

CAROLINE STEPHEN AND THE OPPOSITION
TO BRITISH WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the provenance and nature of Caroline Stephen's opposition to British women's suffrage, setting this issue within the context of her life and times. Her influences included male relatives, life as a Victorian daughter-at-home and religious experience as a convinced Quaker and enthusiastic member of Women's Yearly Meeting. Far from being anomalous, Caroline Stephen's anti-suffragism reflected widespread doubts over the appropriateness of women's entry into parliamentary politics. The Religious Society of Friends was divided on the subject and her eloquence was a valuable support to conservative gender views within the Society and beyond it. Caroline Stephen contributed towards developing a positive, woman-centred opposition to the vote which celebrated gender difference and the value of femininity. She wrote as a Quaker and the religious basis of her views gave them particular power.

KEYWORDS

Quaker, women, suffrage, gender, conservative, British

Caroline Stephen is best known within the Religious Society of Friends as a Quaker mystic whose eloquent account of her conviction and experience of the Inward Light helped to inspire the Quaker renaissance at the turn of the nineteenth century. Her books are now sadly out of print, but she merited no less than six entries in the 2009 edition of Britain Yearly Meeting's *Quaker Faith and Practice*, including one in which she warmly praises the ministry of women:

In Friends' meetings...from the fact that everyone is free to speak, one hears harmonies and correspondences between very varied utterances such as are scarcely to be met elsewhere... The free admission of the ministry of women, of course, greatly enriches this harmony. I have often wondered whether some of the motherly counsels I have listened to in our meeting would not reach some hearts that might be closed to the masculine preacher.¹

Caroline Stephen's opposition to votes for women is less well known, and may even be regarded as a curious anomaly. As a Quaker, she did not separate her faith from its practice in her daily life, so the time has come to investigate why this liberal theologian and admirer of womanly virtues became an active anti-suffragist in the final years of her life. Her death in 1909 came two years after British Quakers had decided to lay down their Women's Yearly Meeting, and one year after suffragette militancy provoked the formation of a Women's National Anti-Suffrage League. Caroline regretted the first and applauded the second of these developments, both of which helped motivate her towards eloquent public expression of her own long-standing opposition to the female franchise.

Caroline Stephen's anti-suffragism clearly needs to be set within the wider context of her life and times, including the histories of Quakerism, of Victorian gender controversy, and of the British suffrage movement. This paper suggests links between her gender views and the family relationships which were central to her life, but at the same time constricted her intellectual and spiritual growth. There is nowadays a very extensive historical literature on Victorian womanhood, much of it related to the ideals and realities of family life.² Over the past three decades argument has raged over the significance of 'separate spheres', identified in the 1970s as a key descriptor of (and prescription for) increasingly differentiated middle-class gender roles: woman's moral influence, practical skills and reproductive function in the 'private' domestic sphere contrasted with and complemented by man's active, adventurous role as family provider and citizen in the 'public' world of industrialising, urbanising nineteenth-century Britain. At first glance Caroline Stephen's rather circumscribed life as an unmarried daughter-at-home and devoted sister, aunt and surrogate mother to young relatives and Quaker students seems to fit this paradigm rather well. However, closer examination bears out the conclusions of historians who have critiqued a 'separate spheres' view of Victorian women as unduly narrow and insufficiently sensitive to changes over time and the variability of individual lives.³ A study of Caroline's family influences, and of her evolution from mid-nineteenth-century domesticity to early twentieth-century Quakerism, reveals her personal choices as she mapped her pathway through competing discourses surrounding femininity, religion and citizenship, and herself became a contributor to the late Victorian gender debate.

Accounts of Caroline Stephen by distinguished contemporaries, including both family members and leading Quakers, suggest very diverse perceptions of her abilities and personal stature.⁴ It seems likely that Quakerism offered her a welcome refuge from family demands and particularly from her domineering and intellectually brilliant male relatives.⁵ The religious dimension of Victorian women's lives was of absorbing interest to many contemporary commentators, both male and female,⁶ but has been relatively neglected by modern historians. The role of evangelical Christianity in defining woman's domestic sphere was identified in Davidoff and Hall's influential *Family Fortunes* (1987); yet the potential of varied religious faith to open up the 'public' spheres of female philanthropy, social campaigning and even the women's suffrage movement itself has only recently begun to receive the attention it deserves.⁷ Caroline Stephen found a higher level of personal self-fulfilment and

public respect as a Quaker than as a devoted family member or a feminine social activist. This raises interesting questions about the connections between her religious faith and her gender views, including her negative views on votes for women. It is necessary to examine both her individual experience of Quakerism and her place within a collective religious body which is more generally renowned for its radical faith and practice than for its conservatism.

After a period of obscurity, Caroline Stephen's reputation has recently been revived through feminist analysis of her influence upon her famous niece, the modernist writer Virginia Woolf.⁸ However, several studies of nineteenth-century Quaker women have drawn the conclusion that the Society of Friends was less predictably sympathetic towards feminism (and suffragism) than some historians seem to suggest. Elizabeth Isichei's account of *Victorian Quakers* (1970) prepared the way by emphasising the social conservatism of many Quakers and the restricted role of women within the Society's own governance.⁹ More recently Sheila Wright and Helen Plant, both working on Yorkshire Quaker records of the late eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries, have explored the importance of women's religious ministry.¹⁰ Wright believes that this ministry presented 'a limited, subliminal challenge which, although potentially subversive to male authority, was only made when under the influence of divine inspiration'.¹¹ Plant also concludes that links between Quakerism and feminism were far from straightforward, despite women's self-fulfilment as spiritual ministers and the existence of debates among Friends over gender and authority; 'gender attitudes were complex and often contradictory' and corporate loyalty to the Religious Society of Friends remained predominant in most women's lives.¹² Elizabeth O'Driscoll's study of Newcastle Quaker women up to the late nineteenth century analyses potential connections between Quaker theology and feminism, before concluding that class and gender assumptions often undermined both male and female Quakers' professed faith in equality. The influence of evangelical domestic discourse upon Newcastle Quakers was significant, with its emphasis upon women's distinctive spiritual role within the family and feminine religious service through good works. Most Quaker women remained 'constrained by their cultural milieu'—usually 'solidly bourgeois and highly respectable'—and the minority who became committed feminists looked beyond the Society for their inspiration.¹³

Historians of Victorian women have increasingly turned to the detail of individual life stories, with the aim of listening carefully to women's own voices and respecting individual female agency as well as testing out general theories of gender history. Philippa Levine's prosopographical investigation of *Feminist Lives in Victorian England* (1990) was followed by a number of other multiple biographies which explored the porous boundaries between women's 'private' and 'public' lives.¹⁴ Much of this work has so far focused upon feminist women, but the lives of more conservative women equally repay close study situating family life and individual beliefs within wider social and intellectual contexts.¹⁵ After briefly outlining Caroline Stephen's life story and its varied representation by contemporaries and historians, I will turn to her own writings on Quakerism and on the role of women for a deeper understanding of her nowadays rather unfamiliar ideas. Despite her intelligence and spiritual insight, she shared many Victorian women's lack of confidence in her own ability to interpret

the wider world. Her literary output was not large, and very little of it refers directly to her own lived experience. A combined study of her life story and her published work is therefore needed in order to understand her strong views on womanhood and the narrower issue of female suffrage.

Caroline Stephen was far from alone in believing that women had more important things to do than to enter the essentially male business of parliamentary politics. Both within the Religious Society of Friends and further afield, many thousands of women were concerned to protect female qualities of nurturing, purity and spiritual strength which they believed gave moral sustenance to society and helped defend it from the destabilising forces of modernity. Rather than desiring a 'separate sphere', they sought to preserve gender differences so as to apply these to the vital task of influencing male behaviour and healing social ills. A close and beneficial inter-relationship between male and female qualities was their highest ideal.

