



**PROPHETS AND PRIESTS:
CONGREGATIONAL WOMEN IN AUSTRALIA, 1919-1977**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the contribution to Australian history of Congregational women – members of the first Christian denomination to admit women to the ordained ministry in Australia. It seeks to investigate a previously neglected area of historical research and thus contribute to the study of religion and gender within Australian history. It will argue that religion has played an important role in the development of twentieth century feminism and should therefore be reflected in its general histories. The advantage of Congregationalism for women was that it encouraged them to explore and express Christian citizenship through the roles of “prophet” and “priest”. These roles allowed Congregational women scope to pursue reform in their church and in the wider community both on the basis of equality with men and also on the basis of their gender difference. Congregational women gained access to the prophetic role, thus providing a feminist perspective on theology and social issues, which challenged traditional Christian theology that had been developed by men. They sought access to the priestly role to extend their exercise of this prophetic role, but were only partly successful. Where they did gain access to the priestly role their exercise of it had both positive and negative results for themselves, their churches, and the wider society in which they lived. Just as the prophetic role could reflect rather than challenge received ideas, so gaining access to the priestly role could serve to reinforce traditional views, particularly in relation to race, class, and gender. Finally, as the position of the church in the community declined over time and women gained greater access to paid employment, the previous significance of access to the priestly role declined.

STATEMENT

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available to others for loan and photocopying for the purposes of research.

Signed.

Date.....[~]25/01/05.....

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACC NO	Accession Number, archival reference, Mitchell Library
<i>ADB</i>	<i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i>
ADD ON	Additional deposits, archival reference, Mitchell Library
AFWV	Australian Federation of Women Voters
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BTh	Bachelor of Theology
<i>Basis</i>	<i>Basis of Union</i>
CCWS	Congregational Church Women's Society
CMS	Colonial Missionary Society
COPEC	Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship
CWA	Congregational Women's Association
CWFA	Congregational Women's Fellowship of Australia
CWM	Council for World Mission
CYF	Congregational Youth Fellowship
Dip Ed	Diploma of Education
FMW	Federation of Methodist Women
FRAS	Fellow of the Royal Australian Society
Ibid.	Ibidem
JCC	Joint Constitution Council
JCC	Joint Constitution Commission
LMS	London Missionary Society
LNU	League of Nations Union
LTh	Licentiate of Theology
ML MSS	Mitchell Library, Manuscripts
MLK	Mitchell Library, Kingswood, previous repository
MN	Archival reference, Battye Library
MP	Member of Parliament
MS	Manuscript
OMDP	Archival reference, John Oxley Library
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PRG	Private Record Group
PRN	Private Record Number, Battye Library
PWA	Presbyterian Women's Association
Rev	Reverend
SAMWA	South Australian Medical Women's Association
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SRG	Society Record Group
UCA	Uniting Church in Australia
UCWA	Uniting Church Women's Association
URC	United Reformed Church
WAAAF	Women's Australian Army Auxiliary Force
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCTU	Woman's Christian Temperance Union
WEA	Workers' Educational Association
WIA	Women's Immigration Auxiliary
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WNPA	Women's Non-Party Association
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

INTRODUCTION

Congregationalism was the first Christian denomination to ordain women, in the United States in 1853, then in England in 1917 and Australia in 1927. Of those three nations, only historians of women in North America have considered the religious aspects of the lives of women as central to their investigations of women's lives and, in particular, the movement for the ordination of women. The first texts historians produced, in what became a sub-field of women's history, considered religion as part of the worldview of ordinary women.¹ Over twenty years ago, for example, a biography was published of the first woman ordained in American Congregationalism, Antoinette Blackwell Brown.² Since that time, scholarship on the topic of women and religion has become so prolific, that the author of a recent general history of women and religion in America argued that she could not summarise in a single volume all the research that has been conducted.³

By contrast, the study of religion has not been central to accounts of women's history in Britain or Australia. Gail Malmgreen has argued that general histories of British women have neglected the role of religion in the lives of women. She argued that British women sought to expose the inconsistency of the claim that women were more religious than men on the one hand, and, on the other, their lack of access to leadership in

¹ See, for example, Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860", *American Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 2, Part 1, Summer 1966, pp. 151-74; Ellen Carol Dubois, *Feminism and Suffrage: the Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977); Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism and Temperance in Nineteenth Century America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1981).

² Elizabeth Cazden, *Antoinette Brown Blackwell: A Biography* (Old Westbury, New York: Feminist Press, 1983).

³ Susan Hill Lindley, "You have Stept out of your Place": *A History of Women and Religion in America* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. x.

religious institutions. Malmgreen has argued that the expectation that female workers be celibate in the new secular professions such as nursing and teaching was derived from the monastic ideal of female service. Only recently have historians begun to explore the complexities of the interaction of women and religion in Britain in greater detail.⁴ An introductory history of the lives of women in English dissent, with a focus on ordained women ministers rather than the laity, was published in 2004.⁵ Historians of women and religion have begun to document and describe the diversity of women's experience within the British Isles. Recent histories of women in Wales, for example, have shown that despite the decline of nonconformity, religion continued to influence women's movements there well into the twentieth century.⁶

The relationship between religion and gender is only beginning to be explored by historians of Australia. This neglect reflects the continued failure of historians of religion and historians of gender to consider the lived experience of women in religious denominations. Until relatively recently, white Christian women have formed the majority of women in Australian history since 1788. They have also formed the majority of the membership of the Christian churches. As a consequence of this neglect of the religious frameworks white women have used to organise their lives, our understanding of them has been impoverished significantly.

⁴ Gail Malmgreen, *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 1-8; Ann Hogan and Andrew Bradstock (eds), *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture: Reassessing the Angel in the House* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1998); Sue Morgan (ed.), *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

⁵ Elaine Kaye et al, *Daughters of Dissent* (London: United Reformed Church, 2004).

⁶ Michael Roberts and Simone Clarke (eds), *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000); Deirdre Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000).

This thesis intends to modify the existing literature on religion and gender by exploring the role of women in Australian Congregationalism. It will present empirical evidence on that topic and draw on various theoretical approaches as these relate to the particular topic under discussion. It is written from the position of a woman who is an active member and former employee of the Uniting Church in Australia, the continuing church of many of the Congregational churches that formed Australian Congregationalism. Before I turn to this discussion, I will review the historiography of the history of religion, drawing first on surveys of the field from the United States and Australia.

Historiography of the history of religion

Historians cannot consider the ultimate purpose of religion, the life of the spirit: that is a matter for theologians. Historians can provide accounts of the way religion has been expressed over time, and the implications of this expression for the history of societies conceived more broadly than religious communities. The way historians of religion have approached this task, or, more precisely, have reduced their task to this relatively modest pursuit, has changed markedly over time. The historiography of the history of religion can be considered as a discrete area of scholarship with conferences and publications devoted to it, often emerging from the United States, where there is considerable institutional support for the history of religion. There, the history of religion is now written from many perspectives, mirroring broader social and religious changes that have occurred since the Second World War. Immigration, an increase in religious diversity in Western societies and the rise of liberation movements have altered the perspective from which the history of religion is conceived. Influenced by a shift to social history, historians now consider their writing from different geographical

locations, and examine the agency of indigenous peoples, women, and children.⁷ Attention to the response of lay people to religion has produced less celebratory forms of history than previously.

The story of the historiography of religion is not limited, however, to the changes of the last fifty years. Recently, the late Hans Hillerbrand, the historian of the Reformation, has provided a brief survey of the writing of church history that sets the changes of recent years in the context of centuries, rather than decades. His perspective has implications for the writing of aspects of the history of a Protestant denomination and provides a useful summary of the assumptions behind the method adopted here.⁸ Hillerbrand has argued that until the eighteenth-century Enlightenment in European cultures, the history of the world and the history of Christianity were understood as a linear narrative of salvation, starting from the Garden of Eden and ending with the Second Coming of Christ. The Enlightenment challenged the universal claims of Christian history and created demand for the study of church history as an area separate from world history, conducted according to rational principles as part of the scientific enterprise. Church history became the study of individual Christian denominations, a focus which reflected the consolidation of Protestant churches into denominations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and particular fashions in theology. Neo-orthodoxy, a significant movement in twentieth-century Protestant theology, which emerged after the First World War and is most associated with the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968), who was Professor of Theology at the University of Basel, involved a reaction against theological liberalism, which had been dominant in the late nineteenth

⁷ Thomas A. Tweed (ed.), *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1997), p. 6.

⁸ Hans J. Hillerbrand, "Church History as Vocation and Moral Discipline", *Church History*, vol. 70, no. 1, March 2001, pp. 1-18.

century. Neo-orthodox theologians criticised theological liberalism for its dependence on human activity to realise the will of God, and sought to establish the writing of church history as a support for dogmatic theology. Such church history tended to focus on elites and the development of doctrine, which was often presented as an inevitable progression, devoid of conflict. After the Second World War and in reaction against the limited appeal of church history for secular and religiously plural audiences, secular universities in the United States established departments of religion to enable students to study religion from a phenomenological and in comparative perspective. Church historians, who sought primarily to understand the history of their own church, worked alongside social scientists of religion, who suspended personal belief to investigate its implications for whole societies, not just for the internal history and identity of Christian denominations.

