adopted with rather more rigour than these early institutions.

5.4.2 Content of training

The influence of the Kaiserswerth system appears to be widespread, since the training of the British nursing sisterhoods and deaconess orders, together with the Nightingale model of training, largely followed the same pattern. This is unsurprising since this was the Institution from which the British women drew their inspiration. In addition to the fund-raising and increasing of awareness of the potential for a professional role for women undertaken by Theodor Fliedner, the Institute welcomed women for a short stay, upon payment, to experience the life of the Community. Florence Nightingale attended for this purpose for a fortnight and later for three months; Elizabeth Ferard attended this; Agnes Jones and Mary Jacques attended and trained there and Elizabeth Fry drew her inspiration for the Protestant Sisters of Charity (in 1840) and for her work with St John's House (in 1848) from her visit to Kaiserswerth (Rose, 1980:180). Furthermore, the Collections Book of Theodor Fliedner held at the Fliedner Archiv in Kaiserswerth shows how widespread were his travels expounding his Deaconess Institute (and raising funds) and equally how widespread was his correspondence. This Collections Book shows details of his travels together with his speaking engagements. It also contains much correspondence undertaken between him and many people. This includes advice about the commencement and management of this sort of work. It also includes many letters of introduction and requests to meet with Fliedner, either during his travels, or at Kaiserswerth. Fliedner also made use of the skills of those who

were interested in the work. A prime example of this is the pamphlet produced by Florence Nightingale, at his behest, in 1851 to publicise the Deaconess Institute. It was titled, *The institution of Kaiserswerth on the Rhine for the Practical Training of Deaconesses under the Direction of the Reverend Pastor Fliedner Embracing the Support and Care of a Hospital, Infant and Standard Schools and a Female Penitentiary*. Thus, the work and practice of the Deaconess Institute was widely known about and widely admired as a result both of Fliedner's work and the extent to which he allowed access to the Institute.

The training of deaconesses at Kaiserswerth included basic education, religious education, singing and nurse training. Each probationer would receive sufficient education to be able to read well, write and know something of arithmetic. The probationer also received instruction from the Medical Superintendent once a week. However, it is notable from the timetable that little time was spent on the theoretical acquisition of nursing skills. Indeed, it was a later criticism of this form of training that such skills were imparted only by lectures from the doctor. Woodward commented on this form of training at St. Thomas's Hospital, London, which, he said, produced trained matrons rather than nurses. By this he meant the training produced women who were capable of institutional housekeeping and management rather than nursing. In support he quoted an advertisement for a matron at Leeds General Infirmary, published in 1852 (Woodward, 1974:34-35).

> Candidates for this office are required to be free from the care of a family, qualified to keep an account of the disbursements and other matters in the house department; it is necessary that she be staid, sober and discreet, mild and humane of disposition, at the same time possessed of firmness to rule the household; it is also desirable that she be experienced in the management of a family and the duties of a sick room.

Nevertheless, this suggested deficit of the training should be balanced by the fact that the training included a strong emphasis on rotation of practical training and the responsibility held by the Sister in charge of the ward for the training of the probationer sisters in all three types of institution. In comparison to this programme in Kaiserswerth, however, other institutions used a more theoretical training programme as well as this system of practical placements, although most systems of training included a level of basic education and religious

education. At the North London Deaconess Institute in 1886 probationers received a six-month course in medical and surgical nursing (Mother Clare, 1952:12), although it should be noted that Elizabeth Ferard, the founder, spent time at Kaiserswerth and was a regular correspondent of Pastor and Frau Fliedner and was clearly influenced by them. Mother Clare said, in 1864, the probationers received training in Bible classes and study of Scripture in addition to practical instruction (Mother Clare, 1952:14). In addition to this, Grierson indicated that at one time the North London Deaconess Institute trained probationer deaconesses in teaching, pastoral work, nursing, dispensing, bookkeeping and cutting out garments (Grierson, 1981:23). Other deaconess orders and sisterhoods had similar variations and there appears to be little distinction between the two forms of nursing. This is reflected in Mumm (1999) in her descriptions of sisterhoods and in Allchin (1958) in his consideration of female orders.

5.4.3 Class based training distinctions

There appears to have been an accelerated training for wealthier women at Kaiserswerth whose period of probation was six months and who were tied to the Institution thereafter for two years rather than the usual five at Kaiserswerth. These wealthier women became the Superintendents or officers of the nurses. Nevertheless, Theodor Fliedner stressed that these women needed to do all that the rest of the women did and needed to have undertaken a course of practical instruction in all stations in order to be able to manage the nurses. However, these women were expected to pay between £30 and £50 per annum for their training and board. Sticker described this system (Sticker, 1960:247). It included the same components as the remainder of the nurse training, but also included a greater element of shadowing deaconesses together with working as sister in charge of a ward, whilst supervised. It also included more time spent with Pastor Fliedner. However, Pastor Fliedner made use of the talents of such women, Agnes Jones related the extent to which she was involved in teaching English whilst undergoing such training (Jones, 1871:23). Florence Nightingale also utilised this system at St Thomas's Hospital Training School (Woodham-Smith, 1951:483). She intended to train hospital nurses and district nurses and to instruct in nurse training, and drew many of her probationers from the ranks of district visitors. However, the training lasted one

year and there was a distinction between lady probationers and nurses. Entry was on the basis of a testimonial of character and at the end of a year successful probationers received a gratuity of £5 or £3 (depending how well they had passed). Lady probationers paid a fee for their training (and board and lodging) of between £30 and £50 and nurses were provided with board and lodging and paid a small salary (Woodham-Smith, 1951:483).

A lady probationer received time for lectures, including lectures from medical staff and two lectures a week from the chaplain, together with time for reading. This was in addition to the training offered to nurses. So the lady probationer was spending less time on the wards in favour of more time in study. In 1890 a day for a lady probationer began at 7.00am and ended at 8.30pm. It included attendance at prayers in the morning and evening (Baly, 1986:85).

This system of differentiated training and of payment by wealthier women was common, Mother Clare quoted from an address by Theodor Fliedner, to the triennial conference of the Deaconess Institute at Kaiserswerth on 1 October 1864, “Those of a higher education may take their place as superintendents of missions, etc., whilst those of a humbler rank in life are not the less welcome being in every way recognised as sisters in the work” (Mother Clare, 1952:2). This is unsurprising, since nursing was seen as, to some extent, an extension of management of a household and the wealthier women would indeed be likely to have already had some grounding in this area. Similarly, the skills of basic education would often have been acquired by them already. Although education was not of a universal standard, women managing a household would be expected to keep written records, thus denoting at least basic education skills. This is shown by the many books of household management available at the time, of which Mrs Beeton’s book is the most well known example, in which the methods of keeping such accounts are demonstrated (Beeton, 1880). These management skills were learned by middle and upper class women as a result of their social station. They were thus difficult to acquire by lower class women. Nevertheless, in some deaconess institutes and some sisterhoods, this type of management role in nursing was available to lower class nurses, or nurses without such experience. Sister Dora herself came from a household in which there was probably one servant and very little money. She was thus unlikely to

have acquired staff management skills during her period at Hauxwell. Similarly, Mumm pointed out the proportion of sisters in sisterhoods who were clergy daughters. Although some of these would have experience of staff and household management, it must have been the case that some of these women came from households such as that of Sister Dora, in which such experience would not have been obtained. Thus, these skills, which seem to have been assumed for these women, were not necessarily evident, but this did not seem to make any difference to the role and standing they adopted in the deaconess orders or the sisterhoods of which they were members. This may be part of the artificiality of class structure commented on by Mumm (2001:xxiii). However, this dual approach to training based on class appears to have occurred throughout the forms of nurse training.

5.4.4 Character as a qualification and as part of training

Generally, the evidence shows that the nurses and probationers lived in a community in which the moral example of the sister in charge of the ward was important and in which the sister held an important responsibility for the moral and spiritual character development of the probationers. This applied both within the deaconess orders, in the sisterhoods and in such institutions as St Thomas Hospital Training School. Elizabeth Ferard, founder of the North London Deaconess Institute, in a letter to Kaiserswerth dated 11 December 1865, mentioned that working class probationers need more care. She sometimes wondered if there are “no Christian women in this class” (Letter held at the Fliedner Archiv).

The voluntary aspect of nursing was seen as important in terms of denoting character. Florence Nightingale noted that the probationers in Kaiserswerth received no payment for the first six months, and thereafter a small salary (Nightingale, 1851b:23). Upon qualification and acceptance as a deaconess in Kaiserswerth, board and lodging would be supplied and enough money to cover clothing only. Florence Nightingale stated that the “Institution may thus be said to be a school for nurses as well as sisters” (Bingham, 1979:13). It will be recalled that payment was a delicate issue in conjunction with character and this statement by Florence Nightingale makes it clear that Kaiserswerth drew its deaconesses from all classes of women. The deaconess orders tended to take

the same view and there was no separation of functions in these orders. However, virtually all the sisterhoods adopted a two class system with choir sisters from the higher classes and lay sisters from the lower classes. Nevertheless, most sisterhoods had few lay sisters and accordingly the distinction was not rigid in practice.

This model for nursing was exported to England, amongst other countries, initially by Elizabeth Fry in 1841 with her Institute of Nursing or Protestant Sisters of Charity. In 1848 St John's House was set up by clergymen in conjunction with Elizabeth Fry as "a training institution for nurses in hospitals, families and the poor" (Rose, 1980:180). In both these organisations this issue of character and character building was central.

Florence Nightingale herself trained for two weeks at Kaiserswerth from 31 July 1850, following which she wrote a pamphlet, stressing the importance of character, at the behest of Theodor Fliedner, whose intention it was to explain the way that Kaiserswerth operated (Nightingale, 1851b). Nightingale was very keen that this work should be anonymous. She subsequently spent three months at Kaiserswerth from 6 July 1851 to 7 October 1851 and later studied in Paris in 1853 with the Sisters of Charity, which formed the background to her thinking on training and the purposes of nurses.

The duties of a Nightingale probationer were to be sober, honest and skilful in their functions (Jebb, 1861:186). These duties were similar for those involved in sisterhood nursing, as were the aspirations of living in community as an intrinsic part of the training and the subsequent life of a sister, although most of the sisterhoods and the deaconess orders sent sisters out to branch houses, etc., in very small numbers, often as few as two. However, these sisters were still regarded as members of the Community and in some orders there would be a requirement for the sisters to return periodically. Thus character in the deaconess institutes and sisterhoods included an issue of community living.

Success was considered on both a skills basis and in terms of character, that is to say, success was based on both intellect and morality. Many of the training institutions were very testing in terms of acceptance. The Holy Rood

Sisterhood over a period of twenty years accepted fewer than half those who offered (From the Holy Rood Archive held at the Lambeth Palace Library) and Susan Munn showed similar figures in other sisterhoods (Mumm, 1999:App 4). These figures and the Nightingale figures are not conclusive, as it is not always entirely clear which women chose to withdraw of their own accord, or because of family pressure, and which women were not accepted for further training. The Nightingale Training School took its first probationers on 9 July 1861. From 1862 to 1880, 188 probationers were accepted and 62 did not complete their training (Woodham-Smith, 1951:381). At Kaiserswerth, approximately half of the probationers were accepted as deaconesses, according to a letter of C. Stephens dated 23rd September 1869 and held at the Fliedner Archiv. Discontinuation was frequently on the grounds of character.

It followed that Florence Nightingale believed that the character of those who undertook nursing was fundamental to their ability to perform the work. Owain quoted Florence Nightingale's letters to probationers of St Thomas Nightingale Training School in 1873 "it is what she is in herself" (Owain 1882:1038). Grierson stated that the job of a nurse was "to exert a superior and elevating influence on others" and "ladylike refinement will ensure this" (Grierson 1981:27). Bishop quoted the annual address to the Nightingale school as follows: "It is by the silent influence of a Christ-like life that a nurse in charge of wards makes her ward say 'Go and sin no more'" (Bishop, 1962:17). All of this shows a clear movement from nursing as a paid task to a vocation which required the input of the whole person. Florence Nightingale said "to take up nursing was the equivalent of a religious vow" (Wake, 1998:42). Dingwall suggested that this was the point at which nursing moved from a previous position in the provision of practical care to a position of moral input (Dingwall, 1988:43). It may be not as simple as this. There are significant arguments that a host of social factors contributed to this, as has been argued within Chapter 4. It should be noted that many of these probationers had previous experience in nursing before training. Sister Dora had nursed in her village of Hauxwell and whilst she was a village school teacher (Manton, 1970:43,138). Florence Nightingale had nursed the poor in Lea Hurst (Woodham-Smith, 1951:44). Agnes Jones undertook much district work including nursing in her home area (Jones, 1871:73). The decision to commence nursing had often been

accompanied by soul searching, with the women considering whether this different form of nursing was appropriate for them on a character or vocational basis rather than a task basis. Sister Dora spent some years and more than one visit before she became a member of the Coatham Sisterhood and Florence Nightingale made a decision in 1843 that she was called to be a nurse, but this was not put into action in terms of her work in the Crimea for some years, for it was not until autumn 1847 that she became ill and met Miss Hannah Nicholson with whom she discussed the life of the soul and its union with God in order to qualify to perform God's work. It is therefore surprising, after such lengthy consideration by these women, that the rate of non-completion of training is so high.

Nurse training took the form of the apprenticeship model in Nightingale nurses, deaconess institutes and sisterhoods, a model which, as Bradshaw suggested, was intended (during the period between 1860 and 1896), to encourage a virtuous character, as well as to prepare nurses with biomedical knowledge and technical skill, and (during the period between 1874 and 1982) to develop moral character and encourage professional etiquette (Bradshaw, 2001:3). A nurse was also supposed to be a model of obedience. Within this form of training, the example of the sister was crucial, for learning was by that example, and, as part of the purpose of the training related to character, the personality of the sister was also crucial. Indeed, for the deaconesses, the issue of character may be regarded as more important than technical skill. It was a primary function of the sisters responsible for the probationer deaconesses to instil good character and spiritual training, whilst the probationer deaconesses were on rotation on the wards. Jones quoted from a letter of Agnes Jones, "Is the Christian training of the nurses to be the primary and hospital skill the secondary object?" (Jones 1871:185).

The ordination form for a deaconess at the North London Deaconess Institute dated 10 October 1864, and held at the Fliedner Archiv, said:

> We the undersigned do hereby certify that …….. was admitted a candidate on the ……day of ……18……..and that she has served her probation extending over a period of ….. to our satisfaction and that we have examined her And further that by full satisfaction of her fitness Godly life and conversation we do recommend her to our right

reverend Father in God ……..Lord Bishop of London to be admitted to act as a Deaconess within His diocese.
As witness our hands this ……..day of ……18...
Chaplain Head deaconess

This form of ordination is notable for its omission of reference to any other feature than character and spiritual life. This is to be compared with the form of ordination used at Kaiserswerth, which is quoted later, and which referred to skills-based competence. It is also to be compared with the current form of ordination of deacons currently used in the Methodist Church which also refers to skills-based competence (Methodist Worship Book, 1999:313-329).

Character clearly played an important part in training for all forms of nursing and does not seem to have been more important in any form of nursing. Character was regarded as an essential attribute for initial and final acceptance. In all forms of nursing, it was principally encouraged by the sister in charge of the ward.

5.4.5 Purpose of Training

The purpose of nurse training appears to have been different for the sisterhoods and the Nightingale Training School. The Nightingale Training School distinguished to some extent between nurses and lady probationers. However, it seems that the main intention of the School, certainly in respect of the lady probationers, was to train lady superintendents for hospitals, although this included training in all practical aspects of nursing. For the sisterhoods, training did not seem to distinguish between sisters and lay sisters or offer additional training for the Choir Sisters in the way that Kaiserswerth or the Nightingale School did, although several of the Sisterhoods offered training for lady probationers who were not members of the Order. For an example of this, the Middlesbrough Annual Hospital Reports advertised this facility and indeed the Walsall Cottage Hospital also did so for a short time within the control of Sister Dora. Lonsdale was one of these Lady Probationers who is referred to in Chapter 3 above.

Although the training for lay sisters tended to be longer in terms of years (Mumm, 2001), the choir sisters underwent practical training which involved learning household tasks in order to oversee the lay sisters. Sister Dora trained

to scrub floors, make beds and cook. To the end of her life she was proud of being able to undertake all aspects of hospital management and was pleased when the servant left, as she then undertook the work (Manton, 1970:219). Although the lay sisters would commonly undertake this work, where they existed in sufficient numbers, the training of the sisters enabled them to do so as well so that they could oversee and manage others. Sisters appeared not to have been trained to undertake superintendency (since this would not be needed in a sisterhood, with the possible exception of All Saints, which ran many hospitals) but to oversee wards. Nevertheless, this training was clearly used, and intended to be used, to allow sisters to take on superintendency. Sisters in charge of wards would be moved to take over branch houses and therefore superintendency of hospitals. An example of this can be seen in the movement of four deaconesses from Kaiserswerth to the German Hospital, Dalston, recorded in the records of the German Hospital Dalston, 1845-1869, held at the Fliedner Archiv, Kaiserswerth.

Furthermore, it is clear from the work Sister Dora undertook, that although she did not delegate well, she could not have undertaken all the work herself. There was a period in Walsall when night nursing was undertaken by other than trained nurses until this was taken over by Sister Dora. Thus, for Sister Dora and presumably for other sisterhoods, there was an element of de facto superintendency. On looking at the amount of patient care undertaken by the All Saints Sisters compared with the number of sisters, this issue of the delivery of management or superintendence rather than practical care must also have been true for other sisterhoods. It was simply impossible for all care to have been delivered by the sisters.

Sticker stated that it was the role of the Head Deaconess to train probationers in the work of the deaconess in cooking, housework, washing and nursing (Sticker, 1960:211). The Jahresbericht (Annual Report) of 1 January 1844 to 1 January 1845 (held at the Fliedner Archiv) stated that the Institute taught the deaconesses in religion and in the method of psychiatric nursing (the latter seems to have been unusual. It has not been possible to trace any other Sisterhood nursing or Deaconess nursing which dealt with psychiatric work). However, psychiatric nursing remains a speciality of the hospital at

Kaiserswerth. Thus the purpose of training was to ensure competence in areas of practice and to enable management of others in the exercise of those skills.

There is therefore a clear distinction between the Nightingale training and that of the deaconesses and sisterhoods. The Nightingale training was intended to train superintendents of hospitals which would have been a permanent and full time job. The deaconess institutes and sisterhoods intended to train women to manage wards and to oversee the training and work of other nurses and probationers, as well as to undertake the work themselves as appropriate.

5.5 The Work of a Nurse within a Sisterhood and within other institutions

The historical basis of hospital work is that the early Medieval hospitals in England were organised within the Christian Church and although many of these were closed at the Reformation, there were a number reopened as secular organisations fairly shortly afterwards (Woodward, 1974:Appendix 1).

In the eighteenth century, there was a growth of voluntary secular hospitals and dispensaries, which became hospitals in the nineteenth century. The objects of the care of these hospitals were the industrious poor. It was considered that there was a gap in provision, in that the well-off could afford medical care and the workhouse poor had care provided for them (although there was something of an overlap of provision as some workhouses bought beds from the voluntary hospitals – Doncaster was an example of this sort of provision). Furthermore, the economy of the community depended, in significant part, upon the productivity of the industrious poor. The North London Deaconess Institute was quoted by Mother Clare as providing nursing at its house at 50 Burton Crescent London “to afford a refuge to the better class sick poor in their last hours” at a cost of 7/- per week (Mother Clare 1952:2). Interestingly, this is exactly what the Community of All Hallows appears to continue to provide in the present day, but without charge, being involved in the care and funding of a hospice in the village of Ditchingham.

Hospital nursing was practised in these institutions with the intention that this should be skills based, but the reputation of those who nursed there was seriously tarnished and the success of these hospitals varied significantly.

Mortality figures varied considerably among the hospitals. For example, Salisbury General Infirmary's mortality rates in 1860-61 were 2.3%, Hull Royal Infirmary in 1860 was 7.3% and Manchester Royal Infirmary in 1859-60 was 12.3%. These are all figures taken from the various hospitals' annual reports. Florence Nightingale wanted to undertake three months' training at the Salisbury Infirmary and her family was scandalised because of the reputation for drunkenness and immorality of the hospital nurse. This was illustrated by Charles Dickens' portrayal of Sarah Gamp in *Martin Chuzzlewit* which appeared in monthly instalments in 1843-4, where he described Mrs Gamp as having a red and swollen nose and that "it was difficult to enjoy her society without becoming conscious of a smell of spirits" (Dickens, 1999:307).

The Kaiserswerth Deaconess Institution had begun to alter this image, probably helped by the fact that vocational nursing had not fallen into desuetude in continental Europe, although the tarnished image of nursing personified by Sarah Gamp in England was also present in Germany, where the doctors complained bitterly of the drunkenness and immorality of the hired servants (A Lady, 1857?:25). When this model of vocational nursing was brought to England it drew on the district visiting societies of the Church of England begun in the 1820s as an evangelical initiative. The district visiting societies had extended to attract women from the High Church or Oxford Movement as well as evangelical women and therefore these societies included women who became interested in sisterhoods as well as those interested in deaconess orders. Thus nursing was moved nursing from being purely skills-based to being about both skills and character or example – to having a clear spiritual component.