Victorian and Edwardian concerns over the 'Woman Question' extended much further and deeper than headline-grabbing controversy over suffragette militancy.¹⁶ The most fundamental issue remained the extent to which women differed from men in body and mind, and the related question of whether this difference was biologically determined or socially constructed. Supporters and opponents of women's suffrage often shared a belief in the social advantages of gender difference, though they disagreed about how women's gifts should find expression. Social evolutionary theorists suggested that more advanced societies would develop an increasingly distinctive and influential role for women, both as bearers of racial strength and as guardians of moral values, so any blurring of gender boundaries was widely regarded as a potential threat to Britain's national and imperial future.¹⁷ Suffragists argued that expanded opportunities for women to develop and apply their gifts would benefit British society, but anti-suffragists feared that new opportunities for women in education and employment, coupled with their growing economic independence and legal equality, would dangerously divert them from established feminine priorities of home, family, good works and discreet moral influence.¹⁸ Early twentieth-century Quakers found it as difficult as everyone else to come to terms with social changes which might conceivably undermine family life and private relationships, whilst at the same time enhancing women's public status.¹⁹ Caroline Stephen was wrestling with a familiar set of fears and contradictions as she attempted to chart a course through her life and her writings towards a judicious upholding of gender difference which would allow women to exert their beneficial influence in both 'private' and 'public' spheres. She played her part in holding back the feminist tide, not as a highly original thinker but as one of Quakerism's most persuasive advocates and a deeply religious proponent of anti-suffragism.

Before turning to a more detailed discussion of Caroline's ideas and writings as an Edwardian anti-suffragist, it is necessary to locate her strong views on gender within a biographical context. Born in 1834, she was the daughter of evangelical Anglicans who were heavily committed to the abolition of slavery. Her father served the British government in Britain and India, playing a prominent role in drafting the 1838 Act to abolish slavery in the British Empire before becoming a professor of history at

Cambridge University. Both his career achievements and his autocratic behaviour within the family left a lasting imprint upon an admiring but unconfident daughter. Caroline's brothers were distinguished academics, one a leading jurist and the other the founding editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*.²⁰ James Fitzjames Stephen, her elder brother, published a book titled *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, which was designed to demolish John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*.²¹ It proved a key source of arguments for the opponents of women's suffrage, linking the narrow question of the vote to weightier issues concerning the nature of marriage and the relationship between weaker and stronger sexes. Fitzjames Stephen argued that gender equality threatened women still more than men, since women would lose their protectors and 'would be made to feel their weakness and to accept its consequences to the very utmost'.²² The enfranchisement of women and (worse still) universal suffrage would 'invert what I should have regarded as the true and natural relationship between wisdom and folly'.²³

Caroline Stephen's closest brother, in terms of age and affection, was Leslie Stephen, father of Virginia Woolf. Inseparable in early childhood, these siblings were gradually separated by their very different levels of education (for him, Eton and Cambridge; for her, a succession of governesses). Leslie took Holy Orders in 1855, for the instrumental purpose of gaining a University fellowship and in the teeth of his sister's disapproval. Caroline's fears for his religious faith proved well founded, as he soon became a convinced and proselytising agnostic producing critical tracts which threatened to undermine his sister's own faith as well adding to the personal tensions between brother and sister. Leslie Stephen's autobiographical musings, *The Mausoleum Book* (finally published in 1977), reveal how little respect he had for her wishes and her abilities.²⁴ An attempt to set up a joint household after his sudden widowhood failed miserably, leaving Caroline a nervous wreck.

Despite painful episodes in family life, Caroline Stephen never ceased to treasure her relatives and devoted immense amounts of time and effort to their care. In this respect, she was evidently doing her best to put 'separate spheres' ideals into practice.²⁵ Her sisterly devotion extended to include several male cousins, including Albert Venn Dicey, a famous Oxford academic and another leading anti-suffrage author. Caroline actively supported Dicey's opposition to Home Rule for Ireland, and his *Letters to a Friend on Votes for Women* (1909) rehearsed their shared opposition to the female franchise.²⁶ His book linked suffrage to imperialism, building its case around the view that women's suffrage would undermine the British Empire. Dicey's influence upon Caroline Stephen is probably evident in her reluctance, even as a convinced Quaker, to condemn the South African War of 1899-1902, and her general adherence to what one historian has called 'Friendly patriotism'.²⁷ Cousinly influence may have been mutual to some extent, since Dicey's anti-suffrage book included a handsome tribute to the strength of British women's opposition to the vote. Weighing up the arguments for and against the female franchise, Dicey came close to expressing Caroline's own recently published views on the all-importance of women's family-centred vocation.²⁸

Caroline Stephen lived out her faith in the benefits of gender difference by occupying the dutifully subservient role of the unmarried daughter-at-home throughout

her parents' lifetime. This role, buttressed by the family's evangelical Anglicanism, sanctioned her initial forays into philanthropic work. Many socially conservative women, as well as most feminists, believed that the feminine ideal should expand womanly nurture beyond the family to meet the wider needs of the local community.²⁹ In the second half of the nineteenth century there was an enormous expansion of female philanthropy, ranging from individual acts of charity to the burgeoning network of voluntary associations which gradually meshed with expanding local government provision.³⁰ Caroline's intellectual ability first manifested itself in a 350-page study of *The Service of the Poor* (1871), which assessed the strengths and weaknesses of religious sisterhoods as a means of administering philanthropy. She was already strongly (if unconsciously) attracted towards a more contemplative lifestyle focused upon spiritual development, but altruistically concluded that the path of 'normal' family life provided the strongest foundations for useful social service.³¹

Research for her first book reinforced Caroline's admiration for Octavia Hill's housing reforms, which aimed to improve working-class family life through the support of trained lady rent collectors as well as through provision of 'model' dwellings. Following her mother's death in 1875, Caroline devoted several years and considerable financial resources to housing philanthropy, setting up her own 'model' flats in Chelsea and joining the local committee of the Charity Organisation Society. Her feminine social work included the establishment of the Metropolitan Association for the Befriending of Young Servants (1875), which also attempted to spread the benefits of educated women's personal care and maternal concern for the poor. It is interesting to note that Octavia Hill, founder of professional social work and of the National Trust as well as a leading housing reformer, was another strong opponent of women's suffrage. This formidable woman's explanation of her anti-suffragism, like Caroline's own, related mainly to her faith in women's unique strengths rather than to fear of their weaknesses.³²

During 1872 Caroline made the life-changing decision to visit a Quaker meeting. A new phase of her life opened as she developed her faith alongside her growing commitment to housing reform and other good works. However, a breakdown in health in the late 1870s forced her to resign from most of her philanthropic work and leave London for a quieter country life in Surrey, then Worcestershire, where she was accepted into membership of the Religious Society of Friends. An improvement in health followed, enabling Caroline Stephen to make her mark as an active Quaker and successful exponent of Quaker beliefs. During the 1880s and early 1890s she travelled to minister in various parts of England and Ireland and also attended London Yearly Meeting. She spoke in the Women's Yearly Meeting on a range of subjects, including her personal concern for the growing number of agnostics in London, as well as the more familiar Quaker concerns of temperance and the care of women prisoners. It is clear that Caroline particularly valued this all-female religious gathering, where ideas could be developed and tested before proceeding, if appropriate, to the Men's Yearly Meeting for decision-making and further action. In 1890 she led a group of three women who visited the Men's Meeting to request an expansion in the number of Quaker meetings in the West End of London: regular

afternoon meetings for worship were already being held in her own Chelsea home. In 1893 she also took the initiative in organising a special meeting for worship during Women's Yearly Meeting itself.³³