The new historians of religion, who would become the dominant writers of church history from the late 1960s and 1970s, embraced the theories and methods of the social sciences. In their rejection of the “ecclesiastical” history of elites in favour of the study of the beliefs and practices of ordinary men and women, they redefined church history as a constant conflict between competing interpretations of doctrine, rather than the clear development of it. They relied on Feuerbach, Marx, Habermas, Benjamin, Derrida, and Foucault, to provide the conceptual tools for their work, whereas a previous generation of church historians had derived their method from Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Harnack, and Barth.⁹

⁹ Hillebrand, “Church History as Vocation and Moral Discipline”, pp. 8-9.

Critics argued, however, that the new social history of religion did not employ a distinctive methodology. They suggested that economists, political scientists, and sociologists were better equipped to consider the impact of social factors on the history of Christianity, than were historians of religion. Historians of religion should be interested in exploring the role of Christianity in shaping the broad political, social, economic, and intellectual features of society, thereby making a claim for Christian history as an important part of an understanding of Western culture. In such a perspective, the history of Christianity would be analysed through the ways Christians understood themselves through time and place.¹⁰

How then, could Christianity, as one religion among many, shape society? Patrick Collinson, historian of English puritanism, identifies three distinctive characteristics for the function of religion in modern societies that forms the theoretical basis for this thesis. Religion serves as “a motivating precipitant, provoking action by individuals or groups which would not have been taken without it. Secondly, religion makes a bond, not merely affirming and strengthening social constructions as diverse as churches, sects, and nations, but actually inventing, ‘imagining’ them.” Thirdly, “religion provides legitimation, licensing as just conditions and acts (sometimes atrocious conditions and acts) which without it might have been deemed unlawful.”¹¹ Collinson uses the work of Max Weber to reconcile individual agency and social determination to explain the actions of members of a Christian denomination. Weber identifies the tension between ideas originating from individuals and ideas emerging from social interests. In his view, religious ideas have “an autonomous origin which cannot be

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 17-18.

¹¹ Patrick Collinson, “Religion, Society and the Historian”, *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 23, no. 2, June 1999, p. 153.

accounted for...by the social scientist".¹² These ideas are not only affected by social factors, but also have the power to determine conduct, often channelled through the culture of religious institutions. For Weber, "ideas have operated like points, like the 'switches'" on a railway track, where the track is a religious institution and has determined the direction of action, which "has been pushed by the dynamic of interests."¹³

Women in the history of Christianity

Patrick Collinson's theoretical framework for the study of religion suits the experience of minority and otherwise marginalised groups, such as indigenous peoples and women, particularly well. For women, it allows for discussion of the way religious prescriptions motivated, and were used to legitimate behaviour, and their opportunities to show leadership within the bounds of a religious community. It can also show how the contests for leadership in these communities could reveal contradictions in the religious prescriptions of those communities. Within such a framework, attention to the experience of women can revise existing understandings of the history of religion. Among the many surveys of the historiography of women in religious history, Ann Braude, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Macalester College, has argued that attention to women's religious history has the potential to challenge received narratives of decline, feminization, and secularisation. These narratives have assumed that the public influence of Protestant clergy was the most important indicator of American religion, which steadily declined. She has argued that women have supported religious institutions as lay people, that their numbers remained steady, and did not increase in the nineteenth century amid anxieties of a drop in male attendance. The significance of

¹² Ibid., p. 166.

¹³ Ibid., p. 167.

women in religion increased as they entered positions of leadership in large numbers.¹⁴ While the Australian case is different from that of the United States, the general insight applies that attention to the experience of women has implications for received historical accounts of secularisation in Australia.

This interpretation of women's roles in religious denominations is the product of a number of changing trends in the writing of women's history in general. Adriana Valerio, then historian at Naples University, argues that, at first, historians of women's religious history considered the way Christianity legitimated forms of sexual discrimination and subordination. In a second phase of scholarship, scholars "mined out" the experience of women, particularly their challenge to male domination. While studies showed that women could exercise power in the "great events of history", and in social, political, and religious affairs, they tended to focus on elite women so historians began to explore the role of women in general as shapers of social values. These studies demonstrated that ecclesiastical structures, despite their apparent inflexibility, allowed women a certain degree of autonomy and informal power as mothers and educators.¹⁵

The second and third trends – of uncovering women's lives and locating them in broad historical context – have important implications for identity and for policy debates. The implications of exploring the religious aspects of women's lives for national histories will be discussed below in relation to Australian historiography. The way women's lives are considered by historians also has important implications for the internal histories of Christian denominations, which, forms part of national histories. The most

¹⁴ Ann Braude, "Women's History Is American Religious History" in Tweed (ed), *Retelling US Religious History*, pp. 87-107.

¹⁵ Adriana Valerio, "Women in Church History", *Concilium*, no. 182, December 1985, pp. 63-71.

significant issue of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries within Christian denominations has been the ordination of women. Shurlee Swain has argued that the failure of historians to comment on the experience of late nineteenth-century women evangelists has contributed to the situation in some denominations where arguments for and against women's ordination were allowed to be "recycled" during the twentieth century.¹⁶ Moreover, the unearthing of women's experience should not be reduced to celebratory accounts of women as the foremothers of current generations. Elisabeth A. Clark, historian of the early church, has suggested that the moment of "recovery" of women's lives was "politically charged" – it constituted "a celebratory move" that supported the "identity politics" of contemporary women. Studies of women set in their historical context such as women ascetics in the patristic period could show that the Christian tradition recognised women's abilities as teachers of wisdom. Clark has argued, however, that women from the past cannot be appropriated for feminist politics without difficulty, for women's agency was often bound by social mores that men could use to reinforce traditional gender norms.¹⁷

These warnings are particularly pertinent for the current discussion given that female members of the Uniting Church in particular, are likely to use the following history of Congregational women to support their identity as the members of the successor church to the church that first ordained women in Australia. A critical appraisal will show that Congregational women were bound as well as liberated by the supposedly progressive discourses that allowed them to gain access to roles within their church, which had positive and negative effects for themselves, for others around them, and for later

¹⁶ Shurlee Swain, "In these days of Female Evangelists and Hallelujah Lasses: Women Preachers and the Redefinition of Gender Roles in the Churches in Late Nineteenth Century Australia", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2002, pp. 65-77.

¹⁷ Elisabeth A. Clark, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn'", *Church History*, vol. 67, no. 1, March 1998, pp. 1-31.

generations. The following research on Australian Congregational women seeks to extend the literature on the way white Christian women have sought to gain access to new roles by appropriating existing notions of race, class, and gender, with significant implications for the lives of indigenous women, both within Australia and overseas.¹⁸

Australian religious history

The recent explosion in Australian indigenous history has begun to inform the production of Australian religious history. Two recent surveys have indicated that the history of religion for the Australian context has reflected wider international trends in the historiography of the field. Australian religious history has now “come of age” with the publication of survey histories and the growth of specialist institutions.¹⁹ Scholars have explored the separation of church and state in the colonies, constitutional matters, the establishment of self-government in Australian church institutions, and religious sectarianism. More recently, scholars have considered the history of gender, spirituality, domestic religion, encounters between indigenous and non-indigenous people, and the experiences of post-war migrant religious communities.²⁰

¹⁸ For early reassessments of the appropriation of racial discourses by white women in Britain, see Anna Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood”, *History Workshop*, vol. 5, Spring 1978, pp. 9-65; Valerie Amos and Pratiba Parmar, “Challenging Imperial Feminism”, *Feminist Review*, no. 17, July 1984, pp. 3-19.

¹⁹ Hilary M. Carey, Ian Breward, Anne O’Brien, Suzanne D. Rutland, Roger Thompson, “Australian Religion Review, 1980-2000, Part 1: Surveys, Bibliographies and Religions Other Than Christianity”, *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 24, no. 3, October 2000, pp. 296-313; Hilary M. Carey, Ian Breward, Nicholas Doumanis, Ruth Frappell, David Hilliard, Katharine Massam, Anne O’Brien, Roger Thompson, “Australian Religion Review, 1980-2000, Part 2: Christian Denominations”, *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 25, no. 1, February 2001, pp. 56-82; Ian Breward, *A History of the Australian Churches* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993); Breward, *A History of the Churches in Australasia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Hilary M. Carey, *Believing in Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1996); Roger C. Thompson, *Religion in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994); H. R. Jackson, *Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand, 1860-1930*, (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987); Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1987).

²⁰ Carey et al, “Australian Religion Review, 1980-2000, Part 1”, pp. 296-313.

The intellectual context in which Australian religious history has been conducted has been different from elsewhere, due to the history of religious voluntarism in Australia. While this has been a worthwhile goal for many different interests in the community, the production of Australian religious history has been marginalised to some extent in theological colleges, which were established separately from universities. Only after the Martin Report, handed down in 1964, was religion considered as a discrete discipline that could be taught in universities. From 1975 to the 1990s, religious studies departments were established in Australia. These departments began to challenge the conception of the field by academics from theological colleges and historians.²¹ General historians and scholars of religious studies had complained that church historians tend to maintain debates for denominational audiences, which failed to interest outsiders.²² Some recent work has not done much to dispel this view. As one of the contributors to the history of the Uniting Church, I found that the editors assumed the audience of the publication would be the membership of the church.²³ By contrast, the recent history of Anglicanism in Australia has sought to locate itself in debates about national identity.²⁴ Church historians have argued that for their part, secular historians have failed to develop the conceptual lenses to read sources for their religious content. Patrick O'Farrell has quipped that the question is not whether religion has been an important factor in Australian history, but whether it has interested

²¹ Majella Franzmann, "From Queen of the Sciences to the Rebel Alliance: Religion in the University", *Australian Religion Studies Review*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 5-12; Stuart Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity: Spirit, Word and World* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 179.