As has been noted earlier in this chapter, Florence Nightingale and the sisterhoods also emphasised the female and vocational aspect of nursing (Nightingale, 1859). Wake quoted from a private letter of Florence Nightingale "to take up nursing was the equivalent of a religious vow" (Wake, 1998:42). Therefore she believed that nursing should be undertaken without pay. She believed there was a loss of virtue in working as a nurse for pay (even though she paid the nurses at the St Thomas's Hospital). She said, very early in her

career, “where women undertake so toilsome an office for hire and not for love it cannot be otherwise” (Nightingale, 1851b).

There was therefore an ontological view of nursing which continued to such aspects as the dress and deportment of a nurse. Florence Nightingale criticised the modern dress of women especially crinolines and advocated “a firm light quick step” (Nightingale, 1859:27). This clearly advocated female nursing and is consonant with the attitude of the Sisterhoods developing, as they did, a plain dress.

In functional terms, nursing was seen as medical nursing and day time work, as well as carrying hospital management responsibility. However, this view rapidly expanded into surgical nursing in terms of small operations undertaken without anaesthetic (the use of anaesthesia in all surgery was in its infancy and chloroform in its suppression of respiration was dangerous). Nursing also included dispensing. In Kaiserswerth, nursing also expanded to psychiatric nursing.

Details of daily routine of these nurses vary from one institution to another. The following timetable gives examples of the various descriptions of the routine at Kaiserswerth:

Baly (1986:35) From description by Nightingale	A Lady (1857?:63)	Jones (1871:37, 105, 122, 133).
Rise	4.30-5.30 Rise	5.00 -6.00 Rise
Breakfast	6.30 Breakfast followed by the singing of a hymn, a Bible reading and extempore prayer	6.00 breakfast 7.00 Prayers
8.00 Wards including prayers		7.00-10.30 Hospital
Dinner	12.00 Dinner	12.00 Dinner
Wards		2.00 Classes or hospital
Exercise		3.30 *Stille stunde*: singing of two verses of a hymn followed by thirty minutes meditation
Tea		4.00 Tea
Wards		5.30-6.30 Hospital
Supper		7.00 Supper
9.45 Dormitory including prayers	After supper a further hymn, Bible reading and extempore prayer	8.00-9.30 Teaching
Bed		10.00 Bed

Service in Church at 11.00 each Sunday

Florence Nightingale argued strongly against the medicalisation of nursing (Nightingale, 1859:11 and Sticker 1972:7) and there is some suggestion that Sister Dora declined the opportunity of medical training in Edinburgh because she saw nursing as distinctive work (Manton, 1970:229) . Both women saw nursing as offering a particular service to the patient, which was different from that which was offered by the doctor. They also saw nursing as needing its own management structure, which again was different from that organised by the medical staff. Similarly, the Kaiserswerth Institute set up a system whereby the sisters were answerable to the superintendent and the Head Deaconess in respect of nursing matters including ward management. That is to say, the accountability was not to the medical hierarchy. Many of these hospitals were largely independent of physicians and highly dependent on the Head Nurse or the Founder of the Institution. It was unusual for there to be a physician integral

to the hospitals, visiting physicians being appointed. At Kaiserswerth the first physician was a Roman Catholic and at Walsall, as well as at Middlesbrough, the visiting physicians changed fairly regularly, the annual hospital reports relating the names of the visiting physicians. Sticker indicates that Theodor Fliedner and his first wife Friederike set up Kaiserswerth specifically independently from doctors, clergy, governing bodies and authorities (Sticker, 1960:180ff). This policy has had a long legacy in Germany where many of the hospitals remain confessing hospitals, (that is to say hospitals which remain connected to a particular Christian denomination or tradition) possibly because of their independence.

On the other hand, however, like the sisterhoods, there was a dependence on physicians for medical work and supervision and an extent to which the women were seen as exercising a ministry of service. This was principally toward the sick but the ethos ran deep and there was an element of the women being servants in a general sense. This of course was emphasised by the history of nursing which demonstrated nurses as servants. It was further emphasised by the nature of private nursing which also demonstrated nurses as servants. At Kaiserswerth, Theodor Fliedner expounded the place of a deaconess by referring to the early Church, expounding the role of a deaconess as that of a female servant of the sick and poor for Jesus' sake. This view of deaconesses is described at Romans 16:1, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea".

Fliedner drew upon the Sisters of Mercy as something of a role model and the concept of Motherhouse – so important in the deaconess orders – came originally from the Sisters of Mercy. Nevertheless, it is clear from the writings of Florence Nightingale (Nightingale, 1859:20,29), and other available writing such as the *Hausordnung* of the Kaiserswerth Institute (held at the Fliedner Archiv and reproduced in Sticker, 1960:243-248), that there was an autonomous role for nurses. The nurses were regarded as having particular skills in spiritual care especially and also of overall ward and hospital management. Spiritual care included encouragement of patients and staff toward a better life and holding patients and staff before God in their own

spiritual lives as nurses. The *Hausordnung* at Kaiserswerth makes this clear at paragraph 26:

> Bei der Pflege der Kranken müssen die Diakonissen stets vor Augen haben, daß sie Christus selbst in ihren Kranken pflegen nach seinem Wort: Ich bin krank gewesen, und ihr habt mich besucht. Was ihr getan habt einem unter diesen meinem geringsten Brüdern, das habt ihr mir getan.

This can be translated as, "In caring for the sick the deaconesses must always remember that they are caring for Christ himself in their sick ones, according to his word: I was sick and you visited me. For inasmuch as you did this for my brothers, you did it for me". This is a quotation from Matthew 25:26,40.

Hospital management included cleaning and staff management together with dietetic and pharmacy management and delivery. At Kaiserswerth, the Superintendent, who was in charge of a group of sisters each responsible for a small ward, was responsible for the physical and spiritual needs of the nurses and was answerable to Theodor Fliedner. Florence Nightingale took the view that nurses should obey the physician in matters of treatment but the Head Nurse in matters of patient care and sanitation.

A Lady (1857?:Appendix 2) gives the following as part of the Kaiserswerth Ordination service for Deaconesses:

> They have under the direction of the Superior and the physician exercised themselves in the bodily care of the sick and poor whose servants they are to be and under the direction of the clergyman learnt to satisfy the spiritual wants of those under their care as far as is consistent with their office. Whenever they could they have relieved the afflicted and the miserable and have diligently followed every good work.

Florence Nightingale considered that the responsibility of the nurse was encapsulated in five essential elements: the health of a house depends on pure air, pure water, efficient drainage, cleanliness and light. She saw nursing as involving not simply the care of the sick but also the management of the household or hospital and the management and training of staff. This was clearly also the view of Sister Dora who, close to death in 1878, supervised the fitting out of the new hospital and various aspects of its design. These tasks were also seen as part of the nursing task by the hospital governors who asked the sisterhoods to take over the nursing of their hospitals. The Walsall governors announced in 1863 that the Coatham Sisterhood would be taking

over the nursing and management of the hospital (*Walsall Free Press* 8th October 1863).

As to delegation and management of staff, Florence Nightingale emphasised this: “not how can I always do this right thing myself but how can I provide for this right thing to be always done” (Nightingale, 1859:20,29). This was clearly not the strong point of Sister Dora, who found delegation difficult and preferred to deal with tasks herself. Indeed delegation and consultation were often not the strong points of the women in these managerial positions. A further example is to be found in Elizabeth Ferard of the North London Deaconess Institute, who developed a different stricter Rule after she became the Head Deaconess, apparently without consultation. Nevertheless, the creative energy and vision of these women was often immense. The North London Deaconess Institute began on 30th November 1861 with two women and these tiny numbers were common. The work undertaken by this Institute, in 1863, with three deaconesses and six candidates (later known as probationers and later still in this organisation as novices) included nursing, teaching and parish work (A Lady, 1857?:10).

The extent to which a nurse was part of a team was variable. From Kaiserswerth (A Lady, 1857:10), it is clear that Kaiserswerth Deaconesses never went to their work singly, although they might end up as single deaconesses because of the death or marriage of the person with whom they had been sent out. Sister Dora initially went to Walsall with another sister. However, she rapidly became the only sister at the hospital. The Coatham Sisterhood sent sisters out alone to private nursing placements (Manton, 1970:172).

Florence Nightingale worked in both medical and surgical nursing. Sister Dora however, worked mainly with surgical nursing in the Cottage Hospital at Walsall which was largely an accident hospital. The general belief, however, was that surgical nursing was the work of dressers or clerks who were medical students in the latter stages of their training. Night nursing was largely unheard of as night watching was undertaken by hired servants. Nevertheless, Sister Dora economised on the costs of Walsall Hospital by removing these servants and

taking this task upon herself. One of the myths of Florence Nightingale is of the lady with the lamp, for this view of night nursing pervaded the Crimea also, save that Florence Nightingale took the view that staying with the dying was an important function for her sisters. Florence Nightingale considered that the work of the sisters was of management of the hospital and the staff and the spiritual dimension of staff and patients. Accordingly, although the sisters needed to ensure day to day work was undertaken, which would sometimes mean they had to do it themselves, this work was appropriately undertaken by more junior members of staff. However, sitting with the dying allowed the sisters to pray for those patients and to take this last opportunity for conversion of their patients.

Although the Nightingale Training School offered training for district nursing, there seems to have been no district nursing undertaken in the same way as outpatient nursing was dealt with at Walsall. Outpatient work at Walsall included both regular outpatient clinics and home visiting as necessary. At Kaiserswerth the deaconesses were trained and sent out as parish deaconesses, which was largely district nursing (Jones, 1871:105, in which Agnes Jones described accompanying one of the Parish deaconesses). It should be noted that this work was intended to be exemplary of character as well as functional in the same way that hospital nursing was intended to be. The deaconesses were intending to demonstrate skills and character which could be copied by those with whom they worked. The figures for Walsall, and indeed for Middlesbrough, within the Annual Reports, showed a strong emphasis on district or outpatient nursing. This work with the community surrounding the hospital was also a part of the sisterhood nursing, but not of institutions such as the Nightingale Training School. Sister Dora saw a part of her role as being involved actively in the life of the local church. She actively participated in a parish mission in Walsall taking services for prostitutes and in a series of services for cab drivers supporting this work with a developed relationship with cab drivers and routinely giving them Christmas presents. She left a Christmas gift of gloves for the cab drivers of Walsall when she died in 1878. She also developed community relations within the hospital, including Sunday afternoon services and Bible Study for present and past patients. This work was not undertaken at the Nightingale School. However, within the

Crimea, Florence Nightingale developed activities for the soldiers. These included methods of spending their time which did not involve drink and then providing reliable means of forwarding their wages home to their families (Woodham-Smith, 1951:239-40).

The work of a hospital nurse included the spiritual as well as the physical welfare of the patients. In a letter of 17 February 1870, Elizabeth Ferard, the founder of the North London Deaconess Institute, writing to Theodor Fliedner, in a letter held in the Fliedner Archiv, said, “Our work at Great Northern Hospital” under the sanction of the Bishop, included religious teaching “so much more than is usual in other London Hospitals”. It was also true at Kaiserswerth that the deaconesses were responsible for morning prayer and other devotions on the wards and the Nightingale Training School emphasised the importance of sisters taking prayers on the wards (Baly, 1986:86). Springer, in Nightingale’s *Suggestions for Thought by Florence Nightingale* (Springer, in Nightingale, 1994:116) quoted her as follows: “Unless you make a life which shall be the manifestation of your religion it does not much signify what you believe”. Sister Dora also took prayers and Bible Studies on the wards. Watkin stated that the Evangelical Protestant Deaconess Institute expected its deaconesses to read the Gospel daily on the wards: offer prayers with the patients and distribute tracts (Watkin, 1967:84).

It was important, even central, to the lives and motivation of these women (even though the prevailing opinion of society circumscribed their activity) that nursing should be a demonstration of life and of belief – that this should be a lived theology. Macrae (2001) encapsulated this in the phrase “nursing as a spiritual practice”. However, there is a distinction in the way this was exercised by the Nightingale nurses and those in the deaconess institutes and the sisterhoods. In the latter two, there was a clear intention that nursing should be holistic and not simply based on a hospital, unlike the Nightingale nurses. This led to a development of both district nursing and district welfare work.

5.6 Status of Nurses in several contexts

Nurses were of poor status generally. They had a poor reputation in general, moral terms. This is evident in terms of fictional writing about nurses: a clear

example of this which has already been mentioned is the character of Sarah Gamp, (Charles Dickens writing in *Martin Chuzzlewit* originally published in 1843-4) who entered folklore as a stereotypical nurse of her time. She must have been a recognisable character for Dickens' readers. However, as a result of the growth of medical science and the increasing need for hospitals, the hospitals needed to be better run than they had been and the nurses needed to be respectable and better trained. According to the 1851 census, there were 25,466 nurses and 39,139 nurses in domestic service, of which 18,122 were between 5 and 20 years old and 508 were between 5 and 10 years old and 2,822 were midwives. Of the 18 nurses in the Strand Workhouse in 1851, according to the census of that year, 14 were over 60 years old and 4 were over 70 years old. This makes it clear that the status of nurses was poor and little was expected of them. This was a situation which could not continue if hospitals were to achieve the goal of being better managed.

The sisterhoods and Florence Nightingale increased the status of nurses and nursing by making it the work of a lady and emphasising this both by declining payment for these lady nurses and by increasing a sense of vocation. Theodor Fliedner also emphasised the issue of vocation and the "need to win their hearts as otherwise hireling" (Sticker, 1960:197). Nevertheless, a trained deaconess was paid a small amount of money each year, but this was clearly in the nature of a stipend rather than a wage, thus retaining the necessary sense of vocation. This was said to be £3-15/- per annum together with uniform (A Lady, 1857?: Appendix 3, 69). The Evangelical Protestant Deaconess Institute met the maintenance of their deaconesses from a common fund and paid the trained deaconesses seven guineas a year (Watkin, 1967:59). Bed and board was provided, although in the sisterhoods, choir sisters generally made a contribution and often this was at a high level. This contribution could cause a conflict because of the need to retain the sense of vocation whilst recognizing the poverty of some applicants. Sister Dora was at a disadvantage when trying to enter her sisterhood as a choir sister because a monthly payment was required and she and her sister Frances were unable to meet it. Interestingly, the contribution was met within the community, but Sister Dora felt this disadvantage keenly (Manton, 1970:154). It would have been significant to her in view of the way her father had used money as a means of control of his

family. Sister Dora had derived a sense of independence subsequent to the death of her mother from her ability to earn her own living. Thus financial independence was important to her in a very particular way.

However, this issue of payment was clearly important. Although one cannot discount the extent to which women of higher social class were only able to nurse by dint of this task being regarded as an extension of their existing social responsibility, nevertheless this matter of payment became a point of principle. The North Ormesby Annual Hospital Report of 1863 pointed out, as other hospital reports similarly commented on sisterhood nursing, “It needs but little reflection to perceive that educated women moved by the love of God and nursing with a sister’s care must produce a result far above the ordinary system”. Many of the hospital reports declared the survival rates better in hospitals where sisterhood nursing was involved as well as developing a mythology surrounding the dedication and skill of these nurses. This connection of the sisterhood nursing and the survival rates is shown in the Walsall Hospital Annual Reports of 1867 and 1874 and in the Charing Cross Minutes of the Council 2 January 1867, fol. 258. The myth of ‘Sister Dora’s arm’ is a case in point. This was a story of a miner who attended with a damaged arm, which the doctor declared required amputation. The man begged that this should not occur and Sister Dora undertook to nurse the man. The doctor washed his hands of the case and Sister Dora assiduously irrigated the wound, resulting in its eventual healing, demonstrating what could be seen as a lady’s devotion as a significant factor in the story. The man referred to this thereafter as Sister Dora’s arm (Manton, 1970, 189-190).

It is clear from written material at the time that becoming a sister or a deaconess improved the status of women who were not already ladies. Theodor Fliedner noted in correspondence held at the Fliedner Archiv in Kaiserswerth that the deaconesses tended to come from the peasant classes but their status improved by becoming deaconesses. He himself may have contributed to this improvement by requiring that the uniform dress be that of a married woman of the Lower Rhine. In a letter from the North London Deaconess Institute to Kaiserswerth of 1863, held at the Fliedner Archiv, there was a sense that becoming a deaconess raised the social status of some

women and that this was their motivation. Elizabeth Ferard in this letter to Theodor Fliedner complained that women of the lower classes wish to raise their status and joined with this prominently in mind. She referred to this in a subsequent letter to Theodor Fliedner in 1865, also held at the Fliedner Archiv.

Sisterhoods, unlike deaconess institutes, tended to have both lay and choir sisters, who held different status. However, both had an elevated status as ladies. Lay sisters were generally subject to a longer novitiate. They undertook the more menial tasks and did not have management responsibility, neither did they have a vote in Chapter. The lay and choir sisters were often distinguished both by their apparel and by the way they were known. In the All Saints Sisters, lay sisters were known as Sister…, whereas choir sisters were known as the Sister…. The choir sisters were socially superior to the lay sisters and the lay sisters could not generally aspire to the senior roles in the community. In most orders, transfers between lay and choir sisters were not possible although there were exceptions to this. St Mary's Wantage is one of the few examples of an order which did not distinguish between lay and choir sisters. Some orders, such as the Clewer sisters had a further group known as Magdalen sisters. These were women who had been 'rescued' from a life of ill repute or abuse and had completed the programme which would have allowed them to be placed by the Order in appropriate service. These women had decided to devote themselves to sisterhood. They could, after seven years, transfer to lay sisterhood within the Clewer Order. It seems likely that, despite the differences, these distinctions in status were regarded internally within the orders only.

Florence Nightingale made a distinction in training between lady probationers and others, as many did. Sisters were promoted from the ranks at St Bartholomew's Hospital but this was not a general practice (Summers, 2000:34). However, in all three systems, there is no suggestion that lady probationers (unlike women of other classes) improved their status by becoming nurses, but retained the status of ladies. The whole system was developed in such a way that these ladies retained their status.

5.7 Motivation of Women to be Nurses within Sisterhoods and as Deaconesses and Nightingale Nurses

Summers, in a chapter entitled 'The Costs and Benefits of Caring: Nursing Charities 1830 – 1860' (Barry and Jones, 1991:133-148) wrote of "a movement which was fed by the desire to spread the Christian faith and preach the gospel of reconciliation". The issue of financial motivation is complex. Financial considerations were not so clear in the deaconess institutes. However, for the sisterhoods, there was no question of payment. Similarly, for the lady sisters and superintendents in Nightingale nursing, there was no payment, although nurses were paid in the Nightingale system. Motivation in all three systems was regarded as properly spiritual on the part of the sisters.

Florence Nightingale spoke of a Christian motivation. Calabria and Macrae made it clear that Florence Nightingale considered the idea of joining a sisterhood, as an early adult (Nightingale, 1860). She was quoted in Woodham-Smith (1951:21) as having said, "On February 7th 1837 God spoke to me and called me to His service". She was caught up in her call and spent considerable time discussing this with various friends, for example, the American missionary Frances Hill, when she was in Athens in 1851. When she left Kaiserswerth, at her request, Theodor Fliedner consecrated her to her task (Webb, 2002:85). It followed that Christian female virtues such as obedience and chastity were relevant to her call. Florence Nightingale commented on Mary Baldwin "She had no strong belief in her mission, no presentiment, no conviction that this was her vocation – but to take what was presented to her, to follow the indications of the will of God and prepare herself for them, that was her mission, that her way" (Nightingale, 1996:63). This seems difficult to distinguish from vocation or call.

It is notable, however, that Florence Nightingale did not express an understanding of that to which she was called, although in a private note in 1851, she said, "there never was any vagueness in my plans or ideas as to what God's work was for me" and at Christmas 1856, when the Royal Commission was delayed, she said, "My God why hast thou forsaken me?" She is also to be distinguished from the sisterhoods in that she seems to have believed that God called her to the work, whereas the sisterhoods believed that the work was God's. This belief was demonstrated in Sister Dora's 'inasmuch'.

Furthermore, the sisterhoods believed the whole of their lives were dedicated to God, rather than only the task of nursing. This meant that the work they undertook in terms of ministry was of a holistic nature. Sister Dora undertook various tasks within the Church, such as Bible Study and missions, whereas Florence Nightingale seemed to believe that nursing was the task to which she was called. This matter of the task of nurses in different contexts was explored further in Chapter 4.

Nevertheless Florence Nightingale (Nightingale, 1859) stated that a nurse should be "a religious and devoted woman; she must have a respect for her own calling, because God's precious gift of life is often literally placed in her hands" (Woodham-Smith, 1951:269). In her annual address to the Nightingale School in 1873, she used concepts of service to God: "It is by the silent influence of a Christ-like life that a nurse in charge of a ward makes her ward say 'Go and sin no more'" (quoted in Bishop, 1962:17). However, she seemed to feel that nursing should be extended to any creed (Webb, 2002:138). Thus, it did not require a Christian impetus or a direct call from God, in her view, although this is difficult to disentangle because of use of faith language in the descriptions given.