Caroline Stephen wrote her most widely read and influential book, *Quaker Strongholds* (1890), during this same period of fervent religious commitment.³⁴ Her lucid outline of Quaker beliefs helped to strengthen the liberal revival of the following decade, providing an important tool both for internal and external development by the Religious Society of Friends. The final phase of her life took her back to Cambridge, where family ties included the presence of her niece Katharine Stephen (Fitzgerald Stephen's daughter) as Vice-Principal of Newnham College. Living in quiet seclusion from 1895 onwards, Caroline wrote two more substantial books as well as many articles on aspects of religious faith. She dabbled in local philanthropy, upheld her local Quaker meeting, and gave occasional lectures to student societies. She also enjoyed the role of caring for young visitors who included Quaker students at the University as well as members of her own family.³⁵ Writing to a friend in 1899, she described with some glee 'my undergraduate fishery...thirty-five young Quaker undergraduates, and eight young women mostly students, and these I consider my lawful prey, in addition to any non-Friends I may happen to know'.³⁶

Caroline Stephen's life was relatively unspectacular. Yet she earned some striking tributes from more famous contemporaries. Rufus Jones, 'one of the most influential Quakers of all time' according to historian John Punshon,³⁷ claimed in 1921 that 'One of the most important events in the history of English Quakerism was the conviction of Caroline Stephen to its faith'. Jones believed her to be 'the foremost interpreter in the Society in England of Friends' way of worship', and claimed that she 'interpreted worship better than any other modern Quaker writer had done'.³⁸ Thomas Hodgkin, one of the weightiest of British birthright Quakers and a personal friend of Caroline Stephen from 1891 onwards, acknowledged the 'unspeakable help' which he had received from her writings on silent worship, while indicating the wider importance of her 'message of revival and rediscovery' to the Religious Society of Friends as a whole. Through *Quaker Strongholds*, the woman whom he fondly described as 'this latest and most highly gifted recruit to our ranks' had 'showed to many wavering and discouraged souls that they were despairing prematurely of the future of "our beloved Society"'.³⁹ Katharine Stephen published a posthumous memoir which paid tribute to Caroline's personal qualities, her independence of thought and the strong religious faith which was 'the foundation of everything to her'.⁴⁰ A still more distinguished niece, the author Virginia Woolf, wrote that Caroline Stephen 'was one of the few to whom the gift of expression is given together with the need of it'; her life 'had about it the harmony of a large design'.⁴¹

Such warm admiration for Caroline Stephen's achievements contrasts strangely with the disparaging impression conveyed by her favourite brother in his private account of family history. Influenced by his own loss of religious faith as well as by a congenital lack of respect for female ability, he poured contempt on her Quakerism as well as describing her as a helpless, neurotic invalid and 'a most depressing companion'.⁴² Evidence of Caroline Stephen's problematic relationship with her male relatives has been seized upon by modern feminist historians, who have usually been

more sensitive to the personal humiliations which she suffered at their hands than to the significance of the conservative gender outlook which she plainly inherited from her father, brothers and cousins before going on to develop her own much more positive and woman-centred critique of female suffragism.

Jane Marcus was the first Virginia Woolf scholar to reinstate Caroline as a significant influence upon one of the twentieth century's greatest writers.⁴³ In 1904 Virginia spent time at Caroline's Cambridge home recovering from a mental breakdown. Though she remained an agnostic throughout her life, it has been suggested that she developed a sympathetic understanding of her aunt's 'rational mysticism',⁴⁴ shared her somewhat qualified pacifism, and appreciated her achievements as an independent woman writer. Caroline Stephen was eventually to be immortalised in the feminist classic *A Room of One's Own* (1929), as the aunt whose generous legacy helped fund Virginia Woolf's own independence: 'Of the two—the vote and the money—the money, I own, seemed infinitely the more important'.⁴⁵ The Quaker historian Alison Lewis has developed a fuller account of the Virginia Woolf connection, more securely grounded in an understanding of Caroline Stephen's religious beliefs, while Alister Raby's brief biography of Caroline herself is largely focused upon this particular relationship.⁴⁶

Caroline Stephen's own views on gender roles and on female suffrage require careful study alongside these varied commentaries on her historical significance. This is essential for a fuller understanding of her ideas, and also contributes towards the wider histories of the Religious Society of Friends and of the women's suffrage movement. Despite the extensive historiography on Victorian womanhood and on the suffrage movement itself, the opponents of suffragism have so far received limited historical attention. Brian Harrison's classic study of British anti-suffragism (1978) presented an ideological analysis and organisational history which has been widely accepted as definitive during the past three decades.⁴⁷ However, his selective emphasis upon male leaders, parliamentary supporters and a unitary set of anti-suffrage beliefs has been indirectly challenged by research into American women's mass involvement in opposing their own enfranchisement,⁴⁸ and more recently by my own detailed study of female anti-suffragism in Britain.⁴⁹ A revisionist interpretation is emerging which attaches due importance to women's role in framing anti-suffrage arguments as well as providing organised anti-suffragism with a large majority of its supporters.⁵⁰ Caroline Stephen's writings made a distinctive and influential contribution to female anti-suffragism in Britain, as well as adding a revealing dimension to Quaker history.

Thomas Kennedy's history of *British Quakerism 1860–1920* describes the slow process through which London Yearly Meeting decided to admit women to the Quaker Meeting for Sufferings in 1896.⁵¹ Gradually the number of joint sessions at Yearly Meeting increased, so that by 1907 agreement had been reached to lay down the separate Women's Yearly Meeting and bring women fully within the Society's own 'parliament' (as Caroline Stephen and others called it). This decision was a difficult one for both men and women. For all the enthusiasm of a growing number of suffrage supporters within the Quaker ranks, many other women had serious doubts about the wisdom of abolishing a separate space for the expression of female

concerns to a female gathering of Friends. The closing minute of Women's Yearly Meeting acknowledged 'mingled feelings'.⁵² A consultation during 1906–1907 produced support for laying down the meeting from eight Quarterly Meetings and opposition from six more, so it is not surprising to find the 1907 Women's Yearly Meeting laying alternative plans to safeguard women's gendered contribution in the future. It was proposed that a Women's Conference should be held on the eve of each London Yearly Meeting, and in some localities separate Women's Meetings lasted voluntarily into the 1940s. The forces of male conservatism were also strong within the Religious Society of Friends, as Pam Lunn revealed in her study of 'British Quakers and the militant phase of the women's suffrage campaign'. She concluded, in a similar vein to other recent historians of Quaker women, that 'This period [1906–14] saw the majority of Quakers following the great sea changes of mood and opinion in the surrounding society...rather than leading them'.⁵³

Quaker journals of the period demonstrate both support and opposition to the parliamentary vote for women, and also a widespread reluctance among Friends of both sexes to equate reforms in Quaker governance with the escalating external debate over the female franchise. From the 1860s onwards some Quaker women expressed their belief that the religious practices of their Society provided special encouragement and training for public service. However other Friends took their stand firmly upon the principles of gender difference. J. Firth Bottomley asserted in the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* (1870) that 'the subjection of the female to the male is a universal law... The moral superiority of woman is clear and undoubted, but unfortunately moral superiority alone does not rule the world'.⁵⁴ By the Edwardian period the suffrage argument had moved on, and become entangled with controversy over suffragette militancy and law-breaking. 'I had thought that the principles and practice of Quakers inculcated the duty of obeying the law in all matters in which it was not opposed directly to the law of God', fulminated one letter to the *British Friend* in April 1907, whilst denouncing an editorial supporting suffragism from a Quaker perspective.⁵⁵ Debate rumbled on until 1914, with letters arguing both for and against enfranchisement, and for and against the view that suffragism accorded naturally with Quaker principles. It is not surprising to find anti-suffrage Quakers sometimes invoking the support of Caroline Stephen for their views, or in other cases dismissing the relevance of suffrage politics to the religious work of the Society. In contrast, a tract titled *Friends and the Women's Movement* (1911) claimed that 'the spirit which, at its best, is animating the noble women of this movement, is the same which led the women of our Society two centuries ago into posts of danger and suffering for the truth they loved'.⁵⁶