²² See the editors' introduction to G. Osborne and W. F. Mandle (eds), *New History: Studying Australia Today* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1982).

²³ William and Susan Emilsen (eds), *Uniting Church in Australia: The First 25 Years* (Melbourne: Circa, 2003).

²⁴ Bruce Kaye (ed), *Anglicanism in Australia: A History* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2002), p. xi.

Australian historians.²⁵ The result of this separation is that general histories of Australia continue to fail to address religious themes adequately as shown in Stuart Macintyre's *Concise History of Australia*, Geoffrey Blainey's *A Shorter History of Australia* and Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath, and Quartly's *Creating a Nation*.²⁶

Australian religious history should be understood as a matter of private belief, expressed through the institutional form of particular denominations. The discussion that follows uses the concept of the denomination as a religious community with a common memory, a distinctive language, vision and story, and a particular church culture, as a context for the particular experience of women.²⁷ Bruce Mansfield, the founder and first editor of the *Journal of Religious History* (started in 1960), as well as the foundation Professor of History at Macquarie University, has argued that the denomination was an important means for the expansion of white Christianity in colonial Australia. Christianity in Australia should be understood in the context of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, and the effects of the Enlightenment and the Evangelical Revival. Hence it was characterised by emphases on doctrine, scripture, individualism, institutionalism, and competition.²⁸ Religious denominations began to develop a distinctively Australian identity in relation to the environment, to international relationships, and also in relation to their own internal history.²⁹

²⁵ Patrick O'Farrell, "Spurious Divorce? Religion and Australian Historians", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 15, no. 4, December 1989, pp. 519-24.

²⁶ With the exception of Alan D. Gilbert, "Religion and the Bicentenary," *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 15, no. 1, June 1988, pp. 12-19.

²⁷ Robert Bruce Mullin and Richard E. Richey (eds), *Reimagining Denominationalism: Interpretive Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

²⁸ Bruce Mansfield, "Thinking about Australian Religious History", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 15, no. 3, June 1989, pp. 330-44.

²⁹ Patrick O'Farrell, "Writing the General History of Australian Religion", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 9, no. 1, June 1976, pp. 65-73.

Women and religion in Australian history

Historians of religion and secular historians have only recently begun to address the significance of the intersection of religion and gender in Australian history. Initially, secular feminist historians viewed religion as an oppressive force as it could support women's marginalisation and could discourage a structural view of it. Feminist historians produced a number of histories of women in Australia in the 1970s, with the confident aim that women's lives could be "recovered" and contemporary structures of women's oppression diagnosed, explained, and overthrown.³⁰ Influenced by Marxism and the hostility of the women's movement to religion, these studies assumed that religion was an instrument by which the state controlled the lives of women.³¹ Only Beverley Kingston, in her work published in 1975 *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann*, sought to inspire contemporary women to shape their own futures by exploring the strategies women had used in the past to reduce their oppression.³² But these first historians also presented sufficient evidence of religious worldviews to undermine their own arguments from within. In *Damned Whores and God's Police*, for example, Anne Summers presented the God's Police stereotype as a device for church and state to urge women "to curb...rebelliousness in men" and to "instil virtues of civic submission in children."³³ Summers noted that such a role thereby lent women some of the power "formerly held by priests".³⁴ She also noted that during the past century women have been permitted some participation in social or political affairs on account

³⁰ Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia* (Penguin Books, 1975); Miriam Dixon, *The Real Matilda: Woman and Identity in Australia, 1978-1975* (Penguin Books, 1976); Edna Ryan and Anne Conlon, *The Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work, 1788-1975* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1975); Ann Curthoys, Susan Eade and Peter Spearitt (eds), *Women at Work* (Sydney: Australian Society for Labour History, 1975).

³¹ Jan Mercer, *The Other Half: Women in Australian Society* (Penguin Books, 1975), p. 254.

³² Beverley Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1975).

³³ Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police*, p. 21.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

of their role as moral police, which, in Australia, had acquired an “almost evangelical cast”.³⁵

These accounts hinted at, but generally failed to offer explanations for, the rise of women’s activism in the late nineteenth century. Patricia Grimshaw suggested that women in colonial Australia enjoyed considerable sexual equality within the nuclear family, which developed earlier than Britain and Europe, due to lack of extended family networks in colonial Australia.³⁶ In turn, Australians began to support sexual egalitarianism more readily than European societies. Australian women shared their husbands’ burdens in marriage and grew together in appreciation of each other’s abilities. She asked:

If women’s colonial experience had been such a degrading one, whence arose the movements to open secondary and tertiary education to girls, to open the professions to women, to alter women’s legal status to give fairer terms in divorce and child custody areas, to allow married women to own property in their own right, and most notably, to allow women the right to vote in parliamentary elections?³⁷

Grimshaw argued moreover, that historians had failed to acknowledge the full significance of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in providing a vehicle for feminist reform. Due to a lack of domestic servants, women pursued voluntary activities such as temperance, church, and social work, and supported groups designed to promote education and citizen welfare that could be reconciled with domestic duties. While these occupations initially created new opportunities for women, they failed to provide women with equality with men in Australian national life. Because women’s occupations had less status in society than men’s occupations, women could only

³⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

³⁶ Patricia Grimshaw, “Women and the Family in Australian History” in Elisabeth Windschuttle (ed), *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives in Australia, 1788-1978* (Melbourne: Fontana/Collins, 1980), pp. 37-52; See the discussion of Grimshaw’s critique in Margaret Bevege et al (eds), *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1982), pp. xxi-xxii.

³⁷ Grimshaw, “Women and the Family in Australian History”, p. 44.

participate in social structures “vicariously”, and both men and women “internalised...female inferiority.”³⁸

Grimshaw did not explore the role of religion in challenging access to leadership roles. The first collection of essays on the role of women in religion in Australia, *Women, Faith and Fetes*, was the product of the consciousness-raising of the women’s liberation movement and the ecumenical movement of the 1970s. The work argued that, though the Christian churches had reflected and reinforced the *status quo*, they had also provided women with opportunities for self-expression not found within other institutions. The authority of a personal “call” that was supported by regular spiritual practices, gave women courage to transcend prescribed roles.³⁹ In an opening chapter to this volume, Beverley Kingston questioned the assumption that the churches had been oppressive of women. Women had been members of the churches for centuries, in contrast to their position in politics, or in the workforce, or in the legal system. In the last two hundred years, she argued, the gender of the immortal soul had not been questioned and the “ultimate rewards and punishments”⁴⁰ of life had not been determined by gender – as far as we could tell. Kingston argued that church-based women’s organisations allowed women a sphere in which they could contribute to the spiritual life of the churches, which could include training in political lobbying. She argued that the relationship between the position of women in the church and the position of women in general was probably closer than had been acknowledged previously:

It may be that the current demand for ‘feminist’ history is premature, even incomprehensible, to historians in possession of the established fields and working with tried and tested

³⁸ Ibid., p. 49.

³⁹ Sabine Willis (ed), *Women, Faith and Fetes: Essays in the History of Women and the Church in Australia* (Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1977).

⁴⁰ Beverley Kingston, “Faith and Fetes: Women and the History of the Churches in Australia” in Sabine Willis (ed), *Women, Faith and Fetes*, p. 21.

techniques; but it also seems likely that careful consideration of the nature and uses of both fetes and faith will eventually become necessary, and that a history that ignores either the statistical presence of women in these areas, or the expanding body of knowledge regarding the expectations, conditioning and roles of women in nineteenth-century society fails to encompass the range of attitudes and experiences catered for and present in the life and teaching of the churches.⁴¹

These histories of women were, in part, a project of recovery: an effort to chart the place of women in history.⁴² The late Kay Daniels, a former historian and public servant in the Federal Department of Communications and the Arts, identified a number of problems in the conception and practice of “women’s history” itself. She argued that women’s history failed to identify enough new primary source material, it failed to develop a distinctive methodology, failed to account for differences between women, and it failed to explain the oppression of women in Australian society. Above all, the attempt to incorporate women into existing paradigms of history limited the capacity of Australian women’s historians to challenge those paradigms. Daniels exposed a central dilemma for women’s history: if it remained confined to the framework of conventional history, it could not answer its own questions, but conversely, if it was conceived apart from mainstream history, it faced marginalisation.⁴³

Subsequently, Jill Matthews distinguished between “women’s history”, defined as recovering women, and “feminist history”, defined as “incorporating gender into all historical analysis and understanding”. She sought to challenge the marginalisation of women in Australian history and “to allow women an autonomous space for

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 23.

⁴² For accounts of “feminist history” and “women’s history” in Australia see entries by Penny Russell and Sandra Stanley Holton in Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart MacIntyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 248-50, 688-9.