Florence Nightingale clearly believed that she was called of God. However, there seems to have been a distinction in her view of her calling. She seemed to believe that she was called to the task of hospital nursing, whereas the sisterhoods and deaconess institutes believed they were called to devote their lives to the service of God. This latter belief is perhaps summed up in the Lutheran prayer for the day commemorating the life and work of Theodor Fliedner part of which reads as follows:

> *We praise your name, O God, for all the dedicated women from the time of the Apostles down to the present who have undertaken to minister in the name of Christ to the needs of the Church and of the world.*
> (Kiefer, s.a.: justus.anglican.org/resources/bio/259.html)

5.8 Summary

This chapter has compared the issues involved in nursing within the three strands of sisterhood nursing, deaconess nursing and Nightingale nursing. There is a common thread of vocation running through all three forms of nursing. Ladies within all three strands of nursing were regarded as having high spiritual aims which were central both to their motivation and to the work they undertook. This centrality of spiritual aims was an inherent feature of the way training was undertaken, and variations in this training were largely due to the nature of the intake of nurses. For example, the deaconess nurses undertook a level of basic education because they came from a more uneducated group in their society. However, a divergence is notable in the way the work of the nurse is undertaken. Ladies within the Nightingale system were trained to be superintendents of hospitals as a full-time job. The sisterhoods and deaconess institutes intended their people to be part of a team and to undertake work as required by the order. They intended to be a more holistic establishment, shown by the various roles that the orders and institutes undertook, but also by the importance of district work in these roles. Thus the Nightingale system was more individualistic and was more task focussed (despite its spiritual emphasis) and the deaconess and sisterhood nursing systems aimed to be more community based, both in terms of the nurses and in terms of the way they served. However, insofar as the sisterhoods and deaconess institutes are concerned, it is difficult to observe a distinction except as to the higher social status of the entrants to sisterhoods, perpetuated by the two tier system of most orders.

6.0 PRACTICE OF FAITH: THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MINISTRY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SISTERHOOD

This chapter will consider the extent to which there were distinctive features of ministry in the lives and work of the members of sisterhoods. It includes a consideration of faith as a motivating factor in their choices regarding membership of a sisterhood and regarding the work they undertook. It also includes the impact of their faith upon the way they lived their lives.

6.1 High Church sisters compared with organised women's work in the Low Church and nonconformist churches

6.1.1 Formation of groups

The sisterhoods, like the deaconess orders, tended to be founded by a dedicated and committed woman. However, it is notable that the sisterhoods were also often co-founded or strongly influenced in their foundation by a charismatic priest. The East Grinstead sisters were co-founded by Reverend Neale and the Coatham sisterhood was co-founded by Reverend Postlethwaite. The sisterhoods did not require the authority or permission of the Bishop (although they preferred not to be at odds with the Bishop). This was not the case with the deaconesses and indeed the deaconesses were not nearly so dependent on a priest because they did not require daily Mass. In addition to this the deaconesses came within the authority of the Bishop of the diocese because they required his consent to found the order at all and to continue to work.

In the nonconformist churches, the groups of women tended to be less firmly organised; they were engaged in District visiting, schools and classes for women and children rather than the foundation of larger institutions such as hospitals. The nonconformist churches (apart from the Methodists) were autonomous as individual churches and this clearly had an impact on the way the groups of women were founded.

6.1.2 Continuing work of the sisterhoods

The sisterhoods undertook a broad spectrum of work. They advertised themselves as undertaking work in parishes when asked by priests to do so which was usually work with individual women or groups of women and children, giving Scriptural teaching and instruction in practical skills such as nursing and sewing. They also continued work at their own instigation. This tended to be work in commencing and developing hospitals and associated institutions, schools and orphanages. These ranged widely in size. The schools and orphanages tended to be bigger than the hospitals which could be as small as ten beds, although there was often a large amount of associated outpatient and district work. The financial basis for these projects was often very fragile as was the resource basis: some of the institutions were short-lived or taken over by another order because of this. The sisterhoods also undertook 'rescue work' and this was funded by the Church Penitentiary Association.

In contrast, the deaconesses generally undertook parish work at the request of priests and where projects were instituted, these were much fewer in number, generally being founded at the Mother House. As a result, these projects, which were of the same nature as those of the sisterhoods, tended to be better resourced. The Kaiserswerth deaconesses, however, developed a large number of Branch Houses with their own projects and an example of this is the German Hospital in Dalston, London. As a result of the large size of the Kaiserswerth Institute, these projects were better resourced, although at one time there was only one deaconess at the German Hospital, because one had to return to Kaiserswerth as a result of illness and one became married (Wessel, 2002:199).

Individual women and groups of women in parishes and in the nonconformist churches undertook district work in the same way as the sisterhoods and the deaconesses and they too wore distinctive clothing for this purpose. They did not commence projects except for some ragged schools.

All three groups saw this work as part of their membership of the Church and as a way of bringing faith to those with whom they worked, as did the women who worked outside the Church, such as Florence Nightingale. It is difficult,

however, to completely separate this perspective from the rhetoric and conventions of the time, in terms particularly of women such as Florence Nightingale. Women such as Florence Nightingale used the rhetoric of faith, but, given that she chose not to be a member of a sisterhood, it could be presumed this language was used either as a way of her work being accepted or because she meant something different by it than was meant by the sisterhoods. It is not possible to understand exactly what she meant in her use of language from this distance of history.

6.1.3 Leadership and hierarchy of the sisterhoods

The leadership and hierarchy of the sisterhoods depended on their size. A large sisterhood, such as All Saints, would have a significant hierarchy and number of office holders, whereas a smaller order would have much fewer and would sometimes be limited simply to the Mother. Apart from the Foundress, which was often a life appointment, office holders were elected by the Chapter on a three or five yearly basis. The Chapter was usually composed of choir and lay sisters, but only choir sisters could vote. The leadership of the orders was vested in the office holders and in the Chapter, which usually met fairly frequently and made important decisions as well as decisions relating to individual sisters, such as their readiness for professing. Day to day finance decisions were made by individuals or by the Chapter. However, significant property and finance decisions were normally made by a council composed of men. To some extent this was inevitable as some of the women would be debarred from owning property. However, apart from these decisions, these communities were self-governing and, in a contemporary understanding of democracy, democratically orientated in their form of government.

The deaconess orders were organised in a similar way, although the accountability was necessarily looser in structure, as many of the deaconesses would be away from the Mother House and based in parishes for much of their time, returning to the Mother House only for rest and vacations or for retirement and sickness.

The women who worked individually or in groups in parishes were much less democratic and were led and organised by the parish priest. Similarly, women

who worked in organisations led by particular women were less democratically structured and were led by the particular women.

There does not seem any evidence that these women saw the organisation of their structures as in themselves part of the ministry or determined in a way that was regarded as appropriate for a Christian organisation.

6.1.4 Development of spirituality and practice as a group

The spirituality and practice of the sisterhoods in terms of their relationship with the Church is a complex area. The sisterhoods of the Oxford Movement in the nineteenth century were inspired by people like Southey and Newman, who advocated a revival of female communities to undertake works of charity amongst the poor. In a letter from Dr Pusey to Reverend William Farquhar Hook, the Vicar of Leeds, he hoped that sisterhoods would foster a high moral tone (Letter of Dr Pusey to Reverend W.F. Hook, 1839 in Liddon, 1893:Vol 3):

> I want very much to have one or two societies of *soeurs de la charité* formed: I think them desirable (1) in themselves as belonging to and fostering a high tone in the church, (2) as giving a holy employment to many who yearn for something; (3) as directing zeal ... to be employed in hospitals, lunatic asylums, prisons, among the females.

Thirlwell supported this desire, referring to the Oxford Movement as promoting high practical ends (Thirlwell, 1842:36-38). Reverend Neale wanted the sisters to have a slightly broader perspective, “in the first place to your own personal holiness and in the second to your work for Christ in his poor, this is my third desire for you that you should see them everywhere at all times by all means” (Neale, 1872:92). The sisterhoods tended to have their spiritual direction set by the thinking of these men, and sometimes in considerable detail, including the work undertaken, the pattern of the day and the pattern of worship. The property of the Park Village Sisterhood was identified by a committee of laymen without reference to women (Williams and Campbell, 1965:21) and the Clewer and Wantage sisterhoods worked under councils of men (Allchin, 1958:85). Some of these men clearly thought there was a problem with this in terms of the inclusion of the women. Thus, Pusey said in 1865,

> I think it is a wrong ambition of men to wish to have the direction of the work of women. I should fear that it would be for the injury of both. Women ought to understand their own work, the education and care of young women or they would not be fit for it at all (Russell, 1917:57-58).

It was certainly true that a number of these women were well enough educated to consider these issues in depth. The *Christian Lady's Magazine* of 1834-1846 included Hebrew lessons and discussions on subjects such as factory legislation. Anglo-Catholic periodicals explored theological issues and were well read by women and women were involved in women-led theology groups (Morgan and de Vries, 2010:13). Goodman referred to the use of hymns translated from Latin (Goodman, 1862:19). Nevertheless, there was an inevitable dependence on men since the Oxford Movement elevated clerical authority in men and mystical experience in women. Academic women already had a problem because of the authority of male clergy and the emphasis on a male based education, especially the use of classical languages, together with the renewed emphasis on sacraments. Such women wished to consider their faith in the same way that was done by educated men, rather than adopt the role of women as mystics and creators. Women were also encouraged to pursue the writing of poetry and hymns and devotional books, together with personal prayer, obedience, asceticism and the pursuit of holiness (Morgan and de Vries, 2010:13). Even biblical study and exegesis was difficult for women despite the Bible being considered to be the primary source of divine inspiration. The deaconess orders and the women's groups in the nonconformist churches did not experience this difficulty because the evangelical churches believed that the Bible should not be filtered through the priesthood and it followed that understanding could be in the hands of the laity. The North London Deaconess Institute advertised for theological books at one point in its history (Ancilla Domini, 1868, the house periodical of the North London Deaconess institute, published quarterly and held at the Fliedner Archiv). This acceptance of interpretation by other people than priests had the benefit of allowing a broader range of interpretation including the more mystical and poetic. The use of poetry and hymns was also included within biblical interpretation. As an example of this, Auber thought through a feminised version of the Spirit in her hymn "Our blest redeemer ere he breathed" (Hymns and Psalms, 1983:312) and "What a friend we have in Jesus" is a clear exposition of Joseph Scriven's evangelical theology (Hymns and Psalms, 1983:559). However, the Oxford Movement allowed space for women to develop their theology. Christina Rossetti used the Eucharist – ordinary bread and wine made holy – to sacramentalise ordinary things (Rossetti, 1883:131-132) and Minnie

Benson (wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury) considered the theological implications of her lesbian sexuality in her diary (Benson deposit 1/79 held in the Bodleian Library). Importantly, an incarnational theology had much room to flourish in the way that sisterhoods lived and acted, for here indeed was the demonstration of an earthly embodiment of love and a working through of what that means in a faith context including an exploration of self-sacrifice and selfless love and "the fact of the incarnation that God became a man meant that life on earth mattered profoundly" (Mumm in Melnyk, 1998:167). The sisterhoods were almost entirely active orders and provided a place where a theology of action could flourish in terms of vocation and ministry. This was not unseen at the time of the foundation and beginning of the sisterhoods although it was regarded as a female perspective. Josephine Butler saw women united in suffering in a salvific mission to institute Christ's kingdom on earth (Butler, 1876:2). Melnyk wrote about the "tendency of these women writers to advocate the centrality of action to theology":

> Far from concentrating on the compensations of the afterlife these women's theologies focus intently on this world its problems and joys [...] in fact when these women writers posit an afterlife or a mystical sphere beyond common sight it is often a way of setting upon transcendent standard by which to judge present social conditions – and most often find them wanting. Their new Jerusalems are not escapist fantasies opiate to dull the pain of social oppression but models of equality and harmony and love which rebuke the patriarchal order and inspire the Christian woman to bring them into being (Melnyk, 1998:xvii).

Beamish linked the centrality of the sacraments with such an incarnational theology: "The sacraments make the Church a living being a community that does in very truth incarnate Christ on earth" (Beamish in Melnyk, 1998:123). Women also considered and explored the nature of Christ using such examples as those demonstrated in the ministry and teachings of Joanna Southcott.

Some of this theological direction was conscious in the sisterhoods and some of it was implicit, requiring others to work through its significance, for these women were to an extent circumscribed in what they could communicate. Levine said "They were granted a role in spiritual life which at one and the same time empowered and confined them" (Levine, 1987:12). In other words, the communication of the theological direction did not depend on them, but on a collective working through of this by the whole Church. Nor was it totally dependent on words, but some of this was transmitted by action and deed. Nor

was it limited to time, for some of these directions have only become issues to be thought through with the growth of twentieth and twenty-first century perspectives on theology. That restriction of their role and confinement of their contribution in itself is part of the relationship the sisterhoods held theologically with the Church. Some of this is also true of the deaconess orders and the nonconformist churches, but because of their acceptance of lay involvement in theological and scriptural thinking, there were already outlets for the diversity of thought brought to the Oxford Movement by the sisterhoods which was perhaps not so readily available otherwise.

The sisterhoods developed a way of being community which was only adopted by men some years later. The sisterhood organisations were self-governing and, unlike the deaconess institutes, were founded on the basis that women could manage their own affairs. The sisterhoods agreed that work should not be accepted without consultation in Chapter (Holy Rood Archive, document 3919 Lambeth Palace Library). The Mother was elected, usually for a three or five year term, and upon taking up office was obeyed as holding authority from God. Decision-making was in effect delegated either to her or to the Chapter so the Mother would make decisions as to fasting; “fasting or eating all were according to the Superior’s orders and must not be questioned” (Whately, 1869:56), whilst details of daily life were agreed between the sisters (Sister Jean, 1981:4).

6.1.5 Summary

The sisterhoods developed outside the hierarchy of the Church of England, unlike the other groups of women such as the deaconess orders. However, they were to an extent dependent on the hierarchy of the Church of England in order to maintain their position within society and to retain their links with worship. As a result they were obliged to consider the values of those within the Church of England in terms of the work which they could undertake, the funding for that work and the priorities they declared. Whilst these considerations probably circumscribed their action and progress, they nevertheless made great strides in expanding the acceptable work and lifestyle of women during this period, presenting an example to the Church and society of how a community could live and act. That example was not necessarily fully

accepted or understood during its own time, but stands for reflection during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

6.2 Interaction between sisters and the Church

6.2.1 Commencement of orders

Within both the male and female orders, the involvement of the Church in the commencement of orders was diverse. Harriet Monsell of the Clewer sisters made it clear that the Bishop persuaded her to commence the order (Bonham, 1989:21), although 'permit' was the word used by Bonham (1989:11) and since it appears the Bishop thought this was a work for charity and not a sisterhood, this may be more accurate (Bonham, 1992:56). Other founders had begun orders either without consultation with the Bishop (as appears to have been the case with the Coatham sisterhood), or without the permission of the Bishop. The Church did not have a set of criteria for the commencement of orders or for their membership as these orders had not been in existence since before the Reformation (when they were, of course, Roman Catholic) and the sisterhoods commenced in the nineteenth century did not always fit male stereotypes. This lack of criteria also reduced the level of control which the Church had over the orders. In addition to this, the orders did not look to the institutional Church either for their funding or for approval of funding, unlike the priesthood. Whilst it was clearly more comfortable for the sisterhoods to have the approval of the Bishop both for the involvement of priests in their worship and in terms of the work they undertook, this was not a necessary feature (although lack of this would limit the work they proposed to do) and as a result, the commencement of the orders did not necessarily take place cooperatively between the founder and the Bishop.

6.2.2 Continuation of work of sisterhoods

The sisterhoods varied in the length of time they continued to exist and in the length of time their projects continued to exist. Some of the sisterhoods were very short-lived and either ceased to exist or amalgamated with another sisterhood or transferred pieces of work to other sisterhoods. St Thomas the Martyr Order transferred an orphanage in Liverpool to the All Saints sisterhood (Mumm, 2001:34). Other sisterhoods, such as the Sisters of the Church, continue to work in the community. The work of sisterhoods was facilitated if

they had the approval of the Bishop. This would give them a reference with parish priests without which they were unable to undertake parish work. In terms of working with philanthropists or boards and committees, such people would look to the Bishop for approval of an Anglican group. Sisterhoods without such approval would find it difficult to raise funds or work cooperatively with other groups. This difficulty led to sisterhoods sometimes moving to the diocese of a more sympathetic bishop or reconsidering the sort of work dealt with. The approval, or at least a non-confrontational relationship with the Bishop, was more important in the continuation and expansion of work than it was in commencement of work. The work of the sisterhoods and the deaconess institutes enabled the Church to consider who it was for. As Nettleship wrote,

> Whether the Church of England can become a channel of the people is a problem for the future. The masses are outside the present question and count for nothing in it .... How the Church may be brought home to the classes which have never yet been at home within it, how it may extend its area and reach the uneducated – this is a momentous question (Nettleship, 1889:271).

However, although the work of the deaconesses and the sisterhoods allowed the Church to consider its role with the whole population and whether all people can be part of the Church, it also rather separated the areas of worship and intellect (male) from the role of pastoral care (female), although Nettleship suggested, “In a Protestant church it is not the efficacy of a sacrament but by instruction and description and moral preparation that the heart is made ready to be the recipient of the influences of the Holy Spirit” (Nettleship, 1889:293), a view which did not challenge the separation, but suggested a different sort of hierarchy in responsibility for the functions.

The sisterhoods developed the concept of women undertaking professional work within the Church rather than that which came to them intuitively. This was a slow process and much of the period of Sister Dora’s life demonstrated the Church wanting to see these women as living the lives of ladies in the Church such that the Church was at times uncomfortable with them working and living in community and separating themselves from their families. In order to continue to develop their work, the sisterhoods, perhaps of necessity, accepted this myth that being part of a sisterhood took second place to family responsibilities and that this was a desirable feature (Lonsdale, 1880:40). The sisterhoods were not essential to allow the Church to develop an understanding

of the professional role of women, as other communities were undertaking this role. The Institution of Nursing Sisters was founded as a training institution by Elizabeth Fry in 1840 for women to be trained and instructed as nurses, and these women too wore a distinctive dark dress and plain cap. However, the sisterhoods (together with the deaconess institutes) offered the Church the extra dimension of addressing the spiritual care of the patients. Murray praised the improved physical care offered in certain hospitals but decried the lack of spiritual care when the hospital experience offered a particular opportunity for that. He pointed out that this could not be done by the chaplain or local clergymen alone and the use of lady visitors could interfere with medical treatment. He advocated the remedy that the nurse should give religious instruction supported by the chaplain as occurred at Kaiserswerth (Murray, 1854:7). This belief that it was appropriate for nurses to give religious instruction to patients demonstrated the extra dimension that sisterhood and deaconess nursing offered and tied a sisterhood and deaconess nurse's work into ministry. Nursing and similar 'secular' work became part of the ministry of the Church, recognised as vocation, breaking down the division between the Church and the 'world' and offering the challenge of a new definition of ministry and of the relationships of the ordained and lay members of the Church.

This method of working was mirrored in the educational work undertaken by these women. Carpenter in 1851 detailed the parlous state of children of those she called the 'perishing classes' in terms of their understanding of faith and indeed of society in general (Carpenter, 1851:26). She considered that there was a significant difference between these children and others, since she recognised that in other respects, such as school attendance figures, they were similar (Carpenter, 1851:31). She advocated the need for specific schools for this group, pointing out that there were significant advantages in attempting to educate them both for themselves and for society. She said that this work must be undertaken by those inspired by faith and love, health care and cleanliness (Carpenter, 1851:37). This specialised work was undertaken by the sisterhoods and the deaconess orders routinely and most of the orders were involved in the organisation of ragged schools and schools or classes which met the needs of those who had not previously received formal education. However, whilst this work may have been instrumental in the Church of England considering its

corporate role in social mission, Williams and Campbell made the point that at the time the Church's social role was not connected directly with the work the sisterhoods were doing, but rather with the Christian socialism and muscular Christianity (which advocated activity, particularly of a physical nature, as part of the worship of God by the whole person) of Frederick Denison Maurice (Williams and Campbell, 1965:xiii).

6.2.3 Work by sisters in the community and interaction with worship life of the community

The sisterhoods developed their own worship life which usually included the use of the medieval 'hours' so long as this discipline fitted the work they were undertaking. However, this kind of worship schedule usually relied upon a local priest for celebration of the sacraments as few sisterhoods had the exclusive time of a priest (although some founders were also the holders of the local living, as was the case with Theresa Newcomen of the Coatham sisterhood). There is no written material about this, but where a sisterhood had the exclusive time of a priest, such as the East Grinstead sisters, there seems to have been no arrangements made for periods of absence of the priest, nor did the sisterhoods develop their own worship during these periods apparently, but remained dependent on the priest.