Later feminist writers have resumed this eager search for historical and religious continuity. In the 1980s American histories of Quaker women carried titles which underlined the link between secular and religious radicalism, for example Margaret Hope Bacon's *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America* (1987) and the edited volume *Witnesses for Change: Quaker Women Over Three Centuries* (1989).⁵⁷ In Britain, Quaker feminists collaborated to produce the Swarthmore lecture *Bringing the Invisible into the Light* (1986) which traced women's progress towards equality within the Religious Society of Friends, celebrating radical fore-mothers but also

noting that full equality has never been a 'given' and that women still have far to travel as they learn to voice their experience and make their full contribution.⁵⁸

More recently, British suffrage historian Sandra Holton has authored *Quaker Women*, a study of the interlinked public and private lives of the progressive women belonging to the Priestman-Bright Quaker dynasties between 1780 and 1930. Caroline Stephen makes no appearance. This is unsurprising since she moved in very different circles beyond, and even within, the Religious Society of Friends. However it would be a mistake to assume that her views were therefore insignificant to the history of Quaker women.⁵⁹ As Sandra Holton herself pointed out in an earlier article about women's status within the Quakerism, 'the existing constitutional arrangements of the Society had fostered a deep and longstanding appreciation of separatist strategies for advancing the status and authority of women'.⁶⁰ Thomas Kennedy claims that 'Quaker feminists generally greeted Caroline Stephen's anti-suffrage statements with embarrassed silence', and implies that she was more influential outside the Society than within it.⁶¹ Like other historians of Quakerism, Holton and Kennedy have had to grapple with the apparent paradoxes of a Society which roots its governance in religious faith but is not immune from the social prejudices of its times. When these prejudices are held by Quaker women themselves, and appear to reinforce female inequality as well as gender separatism, they may seem particularly paradoxical.

Caroline Stephen's own writings provide varied evidence of her gender views and their provenance, and may help to resolve a paradox which is more apparent than real. Her enthusiasm for gender differences, and for women's unique social and spiritual vocation, was strengthened by her religious faith and widely shared within the Religious Society of Friends. Caroline's great book *Quaker Strongholds* was essentially an introduction to Quakerism for the uninitiated. As such, it was unlikely to present any direct commentary on the 'Woman Question' which so preoccupied late Victorian society. But a careful reading reveals clues to the author's social concerns, including those related to gender. In her Preface, Caroline outlined the nature of Quaker faith, claiming that 'it is not...so much in the contents of our theology as in our attitude towards theology that there is a distinctive element'.⁶² Quakers often preferred to abstain from 'the attempt to define the indefinable',⁶³ valuing personal experience and intuitive knowledge above intellectual precision. Caroline herself lacked intellectual self-confidence, as a result of her restricted education and lifelong deference towards overbearing and highly academic male relatives. But Quakerism had helped to set her free, in ways more fundamental than any parliamentary vote could do. The spiritual liberation she experienced during her first visit to a Quaker meeting retains its power to move readers, more than a century later:

My whole soul was filled with the unutterable peace of the undisturbed opportunity for communion with God, with the sense that at last I had found a place where I might, without the faintest suspicion of insincerity, join with others in simply seeking His presence.⁶⁴

Her book described Quaker organisational structures, including Women's Yearly Meeting, which she cheerfully reported as dealing 'with matters of less importance,

or at any rate of more restricted scope, than the men's meeting': joint meetings were held as necessary, and 'on these occasions the women are free to take their full share in the discussions...the more easily practicable because no question is ever put to the vote'.⁶⁵ Conventional, egalitarian democracy was neither appropriate nor necessary in order for women to play their part as spiritual equals within the Religious Society of Friends. Caroline's praise for women's ministry has already been quoted. 'How can we listen if we do not cease to speak?' she asked, concluding that inward silence was the source of all true ministry, and accessible to everyone.⁶⁶ Its benefits were particularly to be valued in an era of religious controversy when 'People's very love of truth seems to themselves to be enlisted in pursuing the streams which lead them away from the Fountain of truth'.⁶⁷ Scientific progress and agnosticism were proceeding hand in hand, and 'All that can be shaken is being shaken to its very foundations'.⁶⁸ In these times of spiritual threat, the Religious Society of Friends offered a refuge for doubters and a road towards a refreshed and strengthened experience of the divine.

Caroline stopped short of claiming that women possessed superior spiritual gifts, but she had no doubts about their importance to Quaker worship. 'The admission of the ministry of women seems naturally to flow from the disuse of all but spontaneous spiritual ministrations', she wrote, adding that 'For such ministrations, experience shows women to be often eminently qualified'.⁶⁹ At the same time she valued the role of men within the Society as a source of strength and a further measure of spiritual equality. Whilst other churches were suffering from a decline in male attendance, the Quakers' relatively high male membership showed that Christianity was 'not a religion for women and children only, but one which appeals to and fortifies the best instincts of manly independence'.⁷⁰ Statistics also revealed that the Friends' First Day Adult Schools were overwhelmingly filled by working-class male scholars. This pride in masculine support signified Caroline Stephen's confidence in the virtues of gender difference, whether in religious or in secular life. It is not surprising to find her amongst those who regretted the laying down of Women's Yearly Meeting in 1907, though by then it was over a decade since she had participated in Quaker business at national level. Like many other women, Caroline Stephen feared that womanly voices would be less clearly and less distinctively heard within a mixed assembly. This fear, unlike her Quaker concern for spiritual equality, was directly transferable to the anti-suffrage campaign.

There can be no doubt that Caroline Stephen's Quaker faith suffused all aspects of her life, and that there were strongly religious dimensions to her views on woman's role in society. Nevertheless she seems to have been reluctant to mingle her published statements on anti-suffragism with her writings on Quakerism. Her private correspondence in the last years of her life bears further witness to the all-importance of religion, and the relative separateness of the anti-suffrage campaign.⁷¹ Yet she wrote forcefully about that campaign, and it is necessary to turn to these neglected writings for a deeper insight into her gender views.