⁴³ Kay Daniels, “Women’s History” in G. Osborne and W. F. Mandle (eds), *New History: Studying Australia Today* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), pp. 32-50; Jill Roe, “Obituary: Kay Daniels, 1941-2001”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 33, no. 119, April 2002, pp. 186-9.

self-definition”.⁴⁴ Scholars could influence the conception of historical frameworks by focusing on gender relations and the construction of masculinity and femininity. The release of a collection of essays entitled *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* showed how the new approach could be successful.⁴⁵

As feminist historians considered gender as a central category of analysis, they also began to question the unifying narratives of Australian nationalist histories, seeing this history as a site of contestation between women and men. In an influential article in *Historical Studies*, Marilyn Lake wrote: “it is time for historians interested in gender to move beyond ‘women’s history’ – beyond that static role that lies at the heart of ‘contribution history’.” She argued for a focus that has since shaped investigations into gender in Australian history profoundly: “the contest between men and women at the end of the nineteenth century for the control of the national culture”.⁴⁶ Consequently, feminist historians have addressed the role of women in the creation of the Australian nation, in two general texts on Australian history. *Creating a Nation* (1994) explored “the agency and creativity of women in the process of national generation”.⁴⁷ Similarly, Marilyn Lake’s *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (1999), argued that historians should view the feminist movement as “a major political achievement, its ideas, its mode of doing politics and outcomes constituting an important part of Australian political history.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Jill Matthews, “Feminist History”, *Labour History*, no. 50, 1986, pp. 147-53.

⁴⁵ Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1992).

⁴⁶ Marilyn Lake, “The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context”, *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 86, April 1986, p. 114; for responses see Chris McConville, “Rough Women, Respectable Men and Social Reform: A Response to Lake’s Masculinism”, *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 88, April 1987, pp. 432-40; and Judith Allen, “‘Mundane Men’: Historians, Masculinity and Masculinism”, *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 89, October 1987, pp. 617-28.

⁴⁷ Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly, *Creating a Nation* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1994), p. 1.

⁴⁸ Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1999), p. 16.

These works have been criticised from a number of perspectives. Lake's work was seen as overly confident, and tended to neglect the experience of indigenous women and a thorough analysis of the attitudes of white women to indigenous people.⁴⁹ By contrast, *Gender Relations in Australia* did contain chapters on the experience of indigenous women.⁵⁰ Patricia Grimshaw and Fiona Paisley have since examined the role of white women in the perpetuation of racial stereotypes.⁵¹ A second criticism of these general texts was the extent to which they could provide a comprehensive history of women's experience or feminism. Lake's history of feminism was criticised for its stress on continuities in worldview to the neglect of the different experience of generations, which was most clearly expressed in the women's liberation movement. Here, the lack of exploration of religious themes is relevant. During the growth of women's history in the 1970s, historians of gender considered the history of women and religion, but this interest declined in the 1980s.⁵² In recent years, however, historians of gender have returned to consider religious themes.⁵³ Yet historians of gender still believe that the

⁴⁹ See Barbara Baird's review, *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 15, no. 33, 2000, pp. 401-03.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Jackie Huggins, "Firing in on the mind": Aboriginal Domestic Servants in the Inter-war Years", *Hecate*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1987-8, pp. 5-23; Jackie Huggins and Thom Blake, "Protection or Persecution? Gender Relations in the Era of Racial Segregation" in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia*, pp. 42-58.

⁵¹ Fiona Paisley, *Loving Protection?: Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights, 1919-1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000); Patricia Grimshaw, "A White Woman's Suffrage" in Helen Irving (ed), *A Woman's Constitution?* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1996), pp. 77-79.

⁵² See Norma Grieve and Patricia Grimshaw, *Australian Women: Feminist Perspectives* (1981, 1986, 1994); Ruth Teale (ed), *Colonial Eve: Sources on Women in Australia*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978); Elizabeth Windschuttle, *Women, Class and History* (Melbourne: Fontana, 1980); Margaret Bevege, *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1982); Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly, *Double Time* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1985); Sally Kennedy, *Faith and Feminism: Catholic Women's Struggles for Self-expression* (Sydney: Studies in the Christian Movement, 1985).

⁵³ Janet West produced a full-length, celebratory study, *Daughters of Freedom: A History of Women in the Australian Church* (Sydney: Albatross, 1997); Mark Hutchison and Edmund Campion (eds), *Long Patient Struggle: Studies in the Role of Women in Australian Christianity* (Sydney: CSAC, 1994); Ruth I. Sturme, "Women and the Anglican Church in Australia: Theology and Social Change" (Ph.D thesis, University of Sydney, 1989); Sturme, "Anglicanism and Gender in Australian Society" in Alan Black, (ed.), *Religion in Australia: Sociological Perspectives* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991), pp. 39-51; Muriel Porter, *Women in the Church: The Great Ordination Debate in Australia* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1989); Mavis Rose, *Freedom From Sanctified Sexism: Women Transforming the Church* (Brisbane: Allira, 1996); Judith Smart, "'For the Good That We Can Do': Cecilia Downing and Feminist Christian Citizenship", *Australian Feminist Studies*, no. 19, 1994, pp. 39-60; Judith Smart, "A Sacred Trust: Cecilia Downing, Baptists, Faith and Feminist Citizenship", *Our Yesterdays*, 1995, pp. 21-50; Judith Smart, "A Mission to the Home: The Housewives Association, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and

role of women in religion requires careful defence. In response to Roger Thompson, who has argued that women's role in religion was relatively marginal, Anne O'Brien has argued that as members, mothers and educators, women have maintained religious institutions and shaped the values and attitudes of individuals and communities, a task that had social and political implications.⁵⁴

Part of the difficulty with the attempt to write a comprehensive history of feminism was a narrow definition of the political. Marilyn Lake advocated the perspective of Jill Vickers, historian of Canadian feminist citizenship, who argued that historians should consider women's involvement in politics in fields that are fruitful but often neglected, such as community-based groups and organisations where an "amateur" tradition of politics developed.⁵⁵ Yet Lake did not use this insight to its full potential. Nor did she consider the full implications of access to citizenship for women and others around them. By limiting her selection of source material to major feminist organisations, and by maintaining a narrow definition of women's political action, her own subsequent work largely ignored the role of religion not only in defining citizenship, but in the range of topics considered, and its role as a motivating force. The whole area of peace activism was not explored in Lake's history of feminism nor was activism in religious

Protestant Christianity, 1920-1940", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, 1998, pp. 215-34; Patricia Grimshaw, "Gender, Citizenship and Race in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Australia, 1890-to the 1930s", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, 1998, pp. 199-214; Hilary Carey, "Subordination, Invisibility and Chosen Work: Missionary Nuns and Australian Aborigines, c.1900-1949", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, 1998, pp. 251-67; Katharine Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia, 1922-1962* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1996); Anne O'Brien, "A Church Full of Men: Masculinism and the Church in Australian History", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 25, no. 100, April 1993, pp. 437-457; O'Brien, "The Case of the 'Cultivated Man': Class, Gender and the Church of the Establishment in Interwar Australia", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 27, no. 107, October 1996, pp. 242-256.

⁵⁴ Roger C. Thompson, "Women and the Significance of Religion in Australian History", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 28, no. 108, April 1997, pp. 118-25; Anne O'Brien, "Sins of Omission? Women in the History of Australian Religion and Religion in the History of Australian Women. A Reply to Roger Thompson", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 28, no. 108, April 1997, pp. 126-33.

⁵⁵ Jill Vickers, "Feminist Approaches to Women in Politics" in Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster (eds), *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 20. See

contexts. Her reading could also have benefited from closer attention to critiques of the definition of citizenship.

Patricia Crawford and Philippa Maddern have argued that though modern citizenship has been conceived in masculine and individual terms, assuming a division between public and private spheres, women have tried to gain access to citizenship on behalf of their families, communities, and societies. The modern conception of citizenship rested on a system of unequal power relations and created new divisions between people on the basis of race and gender. The “unequal dyad of warrior citizen and citizen mother, which has affected the citizenship claims of both Anglo and non-British women rests, in origin, on medieval concepts of the distinction between full citizens (soldiers, judges and counsellors) and mere community members.”⁵⁶ Access to citizenship is a “continual grim struggle on the part of dominant political groups to identify and represent other sections of the community as unable to govern either their own bodies or property, and hence in need of the ‘protection’ of their more powerful citizens.”⁵⁷

Feminist accounts of citizenship in twentieth-century Australia would have been greatly enhanced by consideration of the large numbers of women involved in religious organisations and the link that they forged between politics and religion through the notion of Christian citizenship. Christian citizenship is a sacralised form of citizenship that emerged out of the English Reformation and which assumed a tension between allegiance to God and allegiance to secular authorities. The concept of Christian citizenship renders problematic any dichotomy between the history of the average

Marilyn Lake, “Feminist History as National History: Writing the Political History of Women”, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 27, no. 106, April 1996, pp. 154-69.

⁵⁶ Patricia Crawford and Philippa Maddern (eds), *Women as Australian Citizens: Underlying Histories* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), p. 46.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

woman and elite women, or any assumption that the everyday experience of women in the past was divorced from political action. If the parameters of Australian feminist history were expanded to recognise the concept of Christian citizenship, definitions of women's politics could incorporate a wider range of activity than simply their admission to formal politics.