It seems also to have been the case that some sisters wished to develop a relationship with their local community which included sharing worship. It was also true that sisters who worked with parishes or in Branch Houses necessarily used their local churches for worship because these were the only churches available to them. These seemed to have been Anglican Churches, although Sister Dora was friendly with Eliza Ridsdale, the daughter of a Methodist minister, and enjoyed Wesleyan worship. She also became involved in a Wesleyan led mission in 1875 and enjoyed being part of the Methodist social life (Latimer, 1988:28). The Walsall hospital, like a number of hospitals, was non-denominational and drew on the time of local ministers of several denominations to lead worship. Where sisters were placed in parish work, they would be involved with the local church in a cooperative relationship. However, it is interesting to note that such relationships could be fairly fragile and could be built on personality. The All Saints sisters who worked in Bradford had to

withdraw from that work when the priest changed and the breakdown of that relationship was rather messy (Ackroyd, s.a.:44). Where sisterhoods began a project or worked in a Branch House, there is little written material about their worship lives and it is difficult to know how worship was arranged. However, Sister Dora developed relationships with a few priests of a Tractarian persuasion, such as Reverend Richard Twigg and tended to worship in their churches, being a regular worshipper according to her correspondence (Lonsdale, 1880:156). The lack of material about sisterhoods and worship in these circumstances is mirrored in the deaconess institutions, although these tended to develop their mother house to undertake projects. Otherwise they worked in parishes, always with the approval of the Bishop, which presumably meant there was no difficulty about worshipping in the local church or drawing on the time of the local priest for their worship. However, where there was Branch House work, there is little information about worship. The Kaiserswerth deaconesses ran the German Hospital in Dalston, London, but there seems to be no information about the conduct of worship for the deaconesses. Other groups of women working in the Church tended to develop work identified and instigated by the priest, and therefore it is assumed there was no difficulty about their worship in the local parish church, or in the case of nonconformist churches in their own local church or society.

There is little information about the worship of sisters generally, either in the deaconess institutes or in the sisterhoods. Some of the sisterhoods had difficulty maintaining celebration of the sacraments, especially since most bishops would not allow reservation. Where sisterhoods were sending their sisters to work in parishes, then presumably worship was undertaken in the parish, and where sisterhoods were sending their sisters to work in Branch Houses, it appears from Sister Dora's experience that sisters sought out a sympathetic priest and developed their worship life in that church. This may have included worship which was not in the Anglican tradition, at least in terms of the projects in which they worked. There is little information about the worship habits of the deaconesses, but since they worked with the approval of the Bishop, it is unlikely they had any difficulty in worshipping in the parish in which they worked particularly since initially they seemed to use morning and evening prayer. Groups of women undertaking district visiting would normally

work with the parish or local church and therefore it can be assumed there was no problem with worship.

Thus, the only difficulty in developing worship was with the sisterhoods in certain circumstances and this difficulty appears to have derived from their slightly distant relationship with the Church and the Bishop, as well as from their particular requirements in worship. It is interesting, however, that there is so little material about this area of the life of these communities, when most other areas are reasonably well documented. This lack tends to emphasise the view that worship was not a major priority if work required worship to be missed by the sisters.

6.3 Inter relations with other churches and denominations

6.3.1 Formal relationships between sisterhoods and other church groups of women

The overwhelming majority of the sisterhoods were based in London, although a number of sisterhoods also had branch houses in other areas of the country. Some of the sisterhood work would have benefitted greatly from a collaborative approach to the work particularly where it was under-resourced. Some of the work was being duplicated, especially in London, in areas very close to each other. The Park Village Sisterhood was established in the slums near King's Cross, almost opposite the long established St Katherine's, and struggled to maintain its work until it was absorbed into Ascot Priory, whilst the Society of the Holy and Undivided Trinity sisters (which subsequently absorbed the Park Village community) were establishing a presence in Osnaburgh Street in the same area, and the Baptist deaconesses were establishing work in Grays Inn Road (Rose, 1954:6), but apparently there was no communication between these three institutions.

It seems that the sisterhoods worked in isolation both from each other and from other groups of women, so complementary work (for example, nursing work and district visiting) was not in any way subject to liaison to increase the efficiency of the distribution of resources. This isolation is presumably partly responsible for the duplication of service provision, but is also responsible for a distribution which is potentially ineffective both geographically and in terms of the meeting

of holistic need and this has continued until the present time. An example of this lack of liaison is seen in the workhouse nursing work of Agnes Jones in Liverpool and of the All Saints Sisters in Chorlton in Manchester. These projects would clearly have benefitted from cooperative working but there is no evidence of this at all.

An observation may be made that the social welfare work of the churches rarely works cooperatively on any major scale and often duplicates areas of provision. This is particularly obvious in children's work. The sisterhoods seemed not even seem to be aware of the work being undertaken in their neighbourhoods, although others clearly were so aware. For example, the work undertaken by the All Saints sisters in Bradford had been the subject of an approach to the East Grinstead sisters before the All Saints sisters. Thus it was clearly possible to develop a broader approach to the use of resources.

This work by the sisterhoods and other groups of women was the beginning of organised and larger scale work and provision by the churches. It provided an opportunity for cooperation in order to maximise the benefits of resources available. However, this opportunity was not grasped and this failure to use the opportunity has developed into a weakness in church social welfare work which persists and has proved very difficult to work beyond.

It is also notable that this lack of working together with other groups extended to the development of a sense of faith. There is no material which suggests that the sisterhoods worked with each other in this area either. It is correct that the liturgies of the sisterhoods commonly derived from the same sources (in particular, the material of the Visitation sisters in France) probably because the development of formal worship and the formal constitutions was in the hands of the male theologians, such as Southey and Newman, who founded the Oxford Movement and generated the sisterhoods. However, the commonality of this material is due to its common source rather than any working together between the groups. This is unfortunate since the sisterhoods could have shared concerns and priorities with each other in a way which would have been difficult with other groups, sharing experiences as they did. However, this did not occur

until the beginning of the twentieth century when the Church of England began to consider sisterhoods more overtly as part of its structure.

6.3.2 Informal relationships between sisters and other church women

In contrast to the lack of 'institutional' relationships, the sisters and other church women workers seem to have developed relationships across the churches as individuals. Sister Dora was involved in a mission in 1876 organised by the Methodists and was very clear that worship undertaken at the hospital was to be ecumenical in approach. Similarly all the sisterhoods working in hospitals seem to have used multi-faith resources as appropriate and Jewish wards (known as Hebrew wards) were staffed by Jewish personnel where this was possible (Wessel, 2002:212).

However, whilst the individual sisters became involved in work and worship of other churches and groups, nevertheless this involvement does not seem to have been translated into an institutional level, or to have been reflected upon as a general way of working rather than a practice in a particular area of work with particular individuals.

Nevertheless, the use of theology, doctrine and material from other denominations was seen by the individual sisters as enriching their worship. This was particularly the case for less formal worship such as that undertaken with patients in the hospitals. Sister Dora was prepared to consider material and especially hymns as having a part to play in attracting people to the church and noted the emotional impact of hymns by Faber and the Moody and Sankey hymns, which were extremely popular at the time. She was also prepared to use hymns as part of her individual work with patients: she used Bishop Heber's hymns with a dying patient with whom she stayed.

This work by individual sisters is probably the closest that the sisterhoods came to working with other groups and denominations and recognising what their material could offer. It is also the closest the sisterhoods appear to have come to avoiding the separation of faith and life.

6.3.3 Knowledge and work within other church practice and theology by sisters and sisterhoods

Education of women during the nineteenth century was distinctly eclectic. Some women were highly educated, particularly those in whom their fathers had taken an interest. This group included Florence Nightingale and Josephine Butler. However, for many women, education was patchy and Sister Dora is a clear example of this, for she was dependent on her older sisters who had been to boarding school and her older brother Mark Pattison who was an Oxford Fellow. As a result, although men tended to receive a systematic theological education, women's theological education could be widely different. This is clear from the training programme of the Kaiserswerth deaconesses which included basic education.

The result of this situation was, perhaps inevitably, that the male leaders of the Oxford movement were able to articulate clearly the theology of sisterhoods. This included a reference to early Christian practice and an explanation as to how sisterhoods would further the mission of the Church. The male leaders were also able to consider the constitution and worship practice of the sisterhoods from an academic perspective and drew from numerous sources. They considered the constitutions of several European Roman Catholic sisterhoods and the worship of the early church in developing the practice of the sisterhoods with which they were involved.

The sisters themselves, in contrast, had a much more pragmatic and responsive or reactive attitude to their practice. Sister Dora in common with many sisters, did not have an established theology upon entry to the sisterhood. Indeed, she was unsure of her faith at all. She joined a sisterhood which considered that the practice of worship, although desirable in terms of the routine laid down in the constitution, took second place to the work undertaken by the sisterhood. As she continued to work in Walsall particularly she developed a worship style which drew from a number of sources, using hymns from the Anglo-Catholic and Roman Catholic tradition such as those by Faber (about which she had written in a letter, "I am rejoiced that you are enjoying Faber's hymns; they always warm me up"), as well as hymns by Moody and Sankey. She developed an inclusion of prayer in her work which was more

commonly seen in the evangelical tradition than that of Anglo Catholicism. This practice was widespread in all women's work across the churches to the extent that many writers seem unable to distinguish between work which derived from an evangelical tradition and that which derived from a Catholic tradition. For example, Hempton and Hill stated that "evangelical religion was more important than feminism in enlarging women's sphere of action during the nineteenth century" but referred to sisterhoods in this context of evangelical religion (Hempton and Hill in Hayes and Urquhart, 2001:119). A letter from Sister Dora demonstrated sympathy with an evangelical view rather than an Anglo-Catholic view:

> Watch in all you do that you have a single aim ─ God's honour and glory. Look upon nursing as a privilege. Do not look upon nursing in the way they do so much now-a-days as an art or science, but as work done for Christ. As you touch each patient think it is Christ himself and then virtue will come out of the touch to yourself. I have felt that myself when I have had a particularly loathsome patient. Be full of the Glad Tidings and you will tell others. You cannot give what you have not got.

Similarly, in a letter of 9 December 1876, she wrote, "Now Jesus had set me seeking their souls", again phrasing her thoughts in evangelical terms. Perhaps inevitably this less than rigorous approach to theology, which was to a lesser extent also to be seen in the deaconess institutes, led to a much higher level of religious tolerance than amongst the male hierarchy of the church. Price attributed this to the influence of her parents, but this attribution was clearly not correct (Price, 1952:5). Nevertheless, there are several examples of inclusive practice such as her involvement in November 1876 as part of a mission to prostitutes led by the Methodists and her development of a service at the opening of the new hospital in November 1878 which included ministers from the Church of England, the Wesleyans and the Baptists.

6.3.4 Summary

There are several examples, including Sister Dora herself, of individuals working among different Christian traditions. However, such examples are not nearly so evident in institutional cooperative working, which suggests that like the development of practice, this was done from a pragmatic and reactive base rather than a basis of principle, and probably also from a lack of rigorous theological study. It also suggests that what was occurring on an individual

basis was not the subject of reflection within the sisterhoods and whether this kind of cooperation should be developed.

The sisterhoods clearly considered the practice of their faith in terms of worship to be separate from their work and did not consider the work as an expression of worship in itself. Indeed they generally made particular practice of excusing themselves from worship if the work required this, rather than requiring sisters to worship in their own place so that their Order could worship together at set times in spirit even if they were not together physically. However, that is not to say that their ministry was not expressed in their work: the material in the previous section (6.3) regarding the work the sisterhoods undertook is to be contrasted with their more formal worship.

6.4 Work with 'un-churched'

6.4.1 The problem

During the nineteenth century, as has been illustrated earlier, there was a massive movement of population from rural areas to the urban areas which grew at a fast rate. This movement caused vast problems, such as falling wages and very poor housing. Regarding possible remedies being applied, Engels commented that the "philanthropy of the rich is a rain drop in the ocean" (Engels, 1888:60).

The difficulties resulting from this population move were well identified by a number of people, including Samuel Welsh in the *Walsall Observer*; they included drainage and sewerage; health services; housing; poverty; employment; education. On the other hand, various methods were considered to attempt to make a difference. This was the time the Sunday School movement developed through such individuals as John Wesley and Robert Raikes, but, as Engels pointed out a piecemeal approach to the difficulties led to such problems as sporadic education which meant that the student could not remember the learning from one week to the next (Engels, 1888:74).

Another difficulty was that, although there were donors who chose to engage with the issues and to attempt to meet needs identified by them as necessary, such philanthropy lacked a planned approach, which meant that there was a

lack of prioritisation, consistency or hierarchy in meeting needs. As Josiah Wright pointed out In Bradford, in his comment on the *Health of the Towns Commission* of 1844, there was little point in providing public parks for a population who did not have decent housing, and yet the methods of meeting need at this time allowed exactly this to happen.

6.4.2 The declared response of sisterhoods

The development of sisterhoods was one of the responses to need during the nineteenth century. Almost all of the sisterhoods were engaged in active work rather than being contemplative, and such active work was what was envisaged by leaders of the Oxford Movement such as Newman and Southey when they advocated the development of sisterhoods (for example, Southey, 1829: Colloquy XII).

The sisterhoods declared that they intended to devote themselves to the meeting of need amongst the very poor and disadvantaged as part of their outworking of mission. Thus Mumm quoted the All Saints sisters as stating that their work was "always for the very poorest in their society" (Mumm, 2001:xii).

The sisterhoods were keen to link the work they did with their sense of faith and to ensure that this was recognised. It was in this link, amongst other things, that they were more secure in their existence, for if they were doing God's work then this would be recognised as squarely within the tasks of ladies to raise the moral tone of the people. Lonsdale (1880:39) said of Sister Dora, "She threw herself into the ... work not without hopes that in this way the image of God impressed on every soul" and Price quoted from a letter of Sister Dora that made it clear Sister Dora considered that training was not an essential feature of being a good nurse, although undertaking this as a "work done for Christ" was essential (Price, 1952:58).

6.4.3 The issues for sisters

There were several issues for the sisters in undertaking their lifestyle and their work. They were restricted by a concept in society of the work which was acceptable for ladies, which relied heavily on a middle class model that had grown up during the nineteenth century. This required ladies to be committed

as a first priority to the needs of their family and allowed them to undertake a restricted range of activities. This issue was considered at length in Chapter 2. Although the surplus population of ladies (redundant women) allowed, among other things, the institution of sisterhoods and other groupings of women such as Bedford College and Girton College, their work within such groups always had to give precedence to family requirements. This meant that the sisterhoods and other groups found it very difficult to plan their work in terms of knowing of what their available resources consisted. As a result of the patriarchal society and the general law giving control of most property to men, it was impossible for the women to challenge this norm. Accordingly, there was a significant risk of destabilisation both of the sisterhoods and of their work. Nevertheless, it would have been possible to mitigate this by such measures as good financial planning and the development of contingency funds, and careful predictions as to financial resources needed to carry out work would have meant that the effect of this destabilisation would have been reduced. Thus the sisterhoods should not be regarded as helpless victims in this area. They operated under a disadvantage, but there was the opportunity to reduce the impact of that disadvantage.

The sisterhoods consisted of women who had run households and were therefore able to manage financial affairs and to budget. Mrs Beeton made it abundantly clear that this was anticipated to be a necessary skill of the housewife or female head of the household and it was these skills which allowed the sisterhoods to state that they were able to provide both nursing and hospital management (Beeton, 1880). Yet there are a number of examples of the sisterhoods failing to make appropriate financial provision or to manage their financial affairs. Some of this failure was clearly intentional and was done in order to promote a particular priority, as seems to have occurred at Clewer when a building programme was commenced by the foundress, Harriet Monsell, against advice, but one has to wonder whether a sensible analysis of the risks and benefits of such courses of action was undertaken. The result of this restriction of priority to family before sisterhood work was apparently not mitigated by the actions of the sisterhoods and therefore resulted in difficulties in maintaining work which was being undertaken. There were particularly problems where work was undertaken with groups in respect of whom there

was no contingency of the availability of additional funding from wealthier individuals: these problems can be noted in work which was exclusively undertaken with the unchurched, such as some of the ragged schools.

A further issue for the sisterhoods was the restricted field of work which they could enter as women and more particularly as ladies. The section of Chapter 2 which deals with separate spheres addresses this point. Thus, the work undertaken needed to be linked to either meeting the needs of the disadvantaged or encouraging a higher morality particularly amongst those groups. Sisterhoods in themselves were well placed for this work amongst the disadvantaged as inevitably their work involved attempting to demonstrate the availability of the church for those who had previously considered it to be outside their purview. However, sisterhoods undertaking such work needed to be able to demonstrate that they could do so without being in breach of acceptable social standards, which demanded considerable ingenuity from them. So they were able to stretch their fields of work by such strategies as placing the work within the overarching category of attracting people to church.

6.4.4 The actual response of sisterhoods

It is clear that the sisterhoods had an overt aim of meeting the needs of the disadvantaged. This was to be achieved in one of several ways. Work was to be undertaken in areas such as ragged schools and hospitals or nursing. It was to include parish work, in support of the parish priest which involved education and increased learning about the church. It also included work with those who had strayed into paths of error, as it was seen, and particularly into prostitution.

This work was regarded as within the arena of a lady's tasks so long as it was done without payment. There are many examples of hospital annual reports and descriptions of the work of the sisterhoods which clearly made the point that the reason this work had moral benefit was in part because it drew from a sense of call in the sisters and did not derive from a need or desire for money. Interestingly this was not replicated in the work of priests within the church, for they received a living for their work, although it was similarly without payment insofar as the male orders were concerned. The Order of the Resurrection,

which worked in Leeds amongst boys to develop training for priesthood amongst the poor, did so without charge.

However, this view had to be considered against the need of the sisterhoods to fund their activities. This need was managed by separating the funding from the work in general (with the exception of work with fallen women which was funded by grant aid provided centrally). Funding was sometimes linked to the work undertaken, so nursing work was often subject to a sliding means tested scale of payment or work was undertaken specifically to fund non paying work (the guinea nursing so disliked by Sister Dora). A further example of this sort of funding was the school for girls established by the All Saints sisters in Bradford, which paid for the other activities of the sisters. Funding could sometimes be very specifically linked to work, such as the sponsoring of beds or cots in hospitals (Barnes, 1999:49), or payment for the provision of management and nursing of a hospital, as the Mildmay deaconesses were contracted to provide nursing and management for the Doncaster Infirmary (M.F.G., 1863:12). However, there was a clear danger in linking funding to the work in that the work itself had to be attractive to funders, and that attraction affected the funding: in other words, the sisters thereby put at risk their autonomy of action. Furthermore, the failure of such funding put at risk not only the fund raising work, but also the funded work, as was seen by the failure of the All Saints' school in Bradford at the opening of the Bradford Girls' Grammar School. Thus the sisterhoods found it difficult to establish funding which was secure and consistent and which did not risk influence by the funders in the choice of work undertaken. It was probably these constraints in part which prevented the sisterhoods generally developing more challenging or 'political' work and kept the work they undertook within the range of the morally beneficial and reflective of middle class values, although there are examples of support being offered to the disadvantaged the more socially challenging sort of nature (this is referred to in the Blomfield Papers, the archive of the All Hallows Sisters, Ditchingham held at Lambeth Palace Library). Sister Dora was said to have added a second bandage to the head wound of a woman who had been injured by her husband saying, "I think the husband will get an extra week for my beautiful second bandage" (Price, 1952:30).

Further areas of work which required little or no funding allowed a greater sense of choice, bearing in mind the requirement to remain within work which was acceptable for ladies and considered to raise the moral standard of the women and children who received its benefits. Thus, Sister Dora had a concern about the conditions affecting cab drivers and made sure that she gave them a present of gloves from her own income. She was also concerned about the extent to which women were slipping into prostitution and alcoholism (Price, 1952:32) as a result of poverty and lack of support, and she joined a multi-denominational mission to attract these women. Other women were also able to undertake work which was outside the mainstream for sisterhoods where funding was not a constraint. This included the work of Agnes Jones with women who did not have appropriate clothes to go to church: she ran a class for these women and made provision of clothing for them (Jones, 1871:92).

Of course, it also has to be borne in mind that this development of systematic and organised work by women was a new endeavour and therefore the response of the sisterhoods and other groups was inevitably one which altered as it grew.

It was also possible for sisterhoods and other groups to undertake work which might have been difficult to fund, when that work was difficult to oversee. This applied particularly to mission work in other countries where women were greatly involved and much less subject to the restrictions of working than those in the UK, such as Briggs described with the Zanana Baptist missions in India (Briggs, 1997:283).

6.4.5 Summary

The work of women amongst disadvantaged groups grew markedly during the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of several factors. Some of the work was undertaken specifically within a church context, whilst some was undertaken by groups or individuals without such a link. However, most the work undertaken was said to be with a Christian based aim or mission. Most of the work was said to be developed with the disadvantaged or ‘un-churched’. This was clearer in respect of the sisterhoods and deaconess institutes in that they developed statements of purpose or constitutions early in their history.

Some of the groups of women were either self-funding or did not require funding for their work and this was therefore not a constraint to them. In respect of the sisterhoods and the deaconess institutes, the requirement for funding proved a constraint to their choices of action and probably restricted the extent to which they could develop their work outside that which was socially acceptable for ladies to be involved in. Thus, although there are distinctive features of the work of women as it developed during this period, there are few features which distinguish the ministry of sisterhoods except perhaps for a greater clarity of statement of purpose and certainly it is difficult to distinguish the ministry of sisterhoods and deaconess institutes in this area.

Nevertheless, the work of sisterhoods as well as other groups was clearly characterised by the expression of both a Christian and a denominational faith. The sisters themselves wished to declare that their work was motivated by their faith and were concerned if they considered their faith was either at variance with their work or was not consistent with it. Although this is expressed within the common discourse of the time, it cannot be ignored as an expression of motivation and intention. They chose to work with the 'un-churched' and to regard this as a priority because they considered this to be a Gospel imperative (and Sister Dora's regard for the 'inasmuch' is significant in this regard).