During 1907 Caroline Stephen published two articles on 'Women and Politics' in the *Nineteenth Century* journal, one of the leading monthly heavyweights of her day and a well-established venue for suffrage debate.⁷² In her first article she began by claiming to speak 'on behalf of a great though silent multitude of women' who were

reluctant to speak for themselves. After making the case for a female referendum on the suffrage issue, she went on to analyse the reasons for women's silent opposition. The suffrage question was inseparable from 'the much larger and deeper problem of the right general position of women, and the feminine and human ideals to which that position should correspond and contribute'. She found much to welcome in 'the great movement of the last century towards what is called the "emancipation" of women'. However, a price was being paid for women's advancement in terms of their loss of protection, and caution was necessary in advancing further down the same road. As a matter of justice, it must be acknowledged that women's natural role imposed burdens upon them which no man could share. True equality demanded recognition of innate differences, which pointed towards differentiation between the public duties of men and women. 'The good of the nation', as well as the good of individuals, required women to concentrate upon fulfilling their responsibilities as wives and mothers. Even unmarried women were heavily laden with domestic duties, and would find it impossible to take an informed role in political life 'without neglecting their own special work'.⁷³

The 'purest and noblest type of womanhood' needed protection in order to infuse the whole of society with her feminine virtues. A claim to moral superiority hovered perilously near, as Caroline Stephen attempted to define female difference. In a passage which recalls her praise for women's Quaker ministry, she described 'the womanly gift of instantaneous moral judgment' and women's 'almost unconscious application of ethical standards, apart from the slower process of reasoning out the connection between welfare and virtue'.⁷⁴ Female spiritual qualities, and feminine intuition, were needed to complement the masculine qualities of physical strength and intellectualism. On the one hand, women had neither time nor aptitude for taking an active role in parliamentary government; on the other hand, they had more important things to do. It took a suffragist riposte to this article to provoke Caroline into a published 'Rejoinder' which included a notably terse summary of her viewpoint: 'You cannot legislate with one hand and rock a cradle with the other'.⁷⁵

How original were Caroline Stephen's views on the suffrage issue, and how closely did they relate to her Quaker faith? Many of the arguments in her *Nineteenth Century* articles were expressed, with slightly different emphases, by other female anti-suffragists.⁷⁶ The basic claim of natural difference, and consequent divergence of social functions, was a mainstay of both male and female anti-suffragism. Though Caroline lived a retired life in old age, she certainly followed the development of the suffrage campaign with close attention and would have been aware of its main debating positions from the 1860s/70s onwards (when the first Women's Suffrage Bills went down to defeat, and Fitzjames Stephen published his important book). In addition to her personal links to several male anti-suffrage authors, Caroline would have been aware of the *Nineteenth Century* journal's famous 'Appeal Against Female Suffrage', authored by Mary Ward and Louise Creighton.⁷⁷ Though she did not join the two thousand female signatories of the 'Women's Protest' which accompanied this article, she enthusiastically welcomed the arrival of a specifically female anti-suffrage organisation in 1908, and chose to place her final article in its journal.⁷⁸

There were strong incentives for her to maintain a dignified silence on a controversial subject, especially as the Society of Friends was divided on the matter and reluctant to make a collective commitment. Yet she clearly felt that she had something important to add to the debate. Undoubtedly she acted under concern, in the true Quaker sense of response to a religious imperative, rather than out of any love of publicity-seeking political activism.

Caroline Stephen's most original contribution to the campaign against votes for women took the form of a third article in the *Nineteenth Century* journal, under the title 'A Consultative Chamber of Women'.⁷⁹ Published in the autumn of 1908, this article moved beyond condemnation of the vote and lamentations over its impact on women and on British society. Instead, Caroline wanted to develop a viable alternative to women's participation in male parliamentary politics. As she put it, her aim was to 'disentangle, if possible, the element of right and reasonable desire for some truly feminine share in the national counsels from the rash and violent struggle for political power'. The solution, it seemed to her, was the creation of a separate Chamber of Women, which would serve an influential advisory role alongside the male Parliament: 'My dream would be that a certain number of representative women (say two from each county) should meet during the session of Parliament to consider, revise and suggest amendments to any Bills sent to them by either House, at its own discretion'. Consultation was likely to focus upon 'social subjects, and especially those peculiarly affecting women and children'; in these areas women's judgment 'could not fail to be very powerful'. Moreover, the good example of a non-partisan Women's Chamber might be expected to rub off on Parliament itself, leading to greater 'detachment from party spirit', and growth of 'an interest concentrated solely on the moral and social effects of the measures under consideration'.⁸⁰

Thus Parliament would be purified and elevated by womanly influence, while the Women's Chamber would provide a safe space for feminine discussion: 'In such a Chamber alone would the true "woman's view" be taken, and the true woman's voice heard'.⁸¹ Caroline stated the case for a separate women's forum still more strongly in the January 1909 edition of the *Anti-Suffrage Review*, only a few weeks before her death:

for the first time we should hear a really feminine voice in national affairs—a voice which we must remember that the Suffrage can never give. Few women surely would really care very much for the power to choose between John and Thomas as their representative; and even if Parliament were thrown open to women, the members would be elected by a mixed constituency to a mixed assembly, in which we may be very sure that the woman's view would be swamped by that of the man.⁸²

On this point, Caroline Stephen showed a degree of accurate foresight. When women were eventually admitted to Parliament in 1918 they found great difficulty in making their voices heard, and have struggled to reform a male-dominated parliamentary culture up to the present day. She was not the only female anti-suffragist who advocated constitutional reform, as an alternative to women's admission to male politics conducted on male terms. But she was one of the first such advocates, and one of the most passionate.⁸³ In the view of those who knew her best, her religious

faith was inseparable from all aspects of her life so it must be assumed that her Quakerism helped to lead her in this direction. Moreover, her anti-suffrage articles make direct reference to the Quaker exemplar of Women's Yearly Meeting, so recently and sadly laid down. Writing a few months before this happened, Caroline added a footnote to her *Nineteenth Century* journal article praising the Quakers' 'separate Women's Meeting; which, though without legislative power, exercises a very marked influence on the action of the Society, through the opportunity it provides for the voice of Women Friends to be heard on all its affairs, and for their views to be placed on record'.⁸⁴ The following year she included another Quaker reference in the body of her article on the Consultative Chamber of Women. Such a Chamber would conduct its deliberations with 'a high degree of method and calmness'; meanwhile, she observed, the recent loss of a comparably educative and influential Women's Yearly Meeting was 'a matter of regret to many'.⁸⁵

The suffrage debate, the wider debate over changing gender roles, and the evolving governance of the Religious Society of Friends became linked together in the early twentieth century through the person and the writings of Caroline Stephen. This linkage was inevitable, though in some respects problematic for Caroline herself and for many other Friends. When a Friends' League for Women's Suffrage was formed in 1911, it remained unrecognised within the Society, and as late as 1914 London Yearly Meeting resisted suffragist pressure to minute a collective endorsement of votes for women. Caroline Stephen's opposition to women's suffrage is a reminder of the conservatism of the Society around this issue, despite the presence of so many leading suffragists among its membership both in Britain and America. By 1913 the Friends' League for Women's Suffrage had 15 branches and over 800 members, but even these substantial numbers suggest less than overwhelming support within a Society of 27,000 Members and Attenders.⁸⁶ Quaker Members of Parliament were led by Joseph Pease, Liberal Cabinet Minister, who opposed women's suffrage and flatly refused to receive a Friends' League delegation in 1912. Meanwhile Meeting for Sufferings and London Yearly Meeting continued to reflect divided Quaker opinion on the suffrage issue by proclaiming 'full recognition of the dignity of woman' in 1913 and appointing a committee to summarise the advantages of gender equality in 1914, though unity could not be reached to support a suffrage minute.⁸⁷

Clearly the Religious Society of Friends was sensitive to the 'Woman Question', and had already reformed its own constitutional arrangements in order to give women a fuller voice in its affairs. The admission of women representatives to Meeting for Sufferings in 1896 was the outcome of an extended period of religious consideration, and followed recommendations from an investigative committee of both men and women. However, women's position within the Society remained, in many ways, a subordinate one. In 1912 'all seventeen Quarterly Meeting Clerks as well as seventy-four of eighty Monthly Meeting Clerks were males'.⁸⁸ The Women's Yearly Meeting chose 'The Position of Women' as its special subject when it met in 1900, but there was widespread support for its dissolution into the mixed-sex London Yearly Meeting a few years later and an annual opportunity for Quaker women to consider women's own priorities was thus permanently lost. It is apparent that many Quakers shared

both Caroline Stephen's respect for womanhood and also her view that women's true vocation lay beyond the masculine worlds of Quaker governance and national government. This position was commonplace, rather than contradictory, and rested upon Quakers' conscientious beliefs as well as their underlying social prejudices.