Hence, consideration of the role of Christian citizenship among Australian women has the power to revise existing understandings of feminism. Christian women, by their association, membership, and informal activity formed a considerable section of the twentieth-century feminist movement in Australia. They were concerned not only with the pursuit of a status in society equal with men, but also with a much larger concern, that of how they might account for their lives on the Day of Judgement. Viewed in these terms, equality with men was not an end in itself, but merely a means to realise this larger goal. Ian Breward, Emeritus Professor of Church History, United Faculty of Theology, Melbourne University, has noted the "absence of 'millenarian exuberance' in the shaping of Australian national culture", but a recent review has indicated that the subject has scarcely been investigated.⁵⁸ Christian eschatology provided the belief that Christians were citizens of two realms: citizens of the world and of the Kingdom of God. A Christian's aim in the present was the pursuit of a new order as a witness to union with God in the next life. To adopt Patrick Collinson's terms of analysis explored earlier and to apply them to women, this eschatological vision was both a precipitant to action and a legitimation for the renegotiation of gender hierarchies. The conception of Christian citizenship was a significant motor by which the activism of the women's

⁵⁸ Hilary M. Carey, "Introduction: Millennium: A View From Australia", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 24, no. 1, February 2001, pp. 1-7. Judith Smart, "The Panacea of Prohibition: the Reaction of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Victoria to the Great War" in Sabine Willis (ed), *Women, Faith and Fetes* (Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1977), pp. 162-192.

movement was maintained after the First World War. Recent scholarship by Judith Smart has shown the connections between women's religious activity and their political activity in the inter-war period, which will be discussed in the relevant chapters.⁵⁹

Within Protestantism, the notions of "prophetic" and "priestly" roles have informed how Christian citizenship might be expressed and negotiated. The etymology of the terms will be explored thoroughly in Chapter 3. Broadly defined, the priestly role refers to the priesthood of all believers, which, in Congregationalism, was expressed ideally through the monthly Congregational church meeting and through service in the world. The priestly role also refers, more narrowly, to the mediation of the priest between the believer and God and, in particular, to the administration of the two sacraments in Protestantism: baptism and holy communion. The prophetic role refers to the delivery of a divine message or "a direct communication of the Deity to the prophet or through the prophet as medium to the community". "Prophecy" might interpret the past, speak to the present, or predict the future.⁶⁰ The act of prophecy could offer women their own authority free from church discipline, and a role that transcended traditional gender roles. Women sought access to the prophetic role to advocate for social recognition of the different experience of women from men. They justified their prophetic power for the sake of others, whom they assumed were less powerful. Moreover, men could co-opt women's use of the prophetic role to argue for a common humanity regardless of biological differences.

⁵⁹ Judith Smart, "A Mission to the Home", pp. 215-34; Judith Smart, "For the Good That We Can Do", pp. 39-60; Judith Smart, "A Sacred Trust: Cecilia Downing", pp. 21-50.

⁶⁰ Karen L. King, "Prophetic Power and Women's Authority: The Case of the Gospel of Mary (Magdalene)" in Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker, *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 22.

When juxtaposed, “prophetic” and “priestly” roles could relate to internal conflict in Protestantism and management of reform within denominations. While the “prophet” could claim to express the spirit of “real” Christianity or a new insight that challenged the weight of tradition, the “priest” represented the institution, and was responsible for upholding the beliefs and corporate structure of Christianity. This binary opposition could be expressed in a number of ways. Protestant nonconformist churches in England adopted a “prophetic” stance in relation to other churches, particularly the Established Church, as part of the prevailing social and political order. Within denominational structures, the laity, by virtue of their freedom from institutional hierarchies, could adopt the role of “prophets” in relation to the institution. A stipended minister, in contrast, might at times become restricted to the role of “priest” in relation to the laity. By virtue of their priestly role, however, ministers could act as a “prophet” in relation to the wider society. This thesis will argue that women, as members of the laity, assumed the role of “prophet” to negotiate access to new “priestly” roles within their own church. In turn, access to the “priestly” role provided them with a means to extend the “prophetic” role, a special message developed on the basis of female experience, to a wider audience.

The following discussion will explore the hypothesis that the women of the Congregational churches in Australia enjoyed greater opportunities than women of other denominations to explore the possibilities of Christian citizenship, due partly to their access to both prophetic and priestly roles within their own church. They also became a presence in intra-church, community, and feminist organisations to an extent that was disproportionate to the numbers of Congregationalists found in the population at large. Hence, Congregational women considered themselves among a group of “emancipated” Protestants, meaning that they had access to leadership roles in their

church to the extent that they could rank themselves third in line behind the Quakers and the Salvation Army and ahead of the Presbyterians, the Methodists, and the Anglicans. Their denomination was the first in Australia to ordain a woman, the Rev Winifred Kiek, in Adelaide, in 1927 (see Appendix 4 for Kiek's biographical details). This thesis will explore the extent to which Congregationalists such as Kiek were justified in their self-perception as "liberated women" – decades before the advent of "women's liberation".

Academic histories of Australian Congregationalism are small in number, and histories of individual congregations are celebratory and rarely more than the chronicling of events. There are two PhD theses on Congregationalism, one in history by Hugh Jackson and the other in theology by the Rev G Lindsay Lockley.⁶¹ Jackson has argued that Congregationalists struggled to maintain an identity in Australia in contrast to other denominations. The churches declined as their members moved and settled in areas where other denominations were strong and became involved in the life of these other churches. Lockley's thesis, which was composed in the 1960s, sought to provide a detailed survey of the growth of Congregationalism from European settlement. Critics argued that like the histories of local congregations, it also suffered from reducing analysis to a catalogue of events. When it appeared in book form in 2001, it was largely the unrevised PhD thesis with an extra chapter added at the end to take it up to the creation of the Uniting Church in 1977. The book did not pay enough attention to

⁶¹ Hugh Jackson, "Aspects of Congregationalism in South-Eastern Australia, 1870-1930" (Ph.D thesis, Australian National University, 1978) published as "Religious Ideas and Practice in Australian Congregationalism, 1870-1930", Parts I and II, *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 12, nos. 3 & 4, 1983, pp. 266-83, 433-44; G. Lindsay Lockley, "The Foundation, Development and Influence of Congregationalism in Australia, with Emphasis on the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D thesis: University of Queensland, 1966) published as *Congregationalism in Australia* ed. Bruce Upham (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 2001); See also Christopher Wood, *St Michael's Church: Formerly Collins Street Independent* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1992); Walter Phillips, *James Jefferis: Prophet of Federation* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1993).

colonial history, or to the background of Congregationalism in England and Wales, including features such as the church meeting and the influence of the Calvinistic Methodists, and lacked analysis of the social and political significance of Congregationalism during the period 1830-1964.⁶² Patricia Curthoys argued that the “discussion of the place of women is particularly limited, given their early involvement in the more public activities of the denomination.”⁶³ Lockley considered the role of women in Congregationalism as “general knowledge” among church members and therefore as neither problematic nor worthy of investigation. He argued that the access of women to the ordained ministry had gradually become accepted, particularly:

the value of new emphases that new ministers are bringing to their work. Congregationalists take some pride in having eliminated distinctions between men and women in ministerial service, and believe that other communions of the Church will ultimately benefit from their attitude.⁶⁴

Lockley thereby took the agenda of Congregational women at their own estimation, rather than addressing it critically. Congregationalists have also produced two histories of their denomination in South Australia and Tasmania.⁶⁵ John Cameron, a Congregational minister trained at Parkin College under Principal Kiek, produced a history of Congregationalism in South Australia as one of five histories of Christian denominations prepared for the ^{Seventy-}centenary of the state.⁶⁶ Cameron’s work focused on the first fifty years of Congregationalism and provides useful statistical information including tables on membership and an index of ministers and their pastorates, but this

⁶² See reviews by John Garrett of G. Lindsay Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia* ed. Bruce Upham, (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 2001) in *Church Heritage* pp. 266-270 and also by Patricia Curthoys in *Uniting Church Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, March 2003, pp. 369-71.

⁶³ Patricia Curthoys, “Review of Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*”, *Uniting Church Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, March 2003, p. 71.

⁶⁴ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, p. 302.

⁶⁵ Theo Sharples, *Congregationalism in Tasmania, 1830-1977* (Hobart: Congregational Union of Tasmania, 1977); John Cameron, *In Stow’s Footsteps: A Chronological History of the Congregational Churches in South Australia, 1837-1977* (Glynde, South Australia: South Australian Congregational History Project Committee, 1987).

⁶⁶ David Hilliard, review of Robert J. Scrimgeour, *Some Scots Were Here: A History of the Presbyterian Church in South Australia, 1839-1977* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1986) in *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 15, 1987, pp. 169-71.

material is not supported by an analysis that considered the failure of Congregationalism to establish itself as a large denomination in South Australia, or how it became one of the most theologically liberal of the Christian denominations.⁶⁷

The culture of Congregationalism has produced a substantial and varied body of historical material. As a religious organisation, the fact that records have survived reflects the value placed on scholarship by the members of the denomination, but these records are incomplete. This thesis draws on the official records of the churches and the Congregational Unions in each state and related ecumenical organisations: minutes, reports, and correspondence. Other unpublished sources include manuscript records of women's organisations, private papers of individual leaders, and some oral evidence focusing mainly on important male leaders and ordained women ministers. Congregationalism has provided extensive scope for the recording of women's voices. The source material is itself a demonstration of what Rosalie McCutcheon has called Congregationalism's "breadth of vision, perhaps especially for women".⁶⁸ It is possible to read in the official records, not simply in manuscript sources, the words of women who present their own reports and, at times, the full text of women's speeches. This presence in the literature of Congregationalism was productive, to some extent, of a Congregational female consciousness particular to the twentieth century, and to the development of broad support within the denomination for the equality of men and women.