6.5 Work of sisters as 'lived faith'

6.5.1 What motivated women to become part of a sisterhood and to undertake the work involved

Membership of sisterhoods is of course intended to be based on religious belief or faith. However, for a number of reasons, it is difficult to tell what part was played by faith in the wish of women to become part of sisterhoods. The rhetoric of the day depended very heavily upon a religious discourse and it was particularly true for middle class women that their acceptable rationale for undertaking areas of work was that it fulfilled their role as those who produced an example of holy living to inspire others. In other words, the religious rhetoric provided 'permission' to develop this area of work for these women. It was regarded as a woman's duty, not a right, that promoted this action, and phrases were used such as 'maternal love is the only truly unselfish feeling that existed on this earth'. It is, however, quite clear that a number of these women,

including Sister Dora, struggled with faith, such that Keble had a stock response to such doubts which was known to others involved in spiritual oversight of these women (Mumm, 1999:15), “to turn oneself more strongly than ever to the practical duties of holy life” (Stanley, 1845:19). Nevertheless, it was clear that sisterhood membership was not the only way to express this kind of faith-motivated work and women became involved in membership of other groups or indeed worked as lone individuals. This chapter considers the distinctive role of ministry within sisterhood and the extent to which religion provided the means and rationale for women to enter public and political activity, which includes the sisters’ intention both to live out their own faith and to develop and encourage the faith of those with whom they worked. As Semple pointed out, “how important it is ... to analyse the function of religious belief in women’s decisions to enter professions ... and to consider the impact of their religious beliefs upon communities” (Semple, 2003:118). However, bearing in mind the lack of clarity of the theological thought of these women, which is explored later in this chapter, and given the extent to which the religious discourse was inherent, it is difficult and probably impossible to develop a firm conclusion on this function and impact of religious beliefs. Most writers, including Vicinus (1985) and Mumm (1999 and 2001) seem to have missed the point that these women were unclear in their exposition of their theology and, if anything, expressed their faith in evangelical terms. Rouse wrote of women undertaking this service to free men for evangelism within their incentive to dedicate their lives in service to others (Rouse, 1913:148-164). Francis-Dehquani wrote of “an inherently feminine disposition towards service and self-sacrifice” (Francis-Dehquani, 1997:197-211). It is therefore rather difficult to draw conclusions as to the extent to which faith and belief formed a motivating factor for these women, still less to draw conclusions as to the theology of sisterhoods coinciding with the theology of these women. The work undertaken by these women, however, did reflect a wish to both live out their own faith and encourage the faith of others in a way that was different from other organisations of women, for the sisterhoods (in common with the deaconesses) made a practice of undertaking both nursing (or other professions) together with pastoral work. This is exemplified by Sister Dora’s mission work in 1876 and the work Mary Jacques undertook in Middlesbrough with the church choir and the boys’ class and to that extent the work is reflective of a faith-based motivation.

It is clear, however, that for many of these women this was the only acceptable way that they could develop professional skills and exercise those skills and for many women this active work clearly subordinated the growth of religious life. Even though the sisterhoods were not skilful at strategic management of growth, nevertheless this was an effective way for women to work with vulnerable women and girls, if this was what they considered they wanted to do.

A further question could be asked: was a wish for 'fame' part of the motivation? At the time of the development of sisterhoods, Florence Nightingale had become a household name and it could be asked whether these women wished to emulate her. It is certainly true that women like Sister Dora became well known individually where they worked. She was increasingly mentioned by name in the Hospital Annual Reports from 1870 to 1872. In the 1870 report she was not mentioned, but a reference was made "to the sisters whose names have become household words in Walsall" and in 1872 a reference was made to there being "no small debt of gratitude to the sister in charge". Sister Dora was prepared to use this aspect of her work to encourage people to seek treatment and this was shown by her working in the epidemic hospital during 1875.

The issue of faith and belief was clearly a live matter in the minds of those who were members of sisterhoods, and although it is difficult to determine the extent to which this was a motivating factor, it must have been part of these women's rationale for entering a sisterhood. It is also clearly correct that motivation was provided by the ability to undertake work which allowed the development of skills and which allowed practice amongst a group in the population to which they wished to commit.

6.5.2 The effect on health of the work of sisterhoods

There are a number of health-based issues which are notable about the members of sisterhoods. Some of those who became sisters entered this life whilst in frail physical health. This was true of Mother Harriet, the founder of the Clewer sisters who was about to go to Italy for the purposes of restoration of her health when she agreed to found the Order. A quotation from Agnes Jones suggests a certain lack of stability in adolescence: "Today I am 14 ... I see

nothing but sin depravity and unhappiness", perhaps indicating a certain vulnerability (Jones, 1871:12). However, these women were in the minority and were generally to be found early in the history of sisterhoods since the health of intending members of orders became a feature of the recruitment requirements generally drawing on the experience of Kaiserswerth and recognising that robust health was necessary to become and remain part of a sisterhood in terms of the lifestyle and the work.

Some women found that this lifestyle and work was too much for their health and there were notorious deaths as a result of a punishing lifestyle. The main example of this is Amy Scobell, who appeared to have died as a result of over-zealous fasting encouraged or required by Priscilla Lydia Sellon. However again these were very small numbers and the sisterhoods generally took precautions to avoid this occurring. Although such precautions were difficult in view of the extent to which Branch Houses were used (and therefore oversight of individual sisters was difficult), such management seems to have been very largely successful, in that there were very few reports of sisters abusing themselves by a punishing lifestyle. It should be noted, however, that Sister Dora appears to have fasted rather rigorously during Lent (Lonsdale, 1881:96).

A more important aspect of health seems to have been the impact of sisterhood living on the mental health of its members. A number of these women seem to have had what now look to be psychosomatic conditions. Priscilla Lydia Sellon had a shoulder injury which seemed to clear up unexpectedly (Gill in Mews, 1993:154). Josephine Butler considered she suffered from weakness of the heart throughout the time she worked with the Contagious Diseases Acts and after the death of her daughter Eva, which motivated her to begin this work (Letter from Josephine Butler to Miss Fosaith 1905 held in the Lambeth Palace Archive 1905/01/03). Florence Nightingale 'took to her bed' from about 1857 (Gill, 2004:433), but this is not a clear example, as some modern writers would say this was in part a strategy to avoid taking on family responsibilities (Gill, 2004:436). Sister Dora had a knee injury when she was working at Walsall in 1866 (Manton, 1971:200). She developed a problem with her knee which prevented mobility and about which the doctors were so concerned that amputation was being considered. This was, of course, an extremely drastic

course of action and was likely to result in death. The injury seemed not to be amenable to treatment when one night she heard a patient calling for her and she went to him, her injury no longer troubling her and apparently healed (Manton, 1971:202).

Psychologists would wish to ally this sort of condition with childhood experience and this would be strengthened with the view that membership of a sisterhood was in part motivated by a need to develop relationships which made up for the lack of healthy relationships in their family of origin. Evidence for such theories can certainly be seen in Sister Dora's early life for her relationship with her parents was largely distant and lacking in emotional warmth. Her father was unpredictable and highly critical and her mother was distant and unavailable as well as being unprotective against her father. This was not made up for by the developing of any other healthy attachment figure, but as her faith developed within the sisterhood she was able to recognise an attachment relationship with God and it may be that this was used as a substitution or compensation for the fact that there was no other attachment figure which was or had been available (Kleinmann, Rasen and Kitson, 1982:128). It is also considered that such symptoms are likely to develop within a situation of psychological stress and are associated with depression (Kellner, 1991:193-194). This was a time for Sister Dora when she had fairly recently moved to Walsall and she was under some pressure and hostility from the local population as well as under some emotional strain.

A further suggestion has been that this sort of condition illuminated the intricacies of how women experienced their domestic and social worlds and was a result of the cost of the strategies of self-emancipation they employed (Summers, 2000:86).

Subsequently, there were a number of stories about Sister Dora, in common with other members of sisterhoods, which suggested she was possessed with almost superhuman physical strength and was tireless in her work and devotion to her patients. She appears to have driven herself beyond a sensible workload and, for example, took on night nursing of the hospital even though she had a

full day shift. Her brother believed these stories were exaggerated when he wrote (Pattison, 1885:154) of Lonsdale's book,

> She spent a faculty of invention which would have pleased her in the front rank as a novelist in embellishing the everyday occurrences of her own life. A very faint reflection of Dorothy's powers of self-glorification is preserved in Miss Lonsdale's romance *Sister Dora*.

The place of women in the Church of England was tenuous. This was particularly true for the sisterhoods, which were not part of the establishment in the way that the deaconess institutes were authorised by the Bishop. Their contribution was regarded as available because they were women rather than because of learned skills. Their ability to nurse and teach was regarded as an extension of womanly intuitive nature and these women had to use this attitude in order to be free to develop their work. This derogation from their skills must have caused some stress for these women as well as causing difficulties in developing priorities in their lives and work. This view of women has continued to be visible within the Church of England, where women could not be ordained as priests until 1994 and the arguments for women priests included that they brought something to priesthood simply because of their gender rather than being taken on merit as individuals with their own skills and gifts. Criticism was based on gender with lack of logic in the arguments used (women were said not to be among the twelve disciples of Christ who were all male, ignoring the other distinctive features of those disciples, such as race) and included arguments as to the impact of women priests, such as that they would distract male members of the congregation. Even now, the Church of England struggles with the concept of ordaining women as bishops. Thus, the place of women in the Church of England accepted by the sisterhoods, despite the stress caused to them in order to develop their position, has continued to haunt women in the church, casting a shadow until the present day. This issue of the place of women could be said to have become broader than the Church in that teaching and nursing have struggled to establish themselves as professions which stand alone until recently. Previously, female teachers and nurses were viewed as being ancillary to men and not requiring proper payment because they would not be responsible for financial support of a family and because they were pursuing a 'vocation'. It has been regarded as adequate compensation for these women to be strongly complimented using such language as 'angels'.

In adopting the position that their members were ancillary to men within the Church of England, the members of the sisterhoods were perhaps more strongly affected than most women by the view that women could not be independent professionals because they were without institutional support. This ancillary position was one which was already accepted within popular thought at the time and is elucidated by the 'separate spheres' theory discussed in Chapter 2. These women did not consider it was appropriate to argue that position as it could have made their whole intention impossible. However, by taking this position, they probably put their own health at risk and probably set an agenda for the view taken of women in the Church of England and to a lesser extent in other churches and society as a whole. This position cast a long shadow over the history of the development of feminism and female emancipation.

6.5.3 The spirituality of individual sisters and of the sisterhoods

The spirituality of the sisterhoods is revealed to some extent within their working environment as well as within worship. The development of a spirituality in Kaiserswerth which acted as a model for daily practice included a very clear recognition of the fact that these were women who had devoted their life and work to God. It was anticipated that each morning the head nurse would read prayers in her ward and would include both patients and staff. This was a routine which was continued by Sister Dora, who always made sure that daily prayers were used. She obviously attached importance to this and devoted care to their preparation. In particular she made a study of the hymns of different traditions and used these in the weekly Sunday afternoon service, which involved patients, staff, former patients and families.

It was also the intention that as well as attending to the spiritual needs of the hospital, the sisters would attend to their own spiritual needs. At Kaiserswerth, each sister had a weekly appointment with the chaplain for spiritual instruction, and the head nurses would go through the worship material they had used that week and discuss why they had used it. This was clearly intended to act as professional supervision for the sisters.

However, the sisterhoods did not seem to consider the development of a spirituality in which their work was itself part of their worship. The work was their outworking of their own faith or sense of responsibility to God, but was not in itself to be regarded as worship. This was a pity as the sisterhoods could have developed a broad sense of worship and its potential and challenged the boundaries between ordained and lay and between secular and spiritual. This failure to develop such a line of thought (either by the sisters or by those regarding the work undertaken by sisters) has continued to be part of the institutional Church, which struggles to grapple with the interrelationship of sacred and secular as well as with the meaning of ministry.

This attention to work-based spirituality contrasts with the attitude towards formal worship. It seems to have been the case that although most sisterhoods observed the hours, this observation did not take priority in their lives. Most sisterhoods took the view that if work required them to miss worship this was acceptable, even in terms of attending Eucharist. It was not suggested that they should take the opportunity to pray in their own place remembering their sisters, but simply that worship would not be attended in those circumstances.

This attention to work-based spirituality was, however, not confined to sisterhoods. It is impossible to distinguish the practice of sisterhoods in this regard from that of deaconess institutes. Most of the deaconess institutes did not use the hours as a guide for worship, nor did they regard the Eucharist as paramount, but they regarded work as supervening the need to attend worship if this was regarded as being required, although this was less likely as deaconess worship tended to consist of morning and evening prayer.

However, the extent to which the spirituality of the sisters and the sisterhoods was at variance with that of other organisations undertaking nursing is debatable and this reflects the discourse of the time upon which comment has been made earlier in this chapter. As an example, Florence Nightingale's annual address to the St Thomas Nightingale School of 1873 included this phrase: "It is by the silent influence of a Christ like life that a Nurse in charge of Wards makes her Ward say 'Go and sin no more'."

Thus it is difficult to distinguish between the spirituality of the sisterhoods and other organisations. This is in part because this view of spirituality affirmed that these women were undertaking 'permitted' activity within the scope of womanly activity because it encouraged and modelled appropriate behaviour and aspirations, and in part because this was simply the expression of this type of view at the time. The distinctions which could be made between the sisterhoods and these other organisations (but not between the sisterhoods and the deaconess institutes) is that the sisterhoods were overtly demonstrating the outworking of Christ's love and mission within a loose boundary of a life of regular worship. Their spirituality also required them to undertake tasks beyond that of hospital nursing – in other words to take a more holistic view of their lifestyle.

6.5.4 The breadth and limitations of the work undertaken within the sisterhoods

The society into which sisterhoods were founded was one in which middle class women had a particular role, status and work. This section will explore the extent to which these aspects of their lives made a difference to what happened in the sisterhoods for these women and whether sisterhoods were distinct in this respect. Although the sisterhoods included working class women as lay sisters and employed working class women within their work in hospitals and schools, it is very clear that middle class norms and values dominated the thinking of the sisterhoods.

The work which was undertaken by sisterhoods was largely within the acceptable area of women's work. Women's work was thus maintained in a subsidiary position and within a gendered space, so that the value of the work of women "was measured largely in terms of work done rather than status bestowed" (McDonald, 2000:118). It included teaching of children and women, nursing and social welfare work and introducing people to the Church and its faith. It could have included work beyond acceptable populations of people and to an extent this did occur by dint of applying the view that women of the middle class could offer an example of a better life to the working class and to men generally. Thus, these women were seen as ideal to work with 'fallen women' and to work in teaching and nursing because they could offer that example and

the faith which they held. However, there were very clear limits to the work. Although the All Saints sisters had initially said that they would undertake mental health work, in fact they did not and neither did any other sisterhood or deaconess order, until a sister undertook this work upon request in New York in 1876 (Mumm, 1999:64). This is interesting since much of the nursing undertaken by sisterhoods was based on the model of the Kaiserswerth hospital, whose deaconesses undertook mental health nursing which continues to be a specialisation at the hospital. Thus this non-provision of mental health care in the United Kingdom must have been a response to thinking and values within the United Kingdom as to what was proper work for women. The sisterhoods used the conventional rhetoric to justify their view of their cause of female domestic sovereignty, motherhood, moral superiority and compassion (Hempton and Hill in Hayes and Urquhart, 2001:13) and to extend the work they undertook.

A further limitation to the work undertaken concerns political lobbying. Very little of the work undertaken was used by the sisterhoods or by anyone else to develop publicity around the dreadful social conditions with which the sisterhoods were often working. The work of the All Saints sisters in the Chorlton workhouse was not used to develop any sense of knowledge that nursing had been undertaken by untrained inmates of the workhouse or that it was wholly unregulated. This was also true of the deaconess institutes, and to some extent in common with the work of Agnes Jones. However, her work was supported by families in Liverpool such as the Rathbones, who were highly politically active and developed the work of Agnes Jones to highlight the shortcomings of health care and other care within the workhouses and to lobby for change in those systems. However, it can be distinguished from the work of some others of the women who were not part of groups such as Florence Nightingale, who was highly politically active. The sisterhoods were, however, very good at generating publicity. The *Walsall Free Press* of 2 May 1857 made it clear that the significant issues for the area were about school and church building and not about a hospital. The building of the school had probably developed a raised profile after the Registrar General's return of 1856 noted in the *Walsall Free Press* of 21 February 1857 revealed a low level of literacy in the area. There was also something of an issue about safe public drainage

which resulted in water mains being laid, as reported by the *Walsall Free Press* of 12 February 1859. Yet by 1863 the Walsall Cottage Hospital Annual Report stated that its aim was:

> to furnish in case of accident a prompt and skilful surgical and trained and experienced nursing [and] in order to carry out this object ... sisters of the Home of the Good Samaritan at Coatham and Middlesbrough who are ladies of education and whose services to the hospital are purely voluntary and benevolent have been induced to undertake the nursing and internal management of the institution (Walsall Cottage Hospital Annual Report, 1863 and *Walsall Free Press,* 12 October 1863).

It is clear that Sister Dora, like many of the sisters in other sisterhoods, used publicity to achieve the results she sought. She used publicity to achieve the acceptance of the Isolation Hospital and publicised various aspects of the hospital such as its non-denominational character to avoid any ill feeling about the hospital, that would have distracted her from those tasks which she considered to be more important.

The sisterhoods also provided a separate space in which women could develop as professionals. This was unique to women's work as other groups (such as colleges) were either time-limited in their involvement or were more disparate and individual in the work they undertook. Colleges tended to be time-limited in terms of the involvement of women, and other organisations, such as deaconess institutes, emphasised the authority of the bishop and the importance of parish work. However, the benefit of working in a group, as the sisterhoods did, was hindered to some extent by the frequent moves of the sisters.

The view taken of these women is exemplified by certain writing at the time. South wrote that the older sisters or head nurses "are treated by both surgeons and dressers as if they were old superior family servants" (South, 1857:33), although he went on to say that surgeons or dressers and nurses accorded each other mutual respect. He wrote,

> the character and reputation of hospital sisters are as dear to them ... for modesty and self respect they will bear comparison with a like number of women in any class of society; and that they present continual examples of self-denial and kind solicitude towards the patients intrusted to their care (South, 1857:8).

However, he reiterated a male hierarchy when he reported a system at St Thomas's whereby the sister reported to the doctor, in contrast with the system at Kaiserswerth where nursing and ward management were reported to the head deaconess and only medical matters were reported to the doctor. He did, however, contrast sisters with other ward staff, noting that the ward nurse and ward maid were paid in part in beer and that the training of sisters was different from other ward staff in that the training of sisters involved them being placed in the matron's office as supernumeries so that they obtained an overview of hospital management and could take temporary charge of wards (South 1857:16). Nevertheless, he considered that further training of nurses along the model of the Kaiserswerth deaconesses would be extra work and that the English nurses were not competent or intelligent enough to take advantage of this (South, 1857:13-28). South's notes emphasise the view of the sisterhoods taken by the Church and perhaps by the sisters themselves as subordinate to men and male leaders within the Church. This is unfortunate since the sisterhoods had the opportunity of presenting a different model of the structure of the Church which would have allowed for a non-hierarchical approach, accepting the work undertaken by each person as equally valuable. There was a real opportunity for this since the sisterhoods were not part of the Church or diocesan structure but stood outside it. This would have been something unique to the sisterhoods, in contrast with the deaconesses, who were part of the diocesan structure and were clearly subordinate to the bishops, and the groups of women who worked in such tasks as district visiting, being similarly subordinate to the parish priests with whom they worked. Nevertheless, although the possibility was not explored at the time, a review of this work allows this exploration in the present time.

The role of faith in determining the breadth and limitations of the work undertaken by the sisterhoods is an interesting one. It does appear that the sisters themselves had not worked out their theology, and their faith demonstrated an eclectic approach. Indeed Sister Dora seemed to be unclear about her role as a member of a sisterhood. She resigned from the sisterhood in 1875 (Manton, 1971:292) but considered herself to be a sister and signed herself as such until the end of her life. Those who have written on the influence of faith have tended to ignore the Oxford Movement approach and

have written almost entirely on the practice of evangelical religion, which seems to have been generally considered to be a powerful influence both negatively and positively. Hempton and Hill stated “Evangelical religion was more important than feminism in enlarging women’s sphere of action during the nineteenth century” (Hempton and Hill, in Hayes and Urquhart, 2001:119-121). It is obviously correct that religious practice was restrictive of women’s work during this period. However, it was also empowering and allowed women to deal with areas of work such as prostitution and to become highly involved in areas such as health, education and social welfare. This involvement allowed the development of indirect evangelism together with a high degree of engagement in evangelism in its broadest sense among certain groups of people, particularly women and children.