Caroline Stephen's anti-suffragism deserves to be remembered as part of the general history of conservative women in Britain, a subject only now emerging from profound historical neglect. She thought, wrote and acted as a Quaker first and foremost, but she was also well connected with the literary and philanthropic worlds of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain through her correspondence, family connections and university links. Her writings on womanhood and suffragism were part of an extended gender conversation which lasted for many decades. As a dutiful daughter-at-home, lady social worker and supporter of the British Empire as well as, in later life, an independent woman writer and Quaker anti-suffragist, Caroline made her contribution to this wider debate. The strength of British women's gender conservatism is evidenced by the relatively slow progress of the women's suffrage movement nationally, for all the drama of its final years. The Women's National Anti-Suffrage League could claim with some plausibility to speak for a silent majority of women who were either indifferent to or opposed to their own enfranchisement. By 1914 the Anti-Suffrage League had over 42,000 members (mainly women), and its local canvassing consistently showed that more than two thirds of female municipal electors did not wish to vote in parliamentary elections. Leading anti-suffrage women included some of the most successful novelists of the day, as well as prominent imperialists and a minority of female educators and social reformers. At humbler social levels, historians have discovered very limited active support for suffragism in poorer working-class communities. In addition to those who expressed outright opposition, many women remained simply indifferent.⁸⁹

Both within the Society of Friends and outside it, Caroline Stephen found herself in good company. She was by no means a lone voice, nor a lone Quaker voice, in opposing votes for women. In many ways her ideas were similar to those of other gender conservatives, and particularly those of other leading female anti-suffragists. However, her writings also merit independent reading and separate analysis. Though raised in the shadow of her male relatives' combative intellectualism, Caroline finally found her own voice as a member of the Religious Society of Friends. She learnt to express her faith in womanhood with a particular power and eloquence which sprang from spiritual conviction rather than mere secular concerns. Her proposals for a separate Women's Chamber alongside a masculine imperial Parliament attracted the interest of other anti-suffragists over the following years.⁹⁰ Yet these rather original ideas undoubtedly grew from the personal experiences of a Quaker woman and appreciative former member of Women's Yearly Meeting. Caroline Stephen was a thoughtful participant in the suffrage debate who drew inspiration from many different sources and expressed carefully considered views, rather than merely recycling existing social prejudices. Her anti-suffragism had an ephemeral impact on her contemporaries, but was an integral part of her own broader outlook on gender, religion and society.

NOTES

1. Stephen, C., *Quaker Strongholds*, London: Edward Hicks, 1891 edn [1890], p. 55; The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, London: The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 2009 edn, 2.62.

2. For example, Abrams, L., *The Making of Modern Woman*, London: Pearson, 2002; Branca, P., *Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class Women in the Victorian Home*, London: Croom Helm, 1975; Burstyn, J., *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood*, London: Routledge, 1980; Davidoff, L., and Hall, C., *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850*, London: Hutchinson, 1987; Dyhouse, C., *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981; Fletcher, S., *Victorian Girls*, London: Hambledon Press, 1997; Gleadle, K., *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001; Gordon, E., and Nair, G., *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003; Gorham, D., *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*, London: Croom Helm, 1982; Hall, C., *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992; Jalland, P., *Women, Marriage and Politics 1860–1914*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986; Morgan, S., *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2003; Nelson, C., *Family Ties in Victorian England*, Westport: Praeger, 2007; Peterson, J., *Family, Love and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989; Rowbotham, J., *Good Girls Make Good Wives*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989; Smart, C. (ed.), *Regulating Womanhood*, London: Routledge, 1992; Vicinus, M., *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972; Vicinus, M. (ed.), *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977. For a recent summary of key historiographical themes, see Hamlett, J., and Wiggins, S., 'Introduction: Victorian Women in Britain and the United States: New Perspectives', *Women's History Review* 18.5 (November 2009), pp. 705–17.

3. See Vickery, A., 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal* 36 (1993), pp. 383–414. For more recent critiques, see Gordon and Nair, *Public Lives*; Morgan, *Victorian Woman*; Nelson, *Family Ties*.

4. For example Hodgkin, T., 'Caroline Stephen and the Society of Friends: Introductory Note by Thomas Hodgkin', in C. Stephen, *The Vision of Faith and Other Essays*, Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1911, pp. xxxv–xlvi; Jones, R., *Later Periods of Quakerism*, London: Macmillan, 1921; K. Stephen in Stephen, *Vision of Faith*; Stephen, L., *Sir Leslie Stephen's Mausoleum Book*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977; V. Woolf quoted in Marcus, J., *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.

5. Caroline Stephen nursed both her parents through their final illnesses until their deaths in 1859 and 1875, and in 1877 attempted to become chief carer for her brother Leslie and his daughter after the sudden death of his wife. Jane Marcus suggests that the demands of family care, including difficult relationships with her brothers, contributed to Caroline's own ill-health and nervous exhaustion during the years immediately before she joined the Society of Friends (Marcus, *Virginia Woolf*). Caroline carefully researched the role of religious sisterhoods before deciding to become a Quaker. After she entered the Religious Society of Friends her health notably improved and she found the confidence to live more independently. Marcus concludes she suffered from the 'tortured ambivalence of Victorian womanhood' (p. 7), and that 'Silence set her free' (p. 28): as a Quaker she was at last able to choose her own identity.

6. Prescriptive literature on Victorian womanhood frequently drew upon religious precepts, for example, in the female-authored journals of the Girls' Friendly Society and the Mother's Union. Some of the most popular female novelists of the late Victorian period (Charlotte Yonge, Mary Ward, Marie Corelli) also explored female spirituality alongside tales of romance and adventure. Virginia Woolf commented in *A Room of One's Own* (London: Grafton Books, 1977 edn, p. 31) on the numbers of learned books about women written by men. Hundreds of male contributors to the

'Woman Question' debate invoked religious arguments both for and against the emancipation of women, for example Wordsworth, C., *Christian Womanhood and Christian Sovereignty*, London: Rivingtons, 1884. Didactic tracts also emphasised the religious dimensions of true womanhood, for example, Davenport, W.H., *Stories of the Lives of Noble Women*, London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, n.d, c. 1905, which opened with Wordsworth's 'A Perfect Woman': 'A perfect woman, nobly planned, To warn, to comfort, and command: And yet a spirit still, and bright With something of an angel light'.

7. See Morgan, S. (ed.), *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain 1750–1900*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002; Moyses, C., *A History of the Mothers' Union: Women, Anglicanism and Globalisation 1876–2008*, London: Boydell Press, 2009.

8. See Lee, H., *Virginia Woolf*, London: Vintage, 1997; Lewis, A., 'Caroline Emelia Stephen (1834–1909) and Virginia Woolf (1882–1941): A Quaker Influence on Modern English Literature', *Quaker Theology* 3.2/2 (Autumn 2000), online edition, www.quaker.org/quest/issue3-3.html, accessed 4 December 2007; Marcus, *Virginia Woolf*.

9. Isichei, E., *Victorian Quakers*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

10. Wright, S., *Friends in York: The Dynamics of Quaker Revival 1780–1860*, Keele: Keele University Press, 1995; Plant, H., 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent: A Comparative Study of the Beliefs, Status and Roles of Women in Quaker and Unitarian Communities 1770–1830, with Particular Reference to Yorkshire', DPhil thesis, University of York, 2000.