⁶⁷ See review by David Hilliard of Cameron's work in *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 16, 1988, pp. 181-3.

⁶⁸ Rosalie McCutcheon, "Margaret Holmes: Larger than the Roles She Played" in Sabine Willis (ed), *Women, Faith and Fetes*, p. 97.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part I explores Australian Congregational women's denominational heritage and the consequences of this history and culture for their experiences as Christian women in twentieth century Australia. Chapter 1 will outline English and Welsh Congregationalism from its origins in sixteenth century Independency to the denomination's end with the establishment of the United Reformed Church in 1972. This serves to highlight Congregational notions of Christian citizenship that influenced their co-religionists in Australia. Chapter 2 will discuss Australian Congregationalism from its arrival in 1789 to the foundation of the Uniting Church in 1977. It shows how Australian Congregationalists drew on their English and Welsh heritage to develop their identity but the denomination failed to appeal to colonial Australians and remained relatively small in contrast to Britain.

Part II details the rise and decline of a gendered consciousness among Australian Congregational women from the end of the First World War to 1977. Chapter 3 explores how Australian Congregational women used the authority and inspiration of their church heritage and the women's movement to establish a separate female culture, which helped them to enter new roles in their church. After the First World War, in common with other white Australian women, Congregational women were influenced by maternalist ideals. Chapters 4 and 5 will explore their expression of maternal Christian citizenship through prophetic and priestly roles. Chapter 6 will outline the response of Congregational women to the Second World War and the war's impact on their access to these roles. Chapter 7 will explore the development of an ecumenically-based feminist consciousness among Congregational women in the post-World War II period, and their attempt to ensure access to prophetic and priestly roles in the anticipated Uniting Church. Chapter 8 will address the decline of support

for maternal Christian citizenship and the response of Congregational women to the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

PART I
THE HERITAGE AND HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN
CONGREGATIONAL WOMEN

CHAPTER 1

Independency and Congregationalism in England and Wales, 1559-1972

The following chapter is designed to provide an introduction to Congregationalism in England and Wales as background to the Australian case that forms the remainder of this thesis. The chapter outlines briefly the structure and ethos of Independency as it emerged from the English Reformation and evolved into Congregationalism in the nineteenth century. It locates the emergence of Independency within the context of the Elizabethan Puritan movement and the English Civil Wars and Interregnum, which provided unique opportunities for women to preach and prophesy. The Restoration of the Monarchy and the Great Ejection of 1662 drove Independents into dissent. By the eighteenth century, these churches, which became known as Old Dissent, were joined by chapels that emerged as a result of the Evangelical Revival called New Dissent. The enthusiasm generated by the Evangelical Revival led to the rise of the missionary movement and the creation of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1831. After the Revival, Congregationalism sought to consolidate its position in local communities through church architecture, liturgy, and preaching, with implications for the status of the ordained ministry. In an increasingly secular society in the nineteenth century, Congregational ministers embraced the intellectual challenges of science and biblical criticism. The nineteenth century also brought increased toleration such that with the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, Congregationalists could seek access to public office and pursue their vision for the separation of church and state. While they achieved access to universities and abolished church rates, they did not realise their dream of disestablishment. The final part of the chapter will consider the decline of Congregationalism in the twentieth century and the inauguration of the

United Reformed Church in 1972. In this context of numerical decline, the ordination of women was achieved in 1917.

The Emergence of Independency

The early history of Congregationalism is found in the Elizabethan Puritan movement that sought, above all, to reform the Established Church from within rather than to form separate churches. The precise origin of English and Welsh Congregationalism has been the subject of much debate, but many historians agree that the Independency of the 1640s is the start of what became known as Congregationalism in the nineteenth century. Denominational histories, which have tended to be “vertical” or “linear”, have located the emergence of Congregationalism in the English Separatist tradition, associated with Robert Browne (circa 1550-1663). By contrast, social historians of religion have emphasised the context in which Independency emerged, arguing that it cannot be understood apart from the broader history of Puritanism.¹

Puritans viewed the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559 and the refusal of the Stuarts to agree to reform the English Church in the seventeenth century, as unsatisfactory responses to their heightened expectations of the role of religion in England. The Puritan approach to religion was based on rational reading of Scripture and a strict moral code. Seeking purity in worship, church government, and personal life, Puritans engaged in observance of the Sabbath that could involve morning prayer, a sermon in the morning and afternoon, and at least one other during the week. They sought a

¹ Patrick Collinson, “Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition” in Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London: The Hambleton Press, 1983), pp. 527-562; Michael Mullett, “Radical Sects and Dissenting Churches, 1600-1750” in Sheridan Gilley and W. J. Shiels (eds), *A History of Religion in Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 188-210; W. J. Shiels, “Reformed Religion in England, 1520-1640” in Gilley and Shiels (eds), *A History of Religion in Britain*, pp. 151-167.

reformed church that taught the Scripture within a liturgy that was itself derived from Scripture. If Puritans considered that there were no good preachers nearby, they would engage in travelling or “gadding”, to hear Puritan sermons. Communion was held monthly, and tests were applied to exclude members who had engaged in scandalous behaviour. After sermons were heard, they were repeated and discussed either in church, or at the minister’s house, or at home, a practice known as “prophesying”. Puritan preachers met in “conventicles” for discussion and mutual support. Such a structure “exerted a strong if unintended separatist pull” as Puritans transferred their commitment from neighbours to congregations and preachers.² By the 1640s, they had conveyed their ideas to the wider society with enough success that England was largely Protestant.³

The main distinction between Independency and Puritanism is the Independents’ belief in the autonomy of the local congregation. Independents saw themselves as more regulated than some sects but less regulated than Presbyterians, who ordered themselves by a series of hierarchical courts. In the Apologetical Narration of 1644, Independents sought to establish the Church of England along the lines of a “middle way” between the church order of Presbyterianism and the Separatism of the Brownists.⁴ Independents shared the Calvinist theology of Presbyterians, but believed that the local congregation should be a covenanted autonomous entity, which embodied the universal church. This polity was described in the Savoy Declaration of 1658 in which, following the death of Cromwell, Independents sought to clear themselves of scandal. The declaration outlined the role of synods as providing counsel, but no further authority.

² Collinson, “The Early Dissenting Tradition”, pp. 536-540, 544.

³ Shiels, “Reformed Religion in England, 1520-1640” in Gilley and Shiels (eds), *A History of Religion in Britain*, pp. 167; Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (eds), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1996).

⁴ Geoffrey Nuttall, *Visible Saints: The Congregational Way, 1640-1660* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957).

Independents believed the Christian faith should be developed in a local congregation composed of true believers, who gathered together, and who adhered to a covenant. These believers would become members of a church by their individual decision to join it. Independents became divided between Baptists and Congregationalists who shared the same polity, but differed over the question of believer's baptism. Congregationalists accepted infant baptism and would not require members to be baptised, while Baptists believed that members should be baptised and that only the baptism of adults, who were conscious of the grace of God, was legitimate. The shared ideal of Reformed churches such as Congregationalists and Baptists that the church should be a company of true believers stood in stark contrast to the Church of England. There, all citizens of the nation were members by virtue of their citizenship. This ideal of church membership reflected a distinction between two allegiances, the allegiance to God and to the state, where the allegiance to God was superior to that of the state and could be brought into conflict with it. From the nineteenth century, nonconformists would refer to reflection on the relationship between these two allegiances as Christian citizenship. Independents often summarised this duty in the command of Jesus recorded in Mark 12:17, to render to Caesar the things that were Caesar's, and to God, the things that were God's.⁵

Independency was part of "Dissent", which embraced all groups that did not accept the Church of England including Presbyterians, Quakers, and other sectaries. State authority broke down during the English Civil Wars and the Interregnum, which provided an unusual opportunity for free speech. Dissenters publicised their views widely. Male dissenters became politically powerful in the Commonwealth and the Protectorate and the "Barebone's Parliament" of 1653 almost disestablished the

⁵ Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution*, vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 3.

Church.⁶ Women challenged male authority by prophesying contributing thereby not only to their churches, but to the number of publications and petitions that dissenters sent to parliament. Katherine Chidley, for example, the wife of a Shewsbury tailor, published *The Justification of the Independent Churches of Christ* in 1641.⁷

Women as Prophets

Although Independency did not consider women as ministers, they could found churches, act as patrons, gather in conventicles, and participate in public acts of defiance. They also wrote and published works that formed part of a growing body of nonconformist literature, but their most important role was to act as a catechist in their homes.⁸ Historian Geoffrey Nuttall has shown that in the English Separatist churches in exile in Holland and in Independent churches in England, women were engaged as lay people in “prophesyings”, which constituted a “temporary unordained ministry”.⁹ These prophesyings referred to reflection on the New Testament in groups or on experience, which they could express publicly and use as a basis for blessings and prayers. In the 1640s in London, women engaged in prophesying to mixed congregations. Similarly, in Boston, New England, Anne Hutchinson repeated the Sunday sermon, and took questions on it from whoever had gathered in her home. At trial, she defended herself as having been given a gift from God that, she claimed, was not a public ministry. Nevertheless, she was ostracised from the local community and eventually murdered. Female Independents had their advocates in men such as John Rogers, who defended

⁶ Watts, *Dissenters*, vol. I, pp. 2, 150.