6.5.5 What was said to have happened within the sisterhoods and in the work they undertook compared with what appears to have actually happened

The sisterhoods, like the deaconess institutes, aimed to work with the poor in their area. This aim derived, as has previously been argued, from the influx of people into the urban areas and the lack of services available for them, together with, to a lesser extent, a recognition of rural poverty, for sisterhoods such as the All Hallows Sisterhood were involved in the issues of rural poverty. In the urban areas, many of the sisterhoods set up and worked with ragged schools, which provided education for the very poorest who could not pay any school fee and whose attire was such that they would be unacceptable in the normal school system. Mary Carpenter detailed the extent to which children lacked education in these areas of society, describing children who did not know the day of the week or which book teaches us to know God (Carpenter, 1851:26). She described the ordinary school system as being inaccessible to such children partly because they would not attend to be looked down upon (Carpenter, 1851:38-39). It is clear that this work of providing teaching for these children could be extremely trying, especially for women who had little experience of working with children. These children had little sense of routine and lacked the basic necessities of living. The sisters were often trying to teach these children in big classes and would allocate sisters who were ill equipped for the task. In the area of health the sisterhoods would indicate they wished to

meet the health needs of the poor in their area and their fund-raising would be aimed at ensuring this was possible. In the area of social welfare, the sisters would show in their reports and prospectuses that they were visiting the poor with a view to providing for urgent need and identifying longer term need as well as sharing their faith with those with whom they worked, who were principally women and children. This work included teaching in the skills of parenting and health care of children and many sisterhoods developed such groups as 'dorcas classes' in which material was provided for women and they were taught to sew children's clothing. Thus the sisterhoods presented themselves as looking to meet the needs of the poorest both in material and spiritual terms and in terms of beginning new projects.

However, this was not the whole story of the work undertaken by the sisterhoods. This chapter has already considered the extent to which it was necessary for the sisterhoods to provide health and education services to the working classes rather than (or as well as) the destitute, because the funders of the sisterhoods required those members of the working classes to be productive as much of the time as possible. It is notable that the Walsall hospital provided more beds for men than women or children and commonly reports were given of patients admitted after industrial accidents or events. There was also a fee scale which overtly charged the working classes on a sliding means-tested scale, thus being clear that hospitals and schools were provided for those who were not destitute. The sisterhoods held this in common with the deaconess institutes, as North London Deaconess Institute at its inception provided terminal care and gave details of the charges for this sort of care (Mother Clare, 1952:1). The All Saints sisters in Bradford provided a school for girls. This school closed when the Bradford Girls' Grammar School opened and one can only assume that this was because the two schools attracted girls of the same class. The Grammar School was a middle class institution. A letter of Anna Lowen to Frau Fliedner of 28 August 1878 shows that this was not an uncommon situation. She referred to the acceptance of children into a Kaiserswerth deaconess middle class school: "I have been informed that middle class children are received in the middle class school connected with the Deaconess Institute" (letter held in the Fliedner Archiv).

It is not wholly clear what were the motivations for the provision of services for the working class and middle class. Some of the reason was to encourage the donation of funds by providing services which would be attractive to funders as a *quid pro quo* and the prospectuses of several of the sisterhoods suggest this to be the case. It may have been that these services were provided as a means of financially supporting the services provided to the destitute, although there is no evidence for this. Some of the sisterhoods also took the view that nursing and education were not available to the working class (although this could not have been an argument for service provision to the middle classes) as these were available to the destitute in the workhouse and to the wealthier by private provision, but not available readily to those who were in neither of these positions.

The sisterhoods put themselves forward as providing new services and this was clearly in evidence in certain areas. The All Saints sisters in Bradford began the Children's Hospital, which was then taken over by a group of city philanthropists within a year (Hamilton, 1968:2). Sisterhoods also provided competent nursing and management services on a contractual basis, such as the work done at several of the London hospitals and at the Walsall Hospital. In these areas, they did not differ from the deaconess orders. As an example of this, the Mildmay deaconesses provided nursing and management services to the Doncaster Infirmary (M.F.G., 1863:12). However, there were instances of the sisterhoods suggesting they had been responsible for new projects which were already in existence or which were largely the responsibility of another group. There are examples of sisterhoods taking over existing hospitals. There is also the example of the All Saints sisters in Bradford who wanted to present that they were responsible for the work in the area of the parish centred on the new church of St Mary Magdalene. However, this was clearly already a vibrant and energetic area of the parish when they arrived. At their arrival, the new church of St Mary Magdalene was almost completed and the photograph below shows this was a substantial building (Anon, s.a.:3). Nevertheless, there clearly was a considerable amount of new work undertaken by the sisterhoods. Much of the work of the Coatham sisterhood was new, beginning with the accident hospital in Middlesbrough started by the sisterhood at the beginning of its life as a response to the accident at the furnace (Manton, 1971:164). The All Hallows



St Mary Magdalene Bradford
Photograph taken May 2012

sisters in Ditchingham began a hospice which continues. Ragged schools were frequently commenced by the sisterhoods. In terms of the smaller projects, the sisterhoods are difficult to distinguish both from deaconess institutes and from independent individual women or groups of women in a parish (some of whom, such as the women of St Peter's Mission sisterhood, a parish group, became sisterhoods). In terms of the larger enterprises, such as hospitals, the work of the sisterhoods is difficult to distinguish from deaconess institutes as new projects. The Kaiserswerth deaconesses began the German Hospital in London and the Mildmay deaconesses began the Mildmay hospital as two examples of this. These deaconess hospitals would be rather difficult to distinguish from sisterhood hospitals in terms of operating as new projects both

as to their aims, their methods and the patient groups with whom they sought to work. The social welfare work undertaken by the sisterhoods as new projects tended to work with two areas. They worked as requested by parish priests and in this are difficult to distinguish from deaconesses. They also worked as a development of their hospital and teaching work. These projects led to district work including district nursing and teaching together with work in conjunction with the parish priest connected with the church. Again, this is not easy to distinguish from the deaconesses except that the work of the sisterhoods leading from projects was work they instigated themselves rather than that which was instigated by the parish priest as was the case with deaconesses. It could also be said to have developed from the project whereas the deaconess work was likely to have developed from a request of the priest and was much less common because the project work of the deaconesses tended to be developed around the mother house with many fewer branch houses than were to be found in the sisterhoods.

Although the sisterhoods presented themselves as offering the example of middle class ladyhood to the working classes, they also presented themselves as materially poor and this certainly had some truth in a relative sense. One of the early sisters in the All Saints sisterhood complained that she found it difficult to be eating with steel cutlery. Later in the history of the All Saints sisterhood, two sisters travelling to South Africa to begin a mission there travelled first class when the difference between the costs of travelling first or other class was substantial.

They also presented themselves as working extremely hard in their schools, hospitals and social welfare work and as achieving a significant amount. As an example of this, the Walsall Cottage Hospital Annual Report of 1870 indicated that the death rate in the hospital was lower than the average for the most progressive surgical hospital in London. However, it is notable that sometimes intervention by the sisters was for short periods of time and therefore the amount of change was necessarily limited. The Bradford Children's Hospital founded by the All Saints Sisters was transferred to the control of a group of Bradford philanthropists within a year of foundation (Hamilton, 1968:2). Often the numbers of sisters working within a particular project must have limited the

amount of change. The Chorlton Workhouse Infirmary had the benefit of only two All Saints Sisters (Mumm, 2002:14). The limitations imposed by these small numbers of women were compounded by their holidays when it appears they were not replaced. Sister Dora periodically took holidays of one month, and for nearly six months she went to the epidemic hospital (Manton, 1971:303). This suggests that the hospitals were not as dependent upon the sisters as might have been thought, either because the workload was less than was reported or because the sisters undertook a smaller proportion of it. The available literature suggests that the sisters were utterly indispensible to the hospitals and some of the sisters, including Sister Dora, encouraged such a view by stating that she preferred to do without servants (Lonsdale, 1880:100) but in terms of their day to day running, that appears to be questionable in the light of the numbers of sisters and the time they spent in the hospitals. This had the unfortunate effect of turning these women into 'superwomen' out of the reach of the achievement of ordinary women. In other words, the work of these women was not that of ordinary women and therefore did not pose a challenge to the social norms relating to the place of women.

The sisterhoods presented themselves as undertaking parish and other work at the behest of the local priest and, in effect, in cooperation with the local community. The prospectuses for the sisterhoods generally gave a clear indication that this work was done within a subordinate capacity and the work was identified by those who requested the services of the sisterhoods rather than the sisterhoods themselves. Work undertaken which had been identified by the sisterhoods was work independent of the parishes and dioceses and within the control of the sisterhoods and this was clearly distinguished from parish work. However, in reality, there appears to have been a less clear boundary between the types of work. The All Saints sisters founded the Bradford Children's Hospital and this work was undertaken subsequent to an invitation to work with the parish. It does not appear to have been part of the agreement made with the parish priest and seems to have caused some disquiet within the community. It seems that the Bradford Infirmary managers considered that the sisters were in competition with them, and it seems that this developed into a significant dispute which required a meeting of the secretaries of all children's hospitals in the UK to broker a resolution (Hamilton, 1968:1).

Furthermore, the work undertaken by the sisters within the parish became impossible to continue after a change of parish priest. Far from the sisters being subordinate to the new priest, a dispute developed about the place of confession and daily celebration of communion, such that the sisters had to withdraw altogether from the parish. The dispute became so heated that the priest put forward his argument in the parish magazine (Ackroyd, s.a.:44). It is perhaps hardly surprising that these strong-minded women, who were prepared to enter into a lifestyle which would attract a level of criticism and were prepared to begin projects which were not safely managed and funded and which were not necessarily accepted by the institutional Church, were not wholly subordinate to a parish priest in other areas of the work they undertook. Indeed, doubtless in some of these areas they had expertise in excess of the parish priest. However, it seems that it was necessary for the undertaking and commencement of this work in parishes to be presented as work which would be done in a subordinate capacity in order to be acceptable to the priests and the community.

6.6 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to consider the place taken by faith in the lives and work of the members of sisterhoods, together with the extent to which this work and faith was developed as ministry, noting the difficulties in doing so when the prevailing rhetoric relates to religion. It has been difficult to distinguish the sisterhoods from the deaconess institutes, although the sisterhoods were independent of the hierarchy of the Church of England. This independence meant that they were more free to develop their own communities and tended to develop self-governing communities with democratic systems in a way which the deaconesses did not for they were dependent on the authorisation of the bishop. Neither did the groups centred round particular parish churches or nonconformist churches, which focussed on parish work as determined by the parish priest. However, the sisterhoods' view of the sacraments as a vital part of daily worship led to a dependency upon a priest, although most orders were clear that worship was second in priority to their work and there are many examples of women who joined sisterhoods unsure of their faith but committed to the work. This allowed the possibility of developing a fascinating theology of worship celebrated in their work, rather than celebrated separately from their

work. This possibility in turn offered the opportunity to consider the nature of ministry in the Church and the relationship between ministry exercised by ministers and ministry exercised by lay people. This opportunity was not explored by the sisterhoods in the nineteenth century, perhaps because generally their theological education was not pursued. This lack of theological education also seems to have resulted in them being unclear as to the Anglo-Catholic theology from which the sisterhoods had developed and the evangelical theology of the Low Church from which the deaconess institutes had developed and this lack of clarity is compounded by those who have studied the sisterhoods.

The lives of the sisters were clearly difficult in a number of ways, including the opposition of public opinion and potential conflict with social norms. This meant that the sisterhoods struggled to establish themselves on a firm footing and the projects they undertook became increasingly vulnerable, although they did not perhaps use their skills to best advantage to reduce the risks inherent in their organisations. Nevertheless, they probably reduced the work they did in scope and politics in order to ensure that they retained the goodwill of funders. This was not so for the individual women who worked in these fields such as Josephine Butler, Florence Nightingale and Eleanor Rathbone, who were not dependent on external funding or resources. Similarly, probably to retain funding, the sisterhoods tended to develop publicity around the amount of work they did as orders and as individuals. This stress took a toll on the women, particularly since some of the women attracted to sisterhoods were emotionally vulnerable. This is noticeable in the health issues revealed.

Sisterhoods were a new phenomenon during this period and developed work for women in a way that had been unacceptable. In so doing they developed a reputation which allowed them to undertake this work. The sacrifice they made in this was that they were unable to work through the theology of what they were doing, both because they did not have the space to reflect on their theology and because they were not able to obtain the education which was available to their male counterparts.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Summary

Studies on the sisterhoods of the middle part of the nineteenth century have been developed in several strands. One strand has been the hagiographical biography of either individuals or organisations, which has often been conducted internally and has tended to be uncritical. A major exception to this has been the work of Margaret Goodham, which was highly critical, but not objective (Goodman, 1862 and 1864). This former sort of biography can also be seen in relation to deaconess institutes and groups of women or individual women such as Florence Nightingale. These studies are often useful as it is rooted within the organisation's ethos and emotions and therefore provide a particular perspective. A further strand, which has grown from a sociological and feminist perspective has developed since the 1970s and 1980s. This work does not examine the theology or faith perspective of the sisterhoods and indeed specifically distances itself from this area, such as Mumm (1999). It was the intention of this thesis to consider the lives, work and actions of the sisterhoods from this faith and theologically-based perspective using the particular example of Sister Dora because she was not one of the 'heroes' of the age unlike women such as Florence Nightingale and therefore hopefully Sister Dora's experience was closer to the norm for these women. However, recognising that the fact that there is written material about her probably distances her experience from the norm to some extent. It was hoped that her life and the issues for the Church and, to some extent, women generally and society, could be considered, taking into account the work which has been done during the last forty years on women's history and on the exploration of feminist theology.

In order to put this thesis into a broader perspective, a literature search and review was undertaken of the history of the study of feminism and particularly of feminist theology, placing the experience of the sisterhoods into that work and considering the additional material and thought that a theological- and faith-

based study of the sisterhoods from the life of Sister Dora would offer to this work.

A review of Sister Dora's life was then undertaken, which considered her story in terms of issues rather than from a purely chronological viewpoint. It was hoped that this would reveal areas of theology and faith which would warrant further study, particularly in the light of her history and life experience, and which would allow consideration of whether that history and life experience could be generalised.

The sisterhoods in the Church of England began to develop in the 1840s, ahead of the male orders. They were mainly the inspiration of people such as Newman and Southey and it was their theology which informed them. However, this work to develop sisterhoods was a fertile field because women, especially middle class women, had begun to search for a place where they could become independent professionals in their own right, particularly taking in to account that the demography of the time meant that there were more women than men and therefore the accepted route of marriage and family was never going to be available for many of these women. This impetus toward the organisation of women's work and the development of a more professional role for women was not unique to the Oxford Movement, but was to be seen in the Low Church in the growth of deaconess institutes and in the nonconformist churches in the growth of visiting. Neither was it unique to communities of women, but individual women also developed this sense of a more professional role. This could be seen as an example in the early life of women such as Agnes Jones (of which issue there is more detail in Chapter 4). However, the sisterhoods were able to offer women a community in which to practise their profession with the support of likeminded women. These were not perfect institutions and often demonstrated instability of resources and membership, sometimes failing to make the best of what they had. They were inevitably limited by the social norms of their times, for they had grown out of that society and depended on it for resources – not least for funding. Whilst they shared this limitation to some extent with the deaconesses, the women who worked alone were often free to be more political in their approach because they did not depend on external funding or resources, although Sister Dora's actions were

sometimes political in a quiet way and this sort of action may have been replicated by other sisters, for these were not the sort of actions which would necessarily have attracted attention. This broad study of the sisterhoods was able therefore to put the work of Sister Dora in context and allowed this to be contrasted with what was occurring generally amongst female communities.

Sister Dora spent most of her sisterhood life in nursing (with its attendant district work). It was therefore considered useful to compare the nursing work undertaken by sisterhoods with that undertaken by other women, including deaconess nursing and the nursing undertaken by nonaligned groups such as the Nightingale nurses. All three groups declared overtly that they were motivated by faith in the work they did and considered the work to be part of their outworking of that faith. They considered that the work linked those with whom they worked and whom they served with the Church and with God and that part of the work was to ensure that the teaching around faith, doctrine and practice was in place for those people. The deaconesses and the sisterhoods also considered they had a duty as part of this outworking of faith to work toward the sustainable meeting of material need for those with whom they worked. This concern resulted in the development of such matters as 'dorcas' classes for women. The Nightingale nurses however considered their work was nursing within the hospitals and did not extend beyond that. All three strands of nursing distinguished between ladies and other women, believing that ladies were better fitted for a management role and for the more openly spiritual tasks. There was some justification for this belief, particularly with the deaconesses, who often entered the order without basic education. Thus, there was little distinction between the three types of nursing, save that the deaconess institutes and the sisterhoods adopted a more holistic approach to their work. However, all three strands of nursing distinguished the social status of entrants and all three considered that faith was an integral part of their work. In this Sister Dora accorded with the values of the sisterhoods, for she worked as a choir sister, undertaking a management role (although in fact her previous life as a clergyman's daughter had probably not really fitted her for this role) and she adopted a broad view of her role as a nurse, working in the hospital and in the district and undertaking a social welfare role.

The final substantive chapter considered the practice of faith and the development of distinctive ministry within the context of sisterhoods. This concluded that in terms of the development and working of sisterhoods, there was little difference between them and the deaconess institutes, not least because the members of the sisterhoods were unversed in their theology and did not give theology or the practice of their faith a high priority. This meant that their thought and worship tended to be eclectic and not rigorous in its development. This is demonstrated particularly in Sister Dora's use of hymns and her rationale for that use. The sisterhoods were in the position of being at the forefront of a development of women's work and this would have allowed for a new way forward. To an extent the sisterhoods did do this, for they developed self-governing communities with a democratic style of government, unlike other groups of women. However, they were unable to pursue any radical new process because they were dependent on external funding and resources, as were the other groups, with the exception of the solo women. This meant the sisterhoods were unable to make a clear declaration of ministry for the poor, because they needed to fulfil their funders' needs of keeping the working classes productive. They were also unable to protest against the social and political system because they could not alienate their supporters, even though they developed outside the establishment and found themselves separated from other women by society and by the Church, which defined them as different. This conflictual position told on the health of some of these women, some of whom were already emotionally vulnerable. In this requirement to remain within certain boundaries they were not to be distinguished from the deaconesses, but for a different reason. The deaconesses were founded with the authority of the bishop and were therefore required to accept that authority, which was of course a much less uncomfortable position than that of the sisterhoods. Furthermore, the deaconesses were much more isolated in their work (and therefore less visible) because parish work was more highly significant than project work. Sister Dora was in a position to develop a more individual line of work, but it is notable that she did not do so. This is evidenced by the fact that she had more men's beds in her hospital than beds for women and children, suggesting that she was working with those who were productive rather than those who were destitute. Nevertheless, all three groups of women

declared their intention to work with the destitute and did undertake such work, although perhaps not in the proportions they suggested in their publicity.

This sort of work and lifestyle allowed the sisterhoods, more than the other groups, to develop a sense of worship and the living of the holy life. They were a largely autonomous group and, apart from being dependent on a priest for communion, had a level of freedom from establishment control. They could have developed a style of women's worship that was not confined to an established liturgy. They could have explored the possibilities for a style of worship that was contextualised in life and work rather than being given a separate space. They chose not to do this. However, others at a later time were inspired by this possibility, as a new way of thinking about worship was demonstrated by the lives and work of the sisterhoods of that time – for women of one age to talk to women from another age.

7.2 Conclusions

There is some difficulty in drawing clear conclusions in relation to the sisterhoods of the nineteenth century. These women lived in a society which was very different from that of the twenty-first century. It was a society in which women, especially middle class women, were circumscribed in terms of their lifestyles by social expectations as to their actions and behaviour, which meant that they needed to have regard to the acceptable conduct and priorities as well as the areas of action for women if they were not going to enter into a very high level of conflict, beyond that which was inevitable by community rather than family living. Furthermore, this was a society in which the accepted rhetoric was that of the Christian Church. These women and those who wrote of them would do so within that accepted rhetoric even though there is clear information that faith was not necessarily a motivating force for some of these women, but rather what motivated them was the professional development available and the community lifestyle. The conclusions drawn therefore must be seen in this light. As Jenkins wrote, "historiography is always positioned and is never true beyond peradventure," it is not possible to "privilege one variant over another by neutral criteria" (Jenkins, 1995:37).

However, there is indeed room for a theologically based reflection on the development of the sisterhoods during the nineteenth century, not just in terms of the time of that development but also in terms of how it speaks to the Church in the twenty-first century. This reflection has several strands. The Church of England at that time was unwilling to use the gifts of women except in particularly circumscribed ways. Florence Nightingale trenchantly pointed this out. It wanted women to be meek and obedient, sidelined from the mainstream, but these women who formed sisterhoods were adopting a public profile and were developing autonomous female space in which to grow a professional persona. The story of the sisterhoods is the story of these women and the Church of England beginning to develop an accommodation to those changing roles. However, this had certain results. The women themselves did not have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences as women of God because they were establishing themselves as independent professionals. Furthermore, the conflicting pressures upon them by the Church and society often told on them, for the Church and society insisted that these women hold priorities which were at odds with their developing lifestyle and insisted that their lifestyle fitted into a particular vision of womanhood, casting them as 'exceptional' when their behaviour became challenging or disturbing. Several of these women developed health problems which looked as though they were influenced by psychological causes. At the time the Church did not consider these actions and views, but with the distance of 150 years, this situation begs the question of how the Church treats those who are on its margins and who want to enter a dialogue with the establishment Church – those who take the role of prophets. The women of the sisterhoods dealt with this situation by reducing the conflict and maintaining their lifestyle as far as possible within limits which the Church found acceptable, such as nursing and teaching, and maybe this was the best that could be achieved at that time. However, as Briggs pointed out, this strategy can lead to a longer term circumscribing of the role of women (Briggs, 1997:283). Furthermore and importantly, it cannot be consistent with the Church's duty to promote justice and fullness of life that the Church's approach to this question of the role of women probably was instrumental in such stress to them that it resulted in health problems.