11. Wright, *Friends in York*, p. 49.

12. Plant, 'Gender and the Aristocracy of Dissent', pp. 22, 28 and 240.

13. O'Driscoll, E., 'Women's Rights and Women's Duties: Quaker Women in the Nineteenth Century, with Special Reference to Newcastle Monthly Meeting of Women Friends', PhD thesis, University of Sunderland, 1999, Conclusion, pp. 305–10.

14. See Caine, B., *Destined to Be Wives: The Sisters of Beatrice Webb*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986; Caine, B., *Victorian Feminists*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992; Holton, S., *Suffrage Days: Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement*, London: Routledge, 1996; Levine, P., *Feminist Lives in Victorian England: Private Roles and Public Commitment*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

15. For example Bush, J., *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power*, London: Leicester University Press, 2000; Bush, J., *Women Against the Vote*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007; Fletcher, *Victorian Girls*; Lewis, J., *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

16. See, for example, the evidence of contemporary fiction, including the 'New Woman' novelists Mona Caird, Sarah Grand and Olive Schreiner and their anti-suffragist opponents Charlotte Yonge, Eliza Lynn Linton, Marie Corelli and Mary Ward; also the evidence of the daily press and heavyweight journals like *Nineteenth Century*, *Contemporary Review* and *Quarterly Review*, which regularly debated the 'Woman Question' between 1890 and 1914; and innumerable books, pamphlets and sermons from both feminist and anti-feminist positions, including works by Caroline Stephen's fellow anti-suffragists: Yonge, C., *Womankind*, London: Mozley & Smith, 1876; Harrison, E., *The Freedom of Women*, London: Watts, 1908; and Colquhoun, E., *The Vocation of Woman*, London: Macmillan, 1913.

17. Herbert Spencer's work on social evolution was particularly influential. He had direct personal links with Eliza Lynn Linton, one of the most vociferous late Victorian anti-feminists, whose diatribes against the 'New Woman' were extensively published in newspapers, periodicals and her own polemical novels. Social evolutionist arguments were also taken up by Edwardian anti-suffrage men and women who had a strong commitment to imperialism, including Lord Cromer, Lord Curzon, Lord Milner and Violet Markham and Mary Ward. See, for example, V. Markham, 'A Proposed Women's Council', *National Review* 55 (1910), pp. 1029–38.

18. See, for example, the anti-suffrage books of Edith Colquhoun, *Vocation of Woman*, and Ethel Harrison, *Freedom of Women*; and the ongoing debate between suffragists and anti-suffragists in the heavyweight journals during the 1890s and 1900s (*Nineteenth Century*, *Contemporary Review*,

National Review, *Quarterly Review*, *Fortnightly Review*), as well as the propaganda literature of both suffragists and 'antis' in the same period.

19. See sporadic articles and correspondence in *The British Friend* and *Friends Quarterly Examiner* during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as London Yearly Meeting's repeated refusals to endorse female suffrage during the years leading up to the First World War. The Quaker suffrage debate is analysed in Kennedy, T., *British Quakerism 1860–1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, Chapter 6; and Lunn, P., "'You have lost your opportunity": British Quakers and the Militant Phase of the Women's Suffrage Campaign, 1906–1914', *Quaker Studies* 2 (1997), pp. 30–56. Quakers, like other suffragists and anti-suffragists, invoked very broad arguments about the nature of men and women and the social consequences of gender difference. For example J. Firth Bottomley claimed in 1870 that 'The moral superiority of woman is clear and undoubted, but unfortunately moral superiority alone does not rule the world', *Friends Quarterly Examiner* 4 (1870), p. 567; while suffragist G. Crosfield argued in 1911 that 'Anything that tends to the uplift of women tends to the uplift of the race, both men and women; they stand or fall together', *Friends and the Women's Movement*, London: Friends League for Women's Suffrage, 1911, p. 5 (LSF).

20. For biographical summaries, see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 'Sir James Fitzjames Stephen' (K.J.M. Smith) and 'Leslie Stephen' (Alan Bell).

21. Fitzjames Stephen, J., *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, London: Smith Elder, 1873.

22. Stephen, *Liberty*, p. 237.

23. Stephen, *Liberty*, p. 242.

24. Stephen, L., *Mausoleum Book*, pp. 54–56.

25. Nelson, *Family Ties*, investigates the ideal and realities of a range of familial relationships, including those of daughters and sisters; see also Davidoff, L., 'Where the Stranger Begins: The Question of Siblings in Historical Analysis', in *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995, Chapter 7, pp. 206–26.

26. Dicey, A., *Letters to a Friend on Votes for Women*, London: John Murray, 1909.

27. Phillips, B., 'Friendly Patriotism: British Quakerism and the Imperial Nation 1890–1910', PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1989.

28. Stephen, C., 'Women and Politics', *Nineteenth Century* 61 (1907), pp. 227–36.

29. See Bock, G., and Thane, P., *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s–1950s*, London: Routledge, 1991; Koven, S., and Michel, S., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalism, Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, London: Routledge, 1993; Lewis, J., *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

30. See Prochaska, F., *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980; Louisa Hubbard, editor of the *Englishwoman's Yearbook*, put the total number of female philanthropists at over half a million: Burdett-Coutts, A. (ed.), *Woman's Mission*, London: Samson, Low, Marston & Co., 1893, p. 361.

31. Stephen, C., *The Service of the Poor*, London: Macmillan, 1871. Jane Marcus notes that Caroline Stephen seemed tempted by the lifestyle of religious sisterhoods, despite her conclusions in favour of family duty. Marcus, *Virginia Woolf*, pp. 7–8.

32. Letter from Octavia Hill in *The Times*, 15 July 1910, reprinted after her death in *Anti-Suffrage Review* 47 (September 1912), p. 218: 'political power would militate against...[women's] usefulness in the large field of public work, in which so many are now doing noble and helpful service. This service is, to my mind, far more valuable than any voting power could possibly be'.

33. See London Yearly Meeting and Women's Yearly Meeting minute books in the Library of the Society of Friends at Friends House, London (LSF).

34. Stephen, C., *Quaker Strongholds*, London: Edward Hicks, 1890.

35. Tod, R., 'Caroline Emelia Stephen 1834–1909' (typescript, 1978, LSF) provides a useful biographical summary and a full bibliography of her writings. See also Jensen, M., 'Stephen,

Caroline Emelia (1834–1909)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, and Stephen, K., 'Memoir', in Stephen, *The Vision of Faith*. Caroline Stephen's enjoyment of surrogate mothering was spelt out in a letter to Hannah Bellows on 6 November 1906: 'To any old woman, and especially to the childless, there is something life-giving in affection and sympathetic appreciation from the young...I feel motherhood to be the most beautiful and precious thing in life—and my secret romance [about being a teacher] is all nourished by the faith that there is an inward motherhood not wholly dependent upon the outward experience of it'. MS vol. 128/3, LSF.

36. Letter published in Stephen, *The Vision of Faith*, pp. xcvi–xcviii. See also Stephen's unpublished correspondence with her Cambridge protégés, including Lyra Wolkins, to whom she wrote on 10 June 1907: 'I am very glad you felt with me on the "Woman and Politics" matter... Of course it is a most difficult and serious question—and I hope we shall feel our way into something better than the suffragists' dream as to the future'. Temp. MSS 584, LSF.

37. Punshon, J., *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers*, London: Quaker Books edn, 2006, p. 257.

38. Quoted in Marcus, J., *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1983, p. 20; also Jones, R., *Later Periods of Quakerism*, London: Macmillan, 1921, p. 969; quoted in Lewis, 'Caroline Emelia Stephen', p. 2.