⁷ Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth Century England* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1992); Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500-1720* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁸ Richard L. Greaves, “The Role of Women in Early English Nonconformity”, *Church History*, vol. 52, no. 3, September 1983, pp. 299-311.

⁹ Geoffrey Nuttall, “The Early Congregational Conception of the Ministry and the Place of Women Within It”, *Congregational Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 2, April 1948, p. 161.

women's right to vote in church government in his volume, *Ohel or Beth-shemesh. A Tabernacle for the Sun; or Irenicam evangelicum* (1653). Although reluctant to comment on women's preaching, he viewed it as likely in future, especially as Mary Magdalene had been the "first Preacher of Christs [sic] Resurrection".¹⁰

Among men, prophesying could lead to lay preaching, but formal leadership within churches remained closed to women because of the Pauline admonition that they should keep silent in church. Women's experience of the challenge of religious authority was different from that of men because for men, appeal to the dictates of conscience could cause conflict simply between their allegiance to religious and civil authority. For women, however, appeal to conscience could cause conflict between their loyalty to religious and patriarchal authority.¹¹ From the 1650s, women had countered the Pauline prohibition against their speaking in church by reference to the sons and daughters who would prophesy according to the prophet Joel (2:28).¹² Nevertheless, the idea of women preaching constituted a challenge to the church culture. Puritans used the female roles of bride and wife to describe the relationship of the Christian to the church and to God.¹³ They viewed the congregation as a family in which the minister was the father and the membership was in feminine subordination to him. Patrick Collinson has shown how Puritan women became conscious of the gap between their interpretation of Christianity and the opportunities to express themselves in the church culture. The

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 153-61.

¹¹ Crawford, *Women and Religion*, pp. 45-49, 159; Patricia Crawford, "Public Duty and Conscience and Women in Early Modern England" in John Morrill, Paul Slack and Daniel Woolf (eds), *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth England: Essays Presented to G E Aylmer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 76.

¹² Keith Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects" reprinted in Trevor Aston (ed.), *Crisis in Europe: 1560-1660* (Garden City: New York, 1967), pp. 332-57.

¹³ Margaret Masson, "The Typology of the Female as a Model for the Regenerate: Puritan Preaching, 1690-1730", *Signs*, vol. 2, no. 2, Winter 1976, pp. 304-15.

following caricature of the “Shee-Puritan or “Shee-precise Hypocrite” was taken from John Earle’s *Micro-cosmographie*:

She is a Non-conformist in a close stomacher and ruffe of Geneva print, and her purity consists much in her linnen...Her devotion at the church is much in the turning up her ey, and turning downe the leaf in her book, when she heares named Chapter and Verse...She overflows so with the Bible that she spills it upon every occasion, and will not cudgell her maydes withoute Scripture. It is a question whether she is more troubled with the Divell or the Divell wth her, she is alwaies challenging and daring him, and her weapon is the Practise of piety. Nothing angers her so much as that women must not preach...¹⁴

These examples show spontaneous religious activity among Protestants regardless of their gender and the frustration women found when they could not take Protestantism to its logical conclusion: equality in leadership. Of particular importance to this thesis is the fact that women prophets of the civil war period in England and women from New England such as Anne Hutchinson, provided role models for later Congregational women who used them as a precedent for women’s ordination. Their arguments will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Significance of the Great Ejection of 1662

After the freedom of the civil war period, the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660 spelled the end of Independent hopes for a church established according to the ideal of the “middle way”.¹⁵ The Act of Uniformity in 1662 enforced a liturgy for the Church of England that did not recognise the Puritans’ concerns. Those who were not willing to conform to this liturgy were forced into dissent, and eventually became known as

¹⁴ John Earle, *The Autograph Manuscript of “Microcosmographie”* (Leeds: Scholar Press, 1966), pp. 115-21 quoted in Patrick Collinson, *The Puritan Character: Polemics and Polarities in Early Seventeenth-Century English Culture* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1989), p. 4.

¹⁵ The Restoration of 1662 meant that Independency now differed from New England Puritanism. Thomas A. Bailey, David M. Kennedy and Lizabeth Cohen, *The American Pageant: A History of the Republic* 11th ed. vol. I: to 1877 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p. 93; Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *New England’s Generation: The Great Migration and the Formation of Society and Culture in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Stephen Foster, *The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England Culture, 1570-1700* (Chapel Hill, London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

Nonconformity in the nineteenth century. About 2 000 dissenting clergy chose to be ejected from the Church of England rather than conform to the new liturgy. Under the series of acts that became known as the Clarendon Code, dissenters were persecuted. The Toleration Act of 1689 allowed dissenters freedom to worship, but it did not allow them political and social equality. Recognising shared nonconformity, Independents and Presbyterians now sought unity, but they could not sustain the “Happy Union” of 1691. The Calvinist theology of the Independents, which was not expansionist, meant that despite toleration they steadily declined.

Old and New Dissent

Independency, later known as Old Dissent, included those congregations that could trace their origins back to the seventeenth century. Independent churches, which met in meeting houses or homes, expected their members to embrace a discipline of regular prayer, attendance at worship, and communion services. They sought to maintain order in liturgy and rejected the imposition of the liturgy of the Established Church rather than the liturgy itself. In the Savoy Declaration they described their adherence to the Reformed faith, rather than composed another form of belief. Membership required conversion and the presentation of an account of faith to the congregation, which was conceived amid threats of death and illness.¹⁶ Independents had high educational standards for the ministry and submitted ordination candidates to rigorous tests. Though they insisted on the autonomy of the local congregation from all ecclesiastical and civil authority, they formed voluntary regional associations called County Unions, which expanded during the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century. These unions

¹⁶ Watts, *Dissenters*, vol. I, pp. 168-83.

sought to provide for the administration of congregations, reception of ministers, joint activities, and fellowship.¹⁷

Effect of the Evangelical Revival on size, membership, social profile, and identity

As a consequence of the Evangelical Revival, the size, social position, and culture of English and Welsh Congregationalism changed markedly from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. By the Census of 1851, nonconformists in England (and even more so in Wales) began to rival the number of worshippers in the Established Church.¹⁸ Such expansion was part of the rise of New Dissent as congregations were founded in the wake of the Evangelical Revival. Part of the success of the Evangelical Revival and the growth of nonconformity related to weakness in the parochial system of the Church of England, as seen by the fact that in 1812, one in ten parishes was without resident clergy.¹⁹ With strength in numbers, the “dignified shyness” of early eighteenth century Independency was replaced by a “militant assertiveness”,²⁰ and in the nineteenth century the independent churches formed into a denomination known as Congregationalism.

In numbers of adherents, Congregationalism became the third largest church in England behind the Church of England and Methodism. Under the influence of the evangelists John Wesley and George Whitefield, between 1772 and 1827 the number of Congregational churches in England increased from 380 to 799, growing even faster

¹⁷ Geoffrey Nuttall, “Assembly and Association in Dissent, 1689-1831” in G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker (eds), *Councils and Assemblies: Studies in Church History*, vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 289-309.

¹⁸ Watts, *Dissenters*, vol. I, pp. 1-5.

¹⁹ Alan D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel, and Social Change, 1740-1914* (London and New York: Longman, 1976), p. 97.

²⁰ R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962), p. 162.

than the Baptists.²¹ Congregationalism expanded faster than population growth until 1840, but then grew only very slowly and failed to match population growth. By the census of 1851, the only census to record religious attendance, Congregationalists stretched from Devon to Essex and Suffolk.²²

Congregationalism gained members from two sources: firstly, Calvinistic Methodist and Methodist societies that had been founded by Whitefield, the Countess of Huntingdon, and Jonathan Scott, who eventually embraced Congregationalism because of their independent organisation, and secondly, Calvinist secessions from Presbyterianism as it was becoming Unitarian, or non-trinitarian, in doctrine.²³ Moreover, Congregationalists appropriated the Methodist practices of itinerancy, the new church structure of class meetings, and Arminian ideas in theology. Arminianism focused on the response of the believer to salvation that was available to all, which stood in stark contrast to notions of the elect and the damned in Calvinism. As a result, congregations began to relax their criteria for membership and to emphasise conversion, emotion, and community life centred on the chapel.²⁴

As a result of the Evangelical Revival, therefore, Old Dissent, which had traditionally been strong where Anglicanism was strong, grew between 1780 and 1840.²⁵ It remained strong among the centres of growth during the Civil War, such as the south-west,

²¹ R. W. Dale, *History of English Congregationalism* 2nd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), pp. 580-1.

²² Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Growth in the British Isles Since 1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 48, 216. Clyde Binfield, *So Down to Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity, 1780-1920* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1977), pp. 6, 15; John Gay, *Geography of Religion in England* (London: Duckworth, 1971), pp. 138-9.

²³ Watts, *Dissenters*, vol. I, pp. 451-69.