As a result of the attitudes of the Church, society and their funders, the work undertaken by the women needed to be acceptable socially and this requirement resulted in a preponderance of nursing, teaching, district and rescue work being undertaken by the sisterhoods with little in the way of political statements. This choice of work and the way it was tackled was probably inevitable because the sisters needed to retain an acceptance within the Church both in order to pursue their work and to be credible, but also because they were dependent upon the male priests and the bishops for their worship, and all sisterhoods considered in their constitutions that worship and daily Eucharist was important, even when this was not celebrated in practice. The deaconesses were not faced with that sort of conflict because they were founded with the authority of the bishops and within the diocese, whereas the sisterhoods were outside the structure. This approach was probably also necessary to retain the sympathy of potential funders.

The work of the sisterhoods was nevertheless distinctive in its nature. Morgan and de Vries (2010:3) asked questions about this:

> How did Britain's heterogeneous religious cultures shape women's beliefs and practices? In what ways did women create and develop their own diverse religious cultures? To what extent were women's faith and beliefs shaped by their gender, class, national identity, sexuality and denominational affiliation? And what were women's contributions to the making of modern British cultures of belief? (Morgan and de Vries, 2010:3).

Whilst there may be a level of disappointment that the sisterhoods were unable to pursue as fully as would be helpful the questions which Morgan and de Vries raised, these sisterhoods offered a clear difference and development in work in the Church and the work of the sisterhoods had its own stamp. It was very similar to the work of the deaconesses, although rather different from the work of the individuals and individual groups of women. It was similar to the deaconesses because the sisterhoods had not worked through their distinctive theology, but it was to be distinguished because these were communities of women who were self-governing and to an extent stood outside the structure of the Church, operating as communities rather than largely as individuals working in parishes with the consent of the bishop. Nevertheless, the approach of the sisterhoods and the deaconesses had in common that they developed a holistic view of their work, so that where they undertook projects, such as hospitals or schools, they took the view that they needed to work with the whole need of the

individual and their family, teaching and supporting them. This was unlike the approach of individuals such as Florence Nightingale. However, because they were reliant for worship and probably for credibility upon the Church, they were unable to adopt the political role that these individuals undertook.

The women developed a certain reputation both in their communities and in the Church, which they supported. The Church, probably as a result of its discomfort with these women, tended to cast them as superwomen and therefore to be distinguished from ordinary people. They were seen as being busier than they probably were, for the work they were said to have achieved would have been difficult or impossible given the other demands on their time and the sometimes small numbers. They were seen as being more totally committed to the destitute poor than they were, for a significant amount of the work which they and the deaconesses undertook was with the working classes. This was probably in order to maintain the sympathy of funders, for whom it was important to retain the productivity of the workers and in part to provide a funding stream. They were seen as being more effective than they probably were and their sometimes serious instability and failure to manage resources appears to have gone largely unremarked. In other words, these women were cast as Madonnas, and this is clear from the material of the time which is written about them both as hagiographical biographies and as part of reports. This heightened reputation allowed these women to be distanced from the norm and therefore to be less challenging; unfortunately, the women themselves received benefit from this in terms of achieving their own aims. An example of this is Sister Dora's decision to nurse the epidemic hospital in 1876 in order to make the hospital acceptable to the people of Walsall.

These women often did not have a strong view of their faith either in terms of its importance or its nature. Although the sisterhoods were founded with a clear theological basis, this seems to have been held by the men who expounded it rather than the women. This could be explained by the fact that the men had the opportunity of a rigorous education whereas the women's education was eclectic and very varied. This was particularly evident in the deaconess institutes where it was necessary to include basic education for the probationer deaconesses. However, within the sisterhoods too, education had been

acquired in a way which was not consistent, and Sister Dora was a clear example of this. Perhaps as an unconscious response to this lack of consistent education (but still an interesting challenge), the sisterhoods demonstrated a theology which was not of words. They envisioned a transcendent God in their buildings and in the beauty of the embroidery that many of them provided for their churches. They lived the image of an incarnate God in their presence with the poor and sick and even where this was imperfect, they showed a way of living which hoped to generate new spirituality and faith. By their actions and their way of living they explored, even if unknowingly, a nonverbal expression of faith and spirituality – an exploration which it remains open to the Church to work with and live.

The sisters did not seem to consider either their faith or their theology central to their being, despite being members of a religious order. This was unlike the deaconesses, who were required to give an account of their faith, of which Florence Nightingale's curriculum vitae was an example (held at the Fliedner Archiv). However, there are several examples of women entering sisterhoods, as did Sister Dora, with a very uncertain faith, and this was acceptable to the sisterhoods. It should be recalled, however, that it is difficult to be wholly clear on this, because of the prevailing rhetoric expressed in Christian terms.

This apparent lack of clarity spilled over into their theology, which, as a result, tended to be rather unclear such that there was little distinction between the sisterhoods and the deaconesses. The sisterhoods frequently expressed themselves in an evangelical way and used evangelical worship forms and hymns, leading to a certain ecumenism between individuals such as Sister Dora and her Methodist friends.

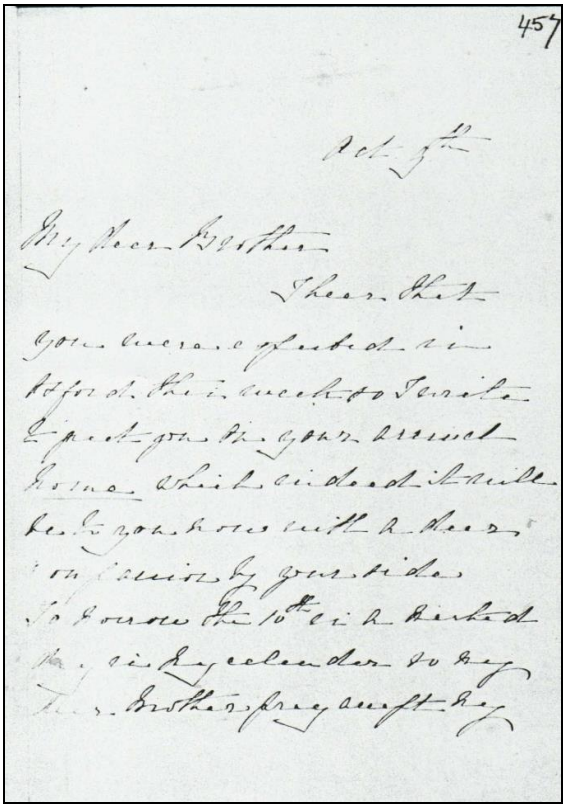
The approach to worship continued this attitude. Although most sisterhoods adopted the system of using the hours, and celebrating Eucharist daily, in fact they also considered that work took priority over worship. This could have led them to explore the nature of worship in this context. The sisterhoods were self-governing communities engaging a democratic style of government, unlike the clear hierarchical structure of the Church of England. They set out to place worship in daily life and these two aspects could have led to a fascinating

exploration of the nature of worship. In this context, worship could have been 'the work of the people' (as liturgy is strictly translated) in that it could have been rooted in its constituency rather than produced for its constituency. The sisterhoods could have explored relevance and context, the nature of worship and the extent to which it needed to be demonstrated by words, or whether the nature of action was itself worship for women who worked as an outpouring of their faith. However, this was simply not an area in which the sisterhoods at this time wished to become involved, nor did the Church. As the Church and theologians have developed thinking about worship, particularly during the last fifty years, this challenge offered but not taken up at the time is a gift for the Church in its development. The sisterhoods' potential offers a conversation which spans 150 years, even though that conversation will never come to a firm agreement, because understanding between the generations cannot be without doubt.

This exploration of the sisterhoods of the nineteenth century from the particular perspective of Sister Dora has revealed something of the nature of these women and their priorities in terms of work and worship and the Church, although it is always difficult to be adamant about these things because of the difficulty of being certain about meaning and rhetoric. The study of sister Dora has revealed a more rounded individual than the Madonna who was portrayed at the time, fixed as a white marble statue on a pedestal, such as Walsall unveiled in 1886. The sisters were women with problems and conflicts, with successes and failures; with work still to be achieved and with ambiguities in their work and theology, all of which offered the opportunity to later generations to develop this thinking for its own times and in its own context. The Church and society and indeed to some extent the women themselves had an investment in viewing these women as extraordinary and without ambiguity, but they were, like all people, ordinary apples of God's eye.

ANNEXURE

Some letters of Sister Dora. These letters are examples. There are over 500 letters to Mr Kenyon Jones in the collection at the Walsall Local History Centre. Unfortunately, no records seem to survive of letters written to Sister Dora.

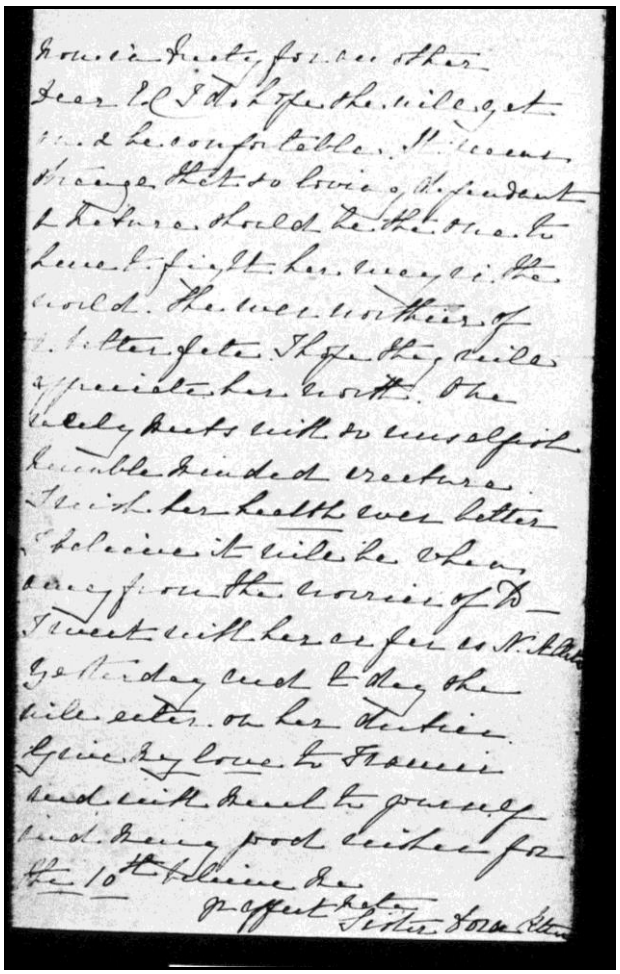


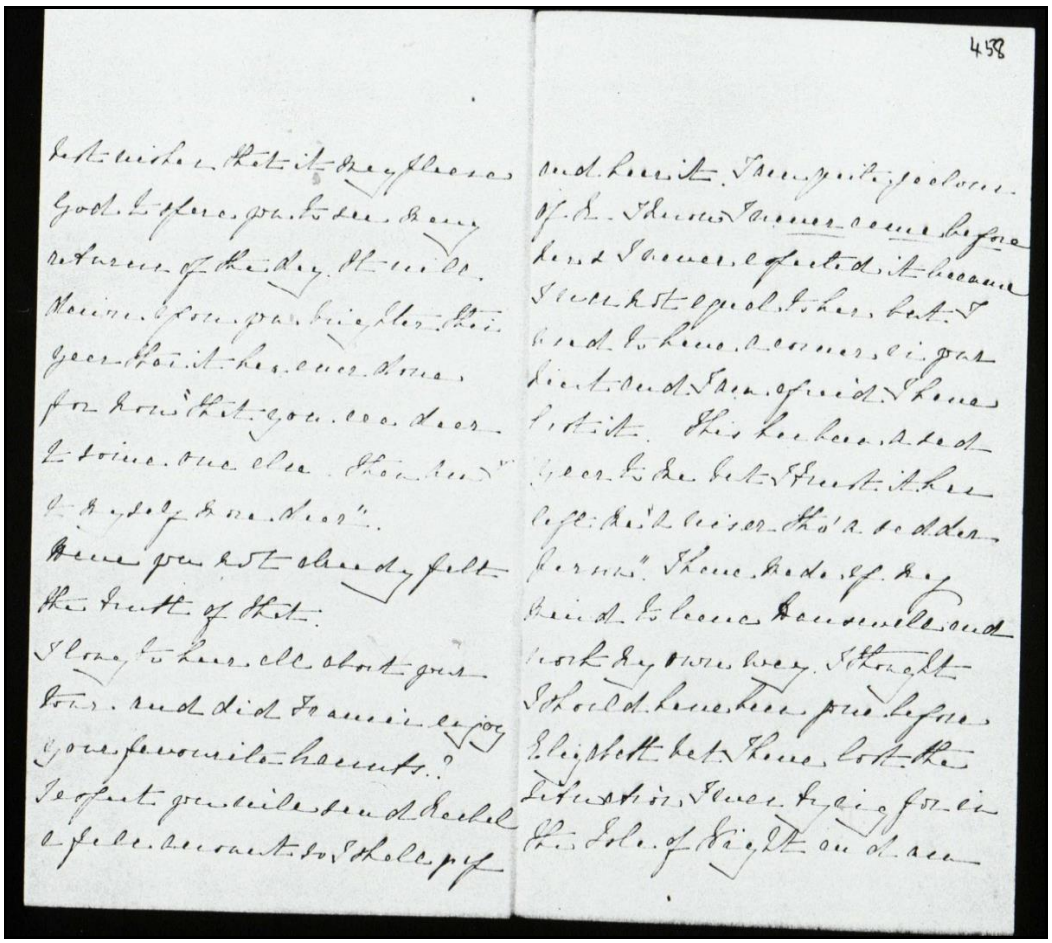
457

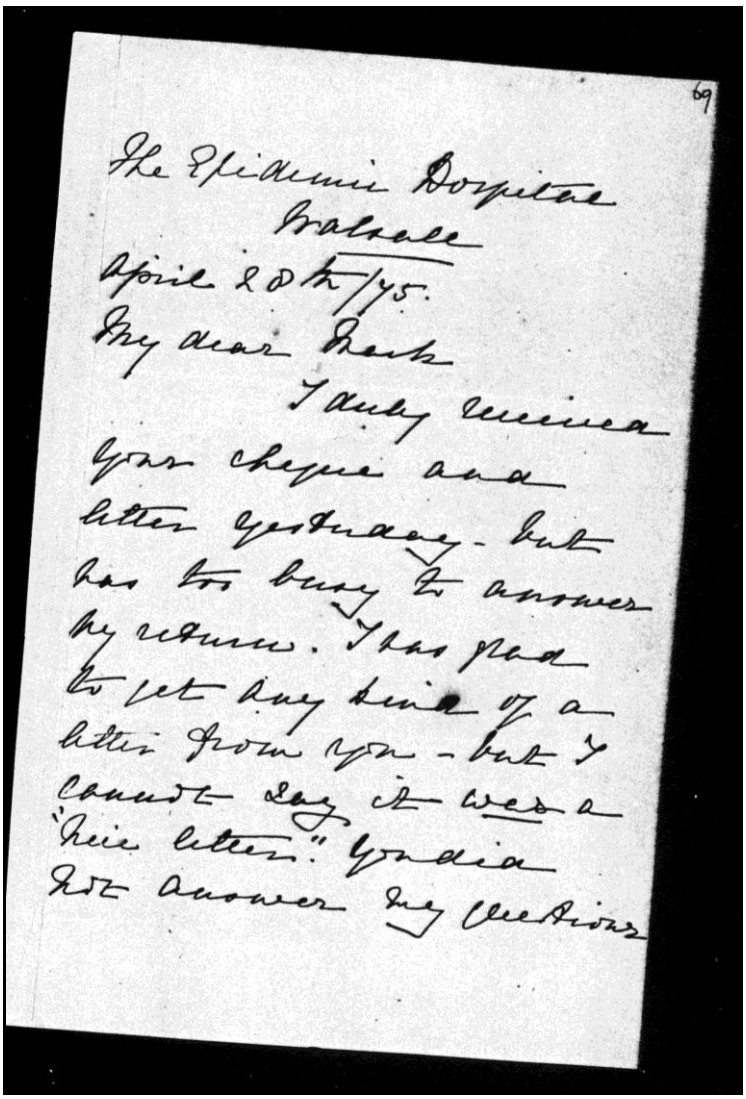
Oct 9th

My dear Brother

I hear that you were expected in Oxford this week so I write to put you on your arrival home which indeed it will be to you now with a dear companion by your side. To morrow the 10th is a marked day in my calendar so my dear Brother pray accept my





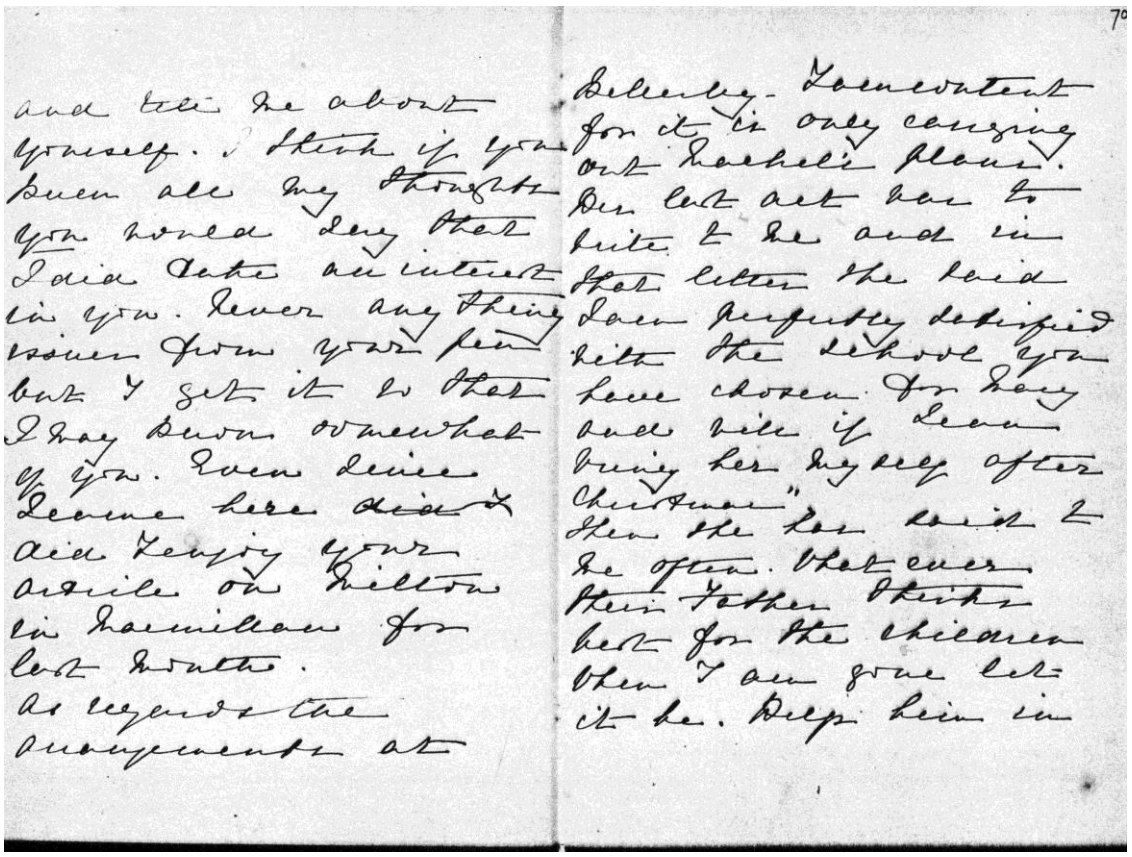


69

The Epidemic Hospital
Walsall
April 20th/75.