39. Hodgkin, T., 'Caroline Stephen and the Society of Friends', in *Vision of Faith*, pp. xl, xli. His friendship with Caroline Stephen is described in Creighton, L., *Life and Letters of Thomas Hodgkin*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1918, p. 160.

40. Stephen, *Vision of Faith*, p. xxxii.

41. V. Woolf, obituary for Caroline Stephen (1909), quoted in Lewis, 'Caroline Emelia Stephen', p. 2.

42. L. Stephen, *Mausoleum Book*, p. 55.

43. Marcus, *Virginia Woolf*.

44. Caroline Stephen delivered a lecture under this title to the Sunday Society at Newnham College, Cambridge, later published in her book *Light Arising: Thoughts on the Central Radianc*, Cambridge: Heffer, 1908.

45. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, p. 43.

46. Lewis, 'Caroline Emilia Stephen'; Raby, A., *Virginia Woolf's Wise and Witty Aunt: A Biographical Sketch of Caroline Emilia Stephen*, London: Cecil Woolf, 2002.

47. B. Harrison, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain*, London: Croom Helm, 1978.

48. See Camhi, J., *Women Against Women: American Anti-Suffragism 1880–1920*, New York: Carlson, 1994; Jablonsky, T., *The Home, Heaven and Mother Party: Female Anti-Suffragists in the United States 1868–1920*, New York: Carlson, 1994; Marshall, S., *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign Against Woman Suffrage*, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

49. Bush, *Women Against the Vote*.

50. See also Joannou, M., 'Mary Augusta Ward (Mrs Humphry) and the Opposition to Women's Suffrage', *Women's History Review* 14.3–4 (2005), pp. 561–80; Delap, L., 'Feminist and Anti-Feminist Encounters in Edwardian Britain', *Historical Research* 78.201 (2005), 377–99; Delap, L., *The Feminist Avant-Garde: Transatlantic Encounters of the Early Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

51. Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, Chapter 6.

52. Quoted in Godlee, M.J., 'The Women's Yearly Meeting', in *London Yearly Meeting During 250 Years*, Religious Society of Friends, 1919, p. 120.

53. Lunn, '“You have lost your opportunity”', p. 53.

54. Firth Bottomley, J., 'The Position of Women', *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* 4 (1870), pp. 565, 567.

55. M.F., *British Friend* (April 1907), p. 109.

56. Crosfield, G., *Friends and the Women's Movement*, London: Friends League for Women's Suffrage, 1911, p. 16.

57. Hope Bacon, M., *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America*, San Francisco: Harper Row, 1987; Potts Brown, E., and Mosher Stuard, S. (eds.), *Witnesses for Change: Quaker Women Over Three Centuries*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989.

58. Quaker Women's Group, *Bringing the Invisible into the Light: Some Quaker Feminists Speak of their Experience*, London: Quaker Home Service, 1986.

59. O'Driscoll, 'Women's Rights', p. 282, comments that 'The atmosphere within the Society was...not as sympathetic to the development of fully-fledged feminist ideas as has been presumed by many historians, who have tended to argue a generalised tendency towards feminism from the example of a few highly visible women Quakers, like the Priestman sisters'. Such 'radical suffragists' were 'the exception rather than the rule within the Society'.

60. S. Holton, 'Offices and Services: Women's Pursuit of Sexual Equality within the Society of Friends 1873-1917', *Quaker Studies* 2 (1997), pp. 1-29, p. 21.

61. Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p. 230. He describes Caroline Stephen as 'late Victorian Quakerism's most illustrious recruit as well as the female Friend best known to the British reading public'.

62. Stephen, 'Preface to the Third Edition', in *Quaker Strongholds*, pp. ii-iv.

63. Stephen, *Quaker Strongholds*, p. vi.

64. Stephen, *Quaker Strongholds*, pp. 12-13.

65. Stephen, *Quaker Strongholds*, p. 16.

66. Stephen, *Quaker Strongholds*, p. 57.

67. Stephen, *Quaker Strongholds*, p. 66.

68. Stephen, *Quaker Strongholds*, p.163.

69. Stephen, *Quaker Strongholds*, p. 100.

70. Stephen, *Quaker Strongholds*, p. 157.

71. See Caroline Stephen correspondence with G. Hodgkin, L. Wolkins, H. Bellows (LSF), and published letters to Lady Farrer, Mrs Litchfield, Miss Forster, Mrs Lecky, Mrs Marsh in *Vision of Faith*.

72. Stephen, 'Women and Politics'; Stephen, C., 'Women and Politics: A Rejoinder', *Nineteenth Century* 61 (1907), pp. 593-94.

73. Stephen, 'Women and Politics', pp. 227, 228, 229, 230.

74. Stephen, 'Women and Politics', pp. 233, 235.

75. Stephen, 'Rejoinder', p. 594.

76. See the writings of Mary Ward, Louise Creighton, Ethel Harrison, Lucy Soulsby, Elizabeth Wordsworth, Charlotte Yonge, Eliza Lynn Linton, Marie Corelli, Beatrice Webb, Florence Bell, Violet Markham, Gertrude Bell, Margaret Jersey, Edith Colquhoun, Mary Kingsley and Flora Shaw, and many lesser-known women, discussed in Bush, *Women Against the Vote*.

77. 'An Appeal Against Women's Suffrage', *Nineteenth Century* 25 (1889), pp. 781-88, published alongside 104 signatures from prominent women, and followed by a 'Women's Protest' manifesto which attracted thousands more signatures.

78. C. Stephen, letter, *Anti-Suffrage Review* 2 (January 1909), p. 7. The Women's National Anti-Suffrage League was founded in July 1908, and two years later merged with the much smaller but wealthier Men's League for Opposing Women's Suffrage, to form the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage, 1910-18. The history of these organisations and the sometimes tense relationships between their male and female leaders are analysed in Bush, *Women Against the Vote*.

79. Stephen, C., 'A Consultative Chamber of Women', *Nineteenth Century and After* 64 (1908), pp. 1018-24.

80. Stephen, 'Consultative Chamber', pp. 1019, 1020.

81. Stephen, 'Consultative Chamber', p. 1022.

82. C. Stephen, *Anti-Suffrage Review* 2 (January 1909), p. 7.

83. The anti-suffrage Quaker Thomas Hodgkin supported the idea of a Women's Chamber as early as 1907, according to Creighton, *Life and Letters*, p. 266, and it seems very likely that Caroline Stephen discussed her ideas with him.

84. Stephen, 'Rejoinder', p. 594.

85. Stephen, 'Consultative Chamber', p. 1023.

86. Lunn, '“You have lost your opportunity”', p. 52.

87. London Yearly Meeting Epistle 1913 and Meeting for Sufferings minute, February 1914. Requests to endorse women's suffrage were refused by London Yearly Meeting in 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913 and 1914: see Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, Chapter 6.

88. Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p. 233.

89. See Bush, *Women Against the Vote*, pp. 308–13, for detailed evidence of women's support for anti-suffragism and widespread indifference to the vote. The suffragism of working women in north-west England is recorded in J. Liddington and J. Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, London: Virago 1978; histories of working class women which confirm their lack of interest in suffragism include Roberts, E., *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working Class Women 1890–1940*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984.

90. For example, see Markham, V., 'A Proposed Woman's Council', *National Review* 55 (1910), pp. 1029–38; Mary Ward's proposal for a council of women's local government representatives in September 1909; Gertrude Bell's initiative to form a Women's Council in 1912; and women anti-suffragists' campaign for a Joint Parliamentary Advisory Committee in 1913–14.

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