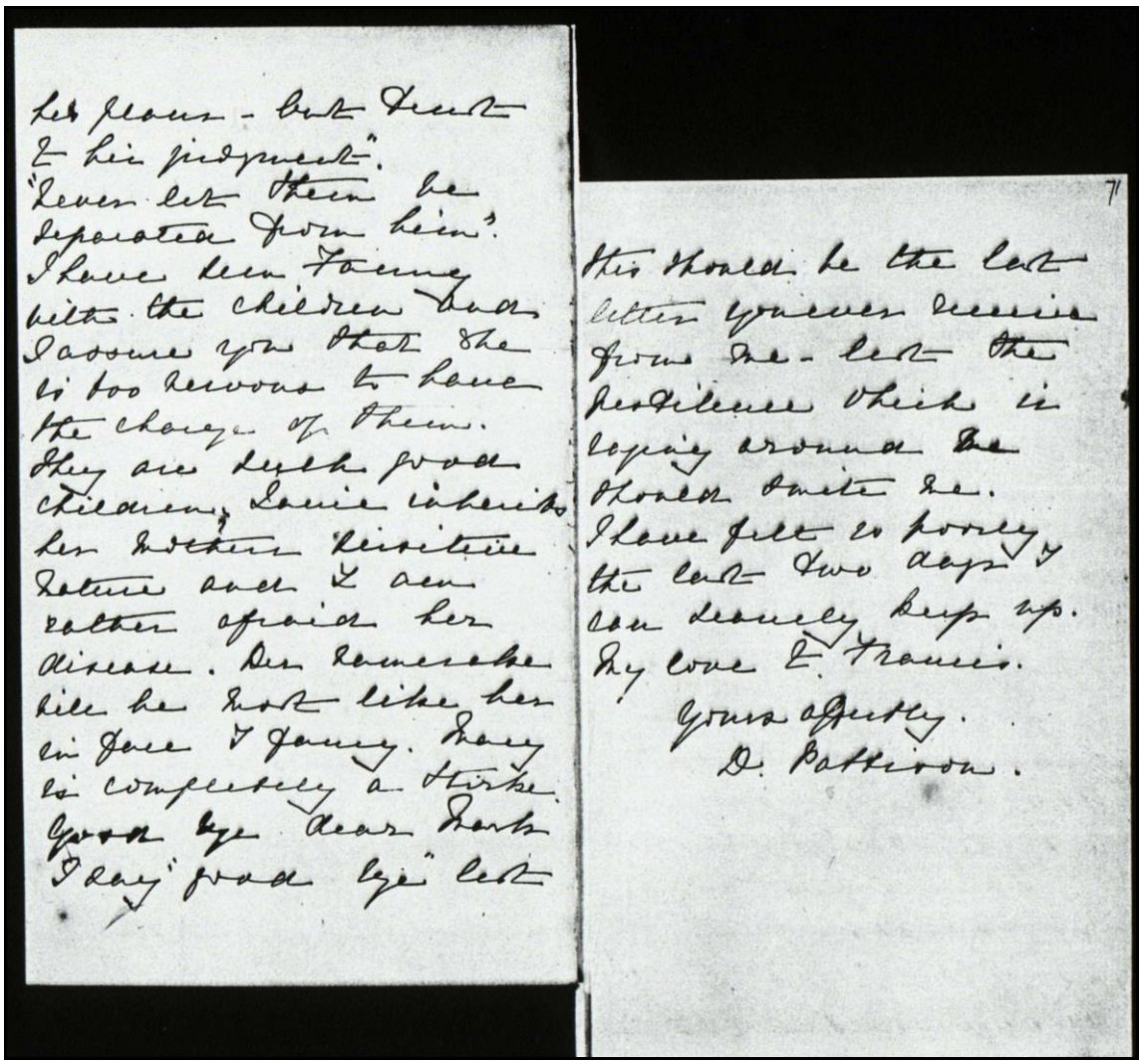
My dear Mark

I duly received your cheque and letter yesterday - but was too busy to answer by return. I was glad to get any kind of a letter from you - but I cannot say it was a "nice letter." You did not answer my questions



and tell me about
yourself. I think if you
knew all my thoughts
you would say that
I did take an interest
in you. Never any thing
issues from your pen
but I get it so that
I may know somewhat
of you. Even since
I came here ~~did I~~
did I enjoy your
article on Milton
in Macmillan for
last month.
As regards the
arrangements at

Bellerby - I am content
for it is only carrying
out Mackel's plans.
Her last act was to
write to me and in
that letter she said
I am perfectly satisfied
with the school you
have chosen for Mary
and will if I can
bring her myself after
Christmas".
Then she has said to
me often. What ever
their father thinks
best for the children
when I am gone let
it be. Help him in



his pleasure - but trust
to his judgment".
"Never let them be
separated from him".
I have seen Fanny
with the children and
I assure you that she
is too nervous to have
the charge of them.
They are such good
children, Louie inherits
her mothers sensitive
nature and I am
rather afraid her
disease. Her namesake
will be most like her
in face & fancy. Mary
is completely a Stirke.
Good bye dear Mark
I say "good bye" lest

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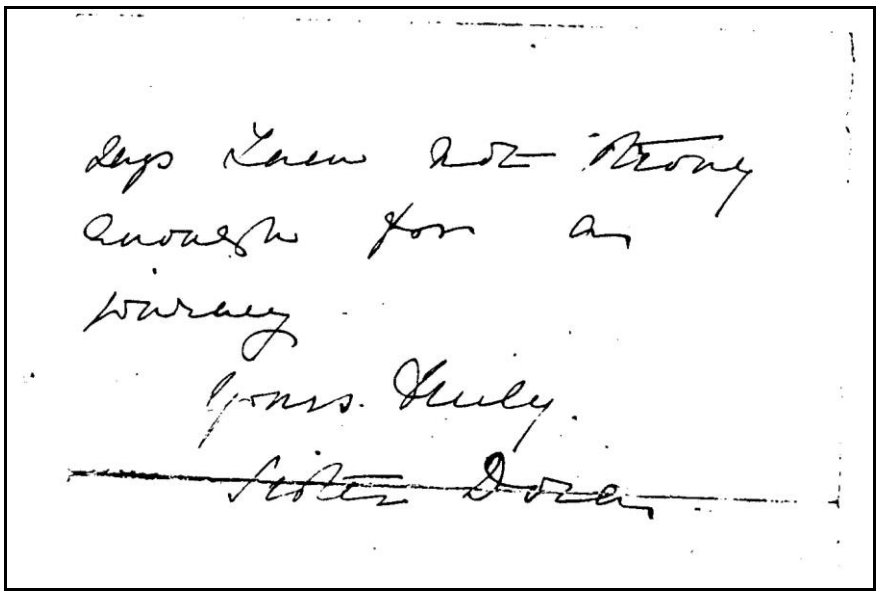
this should be the last
letter you ever receive
from me - lest the
pestilence which is
raging around me
should smite me.
I have felt so poorly
the last two days I
can scarcely keep up.
My love to Francis.

Yours affectly.
D. Pattison.



days I am not strong
enough for a
journey.

Yours truly.
~~Sister Dora~~

January 13th 1876

Dear Mr. Jones,

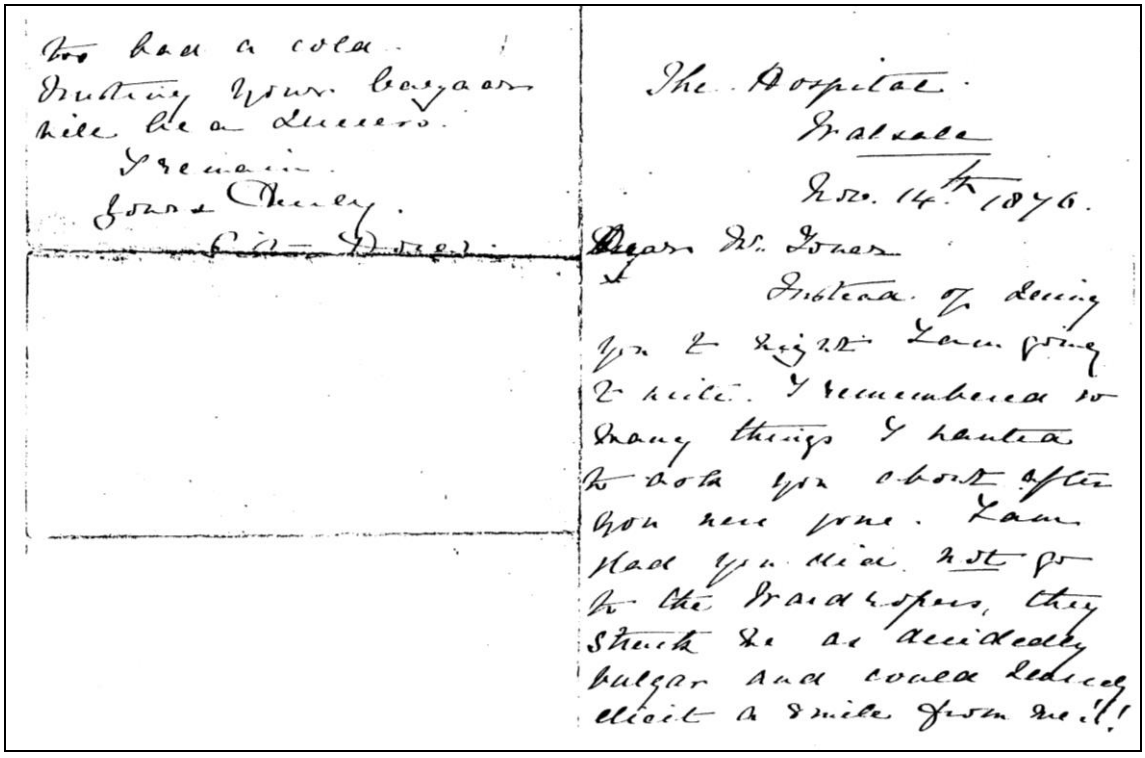
Very welcome was your letter this morning - but I was sorry to find that your cold was no better. I am glad you did not increase it by venturing here. It was certainly most imprudent. I wish our artist had been on the spot to have photographed you as you described.

I think the cold ought to have succumbed to the remedies. It was wise of you to decide not to go to Dudley, though I know how much you would be wanted. Now do get quite well by Saturday night.

I showed Mrs. Gill the extract. She laughed and said when she saw you she would tell you all about it. I send the World for your perusal, when read will you send it to the address enclosed therein.

I had such a tiring day yesterday. Sister Marrianne has never been up since you were here so extra work fell upon me and I could ill afford it. Then I heard some bad news which will really affect my comfort. I will tell you about it when we meet. Then to finish my dark day "the flame" could not be seen in the evening. Tho' I looked out very often. Surely it is not extinguished?!!!

I am going to church.



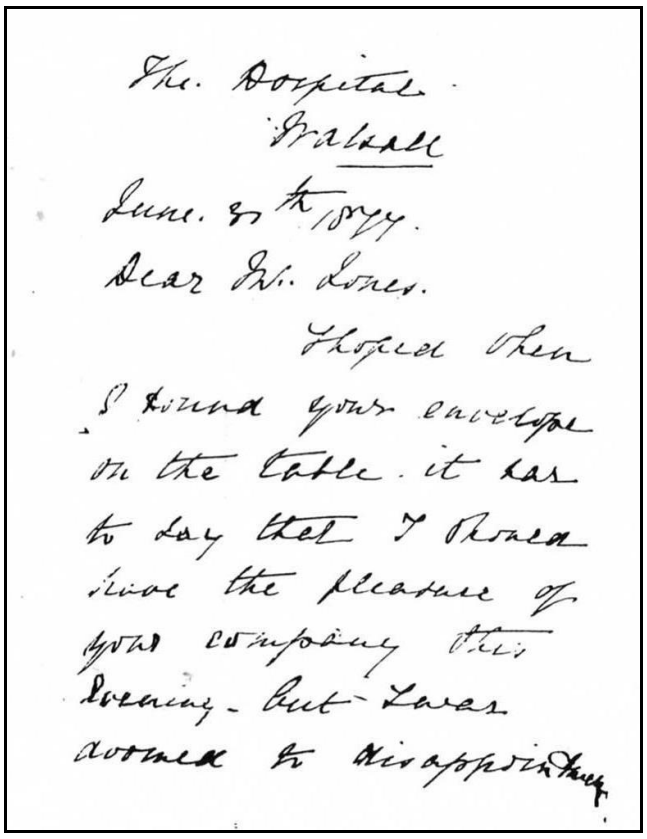
too bad a cold.
Trusting your bargain
will be a success.
I remain.
Yours Truly.
Sister Dorer.

The Hospital.
Walsall
Nov. 14th 1876.

Dear Mr. Jones
Instead of seeing you to night I am going to write. I remembered so many things I wanted to ask you about after you were gone. I am glad you did not go to the Wardropers, they struck me as decidedly bulgar and could scarcely elicit a smile from me!!

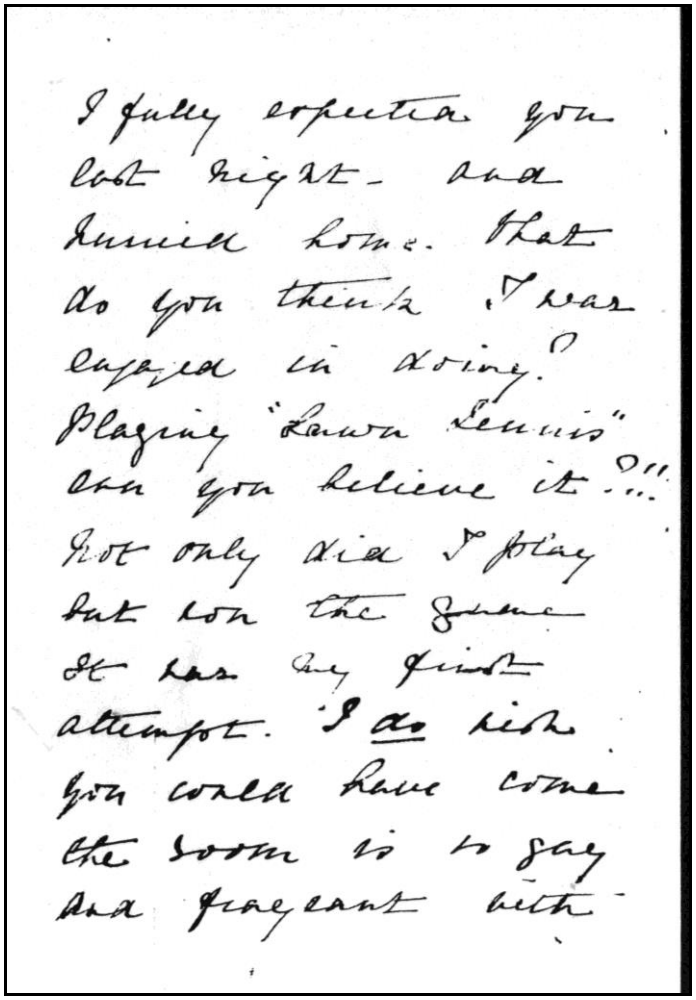
I enclose a little paragraph about your friend in case you should not see it - also a letter from Miss Nightingale which I wanted you to see. Have you seen the Graphic this week with an engraving of the Dus vessels you went over at Southsea. I hope I did not make you late for your engagement last night. I was so glad to see you looking so much better last night. I am terribly greedy, but I should like to see if the Isle of Wight can improve on Mrs Williams!!! So the silver cradle is stolen!! Better too lie in a stream and be at peace. I think the thief must be one of their own household. I am writing in haste going to catch the train for Wdw. this evening. The Doctor will not hear of my going to Tonbridge this week - he says I have



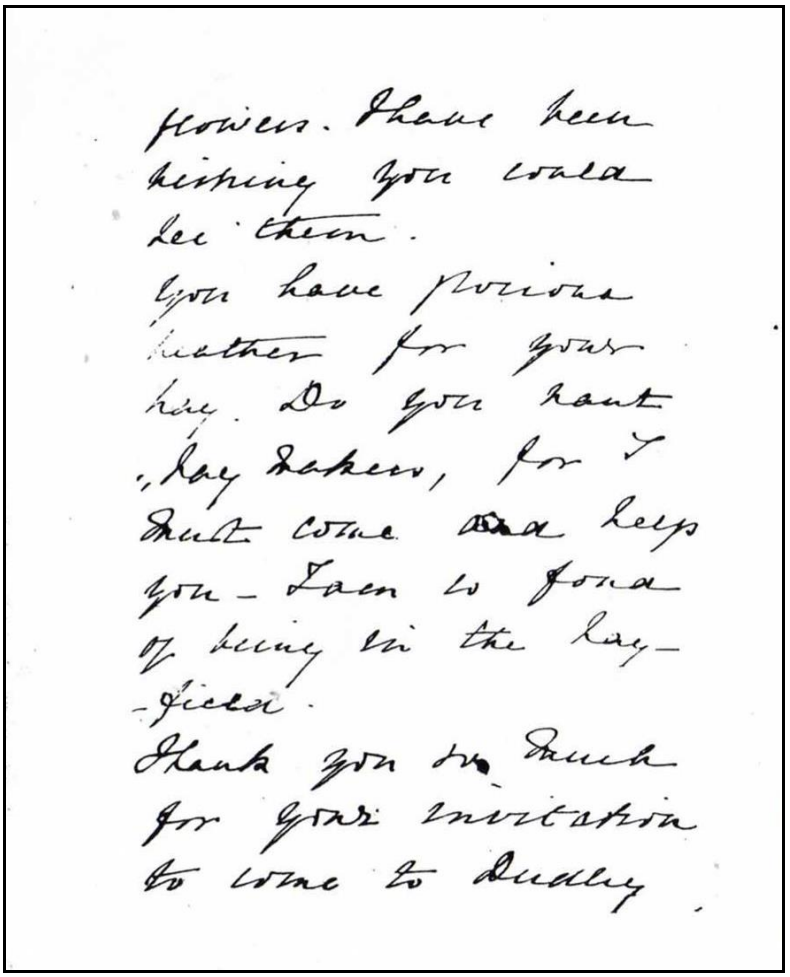


The Hospital.
Walsall
June. 25th 1899.
Dear Mr. Jones.

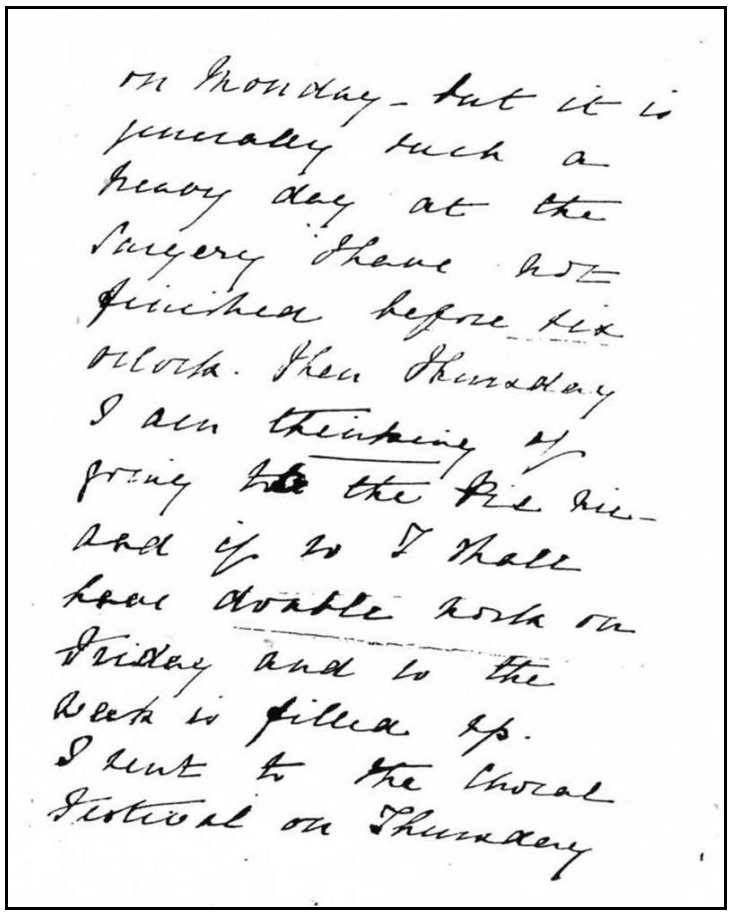
Hoped when I found your envelope on the table it was to say that I should have the pleasure of your company this Evening - but I was doomed to disappointment.



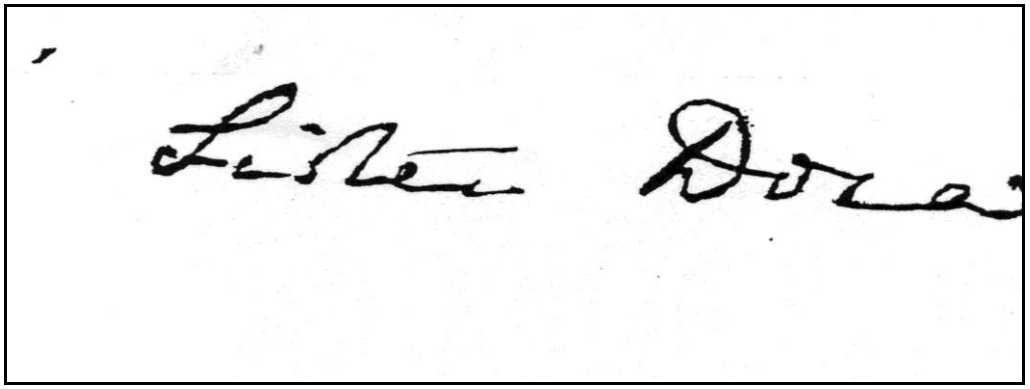
I fully expected you last night - and intended home. What do you think I was engaged in doing? Playing "Lawn Tennis" can you believe it....!!! Not only did I play but won the game it was my first attempt. I do wish you could have come the room is so gay and fragrant with



flowers. I have been
wishing you could
see them.
You have glorious
heather for your
hay. Do you want
"hay makers, for I
must come and help
you - I am so fond
of being in the hay-
-field.
I thank you so much
for your invitation
to come to Dudley.



on Monday - but it is generally such a heavy day at the Surgery I have not finished before six o'clock. Then Thursday I am thinking of going to the Pic nic - and if so I shall have double work on Friday and so the week is filled up. I went to the Choral Festival on Thursday



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