²⁴ Deryck W. Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

²⁵ Binfield, *So Down to Prayers*, p. 8.

London, and East Anglia.²⁶ It also expanded as a result of industrialisation in Lancashire and West Riding, where the emerging middle class were concentrated in towns such as Birmingham and Manchester. New Dissent grew in places where the Established Church was weak. In the countryside, if a village did not have a dominant landlord, chapels could grow relatively easily. The social structure of Congregationalism differed between city and country. In rural areas, the inclusive theology and methods of the Evangelical Revival meant that about three-quarters of Congregationalists were poor. In the larger towns and industrial villages most Congregationalists were middle class.²⁷

Congregational Union of England and Wales 1831

A result of the Evangelical Revival was the merging of independent churches into a denomination, the Congregational Union of England and Wales, in 1831. The chapels that joined the Union embraced both Old and New Dissent. Some were formerly Anglican chapels, which used the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. The Union was simply a fellowship of independent churches: following the Savoy Declaration, the Union did not have legislative authority. In 1833, the Union passed a declaration of faith, church order, and discipline as a common statement of Calvinist doctrine, which was used until 1918.²⁸ The argument used to justify the creation of the Congregational Union was to support smaller chapels financially, but initially, the Union failed to pay its own bureaucracy. In any event, the push for political, social, and legal equality for nonconformists was the main force behind the union. Movements towards the 1831 Union could be seen in the eighteenth century County Associations such as the London

²⁶ Gay, *Geography of Religion in England*, pp. 110, 136-7.

²⁷ Watts, *Dissenters*, vol. II, pp. 109-32, 316-27.

²⁸ A significant departure from Calvinist doctrine in the 1833 statement was a memorialist view of the Lord's Supper following the Swiss theologian Zwingli, who saw the rite as a commemoration of the original event rather than its re-enactment, including the doctrine of the real presence.

Board of Ministers (1727), that formed to discuss evangelisation and missionary work, and there were trusts established to support ministerial education such as the Congregational Fund Board (1695). By the end of the nineteenth century, the Congregational Union of England and Wales had become established as a denomination and was known for its strident political critique of the disabilities facing nonconformists.²⁹

Missionary Activity

Enthusiasm for overseas and local missions was another result of the Evangelical Revival. By the late nineteenth century, English and Welsh Congregationalists began to see themselves as occupying the centre of a large, international fellowship within the British Empire. Recent research on missionary activity has suggested that among missionaries, evangelism coexisted with imperial pride and prejudice. Missionaries did not simply follow colonisation, however, they were sent to various places all over the world and they were often critical of imperial powers. But by viewing themselves as the colonisers' conscience, they saw themselves as providing the cultural means of securing British colonial rule, in contrast to the physical force of the military.³⁰

Missionary societies grew as a result of co-operation in county unions. Congregationalists did not start their own denominational missionary society, but by the mid-nineteenth century, they had become the largest supporters of the London Missionary Society (LMS), founded in 1795, which, initially, was simply called "The Missionary Society". The LMS sought to bring the "glorious gospel of the blessed God

²⁹ Binfield, *So Down to Prayers*, p. 12; Gay, *Geography of Religion in England*, p. 137-8; Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1966), Part I, pp. 400-403.

³⁰ Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 8-9.

to the heathen” rather than impose foreign structures of organisation on indigenous churches. In reality, however, they built churches with a congregational structure of government, but they often confessed that they did not meet the ideal. On the other hand, they could also glory in the way they had adapted their churches to suit local circumstances, often resembling a Presbyterian, rather than an Independent, system of church order.³¹ By the twentieth century, the main centres of LMS activity were India, China, Africa, Madagascar, Papua, and the South Seas including Samoa, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, the Phoenix and Line Islands, the Ocean Islands, Nauru, the Cook Islands, Niue, and the Loyalty Islands.³² In addition to the establishment of the LMS, Thomas Binney (1798-1874), Congregational minister of King’s Weigh House Chapel, London, from 1829 to 1869, established a Colonial Missionary Society in 1836 to send missionaries to the British colonies. An international identity would be further reinforced in 1891, when, at the initiative of Australian Congregationalists, English and Welsh Congregationalists hosted the first International Congregational Council.³³

Missionary societies had enough success in creating converts on the mission field to make Christianity a world religion. It became the dominant religion in the Pacific, but remained a minority religion in Asia, especially in China and India. Where they were successful in winning converts, missionaries could not control the way emerging leaders would appropriate religion, often supporting fledgling national movements rather than British rule, or interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures to argue for polygamy, as happened

³¹ See for example, the survey of churches in Norman Goodall, *Congregationalism Plus* (London: Independent Press, 1953).

³² Norman Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society, 1895-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954).

³³ Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, pp. 328-9.

in Africa.³⁴ The LMS was even more successful in creating support for imperialism among the members of Congregational churches at home. Through mission publications, events, and financial collections, the English middle class distinguished themselves from the image of the degraded heathen; both in countries overseas and also in the provinces at home. The Rev George Greatbatch, who had wanted to be a foreign missionary, responded to a call from the Lancashire Itinerant Society to go to North Meol, Western Lancashire, in the following way: "I had little thought there was a station for me at home which so much resembled the idea I had formed of an uncivilised heathen land."³⁵

Female Missionaries

It was in the feminisation of missionary philanthropy, however, that a British imperial identity was developed most fully. The single female missionary, who was not allowed to preach, but who could attend to the health and welfare of the heathen, could spread Christianity and social reform through the family.³⁶ With the secularisation of British culture and the growth of support for specialist scientific knowledge, medical and educational work became the most prestigious area of Protestant missionary activity. By the end of the nineteenth century, the deployment of women to the zenanas of India was the most important.³⁷ The Rev John Angell James (1785-1859), Congregational minister of Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham, issued the following appeal to women in 1853, which would inform their own arguments for emancipation:

³⁴ Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester, Apollos, 1990), p. 169; Brian Stanley (ed), *Missions, Nationalism and the End of Empire* (Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, UK: William B Eerdmans Press, 2003).

³⁵ Thorne, *Congregational Missions*, p. 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 18.

³⁷ Rosemary Fitzgerald, "A 'Peculiar and Exceptional Measure': The Call for Women Medical Missionaries for India in the Later Nineteenth Century" in Rosemary Seton et al, *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), pp. 174-196.

Her obligations should also be discharged by seeking to extend that benign system to others which has exerted so beneficial an influence upon herself. Of all the supporters of our missionary schemes, whether they are formed to evangelize the heathen abroad, or reform the sinful at home, women should be, as indeed they generally are, the most zealous, the most liberal, and the most prayerful supporters. Wherever she turns her eye over the distant regions of our earth, at least wherever Paganism or Mohammedism throw their baleful shadow – and alas, how large a portion of the earth that is – there she beholds her sex degraded and oppressed. From China’s vast domain – from India’s sunny plains – from Persia’s flowery gardens – from the snows of Arctic regions – from the sterile deserts of Arabia – and from the burning line of Africa – woman lifteth up her voice from the midst of her wrongs, her woes, and her miseries, piteously imploring, “COME OVER AND HELP US.”³⁸

The LMS sent women to India in 1875, which was later than other societies, such as the Wesleyans and the Baptist Missionary Society, which sent women overseas from the mid-1860s. LMS women missionaries were often ill prepared for their work and on the field they remained marginalised in mission houses, largely because of the fact that only 7.5 percent of those who were sent between 1875 and 1914 had a university education.³⁹ The experience of women missionaries will be discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4, with particular emphasis on how they appropriated the imagery that missionary enthusiasts such as the Rev James had used to encourage their offer of service.

Architecture

By the mid-nineteenth century, the enthusiasm of the Evangelical Revival had cooled and laymen sought not to convert more souls, but to secure the perception of the church in the community.⁴⁰ Taste in church architecture provides an indicator of this shift in self-conception within Congregationalism. The plain meeting houses, built in the classical Grecian style of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that had been designed to weather the early years of persecution were replaced, from the 1840s, by churches in the gothic style. Despite restrictions of finance, lack of expertise, and

³⁸ John Angell James, *Female Piety; or the Young Woman’s Friend and Guide Through Life to Immortality* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co, 1852), p. 24.

³⁹ Between 1900 and 1914, the LMS sent 60 women to China and 38 to India. Seton, “Open Doors For Female Labourers” in Seton et al, *Missionary Encounters*, pp. 50-69.

⁴⁰ Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, pp. 156, 158.

inadequately-tested materials, the vast majority of Congregational churches built between 1850 and 1890 were built in this newer style, reflecting a permanent place of worship, Victorian confidence and nonconformist aspirations, and reaction to fresh Anglican church building.⁴¹ Gothic architecture also reflected emphasis on transcendence, rather than rationality, as well as the dissenting ideal of the church as an intermediate sphere between the private and the public. Gothic also met the practical needs of the ideal nonconformist chapel: it allowed for facilities adjacent to the church – such as vestries, halls, lecture rooms, and organ lofts – which the previous Grecian style had not allowed.⁴² In response to the census of 1851 and to mark the bicentenary of St Bartholomew's Day in 1862, Congregational churches erected over 360 new buildings in the next five years. The builders of these churches hoped to provide 1.6 million seats to accommodate the 5.5 million Britons that the census had revealed did not attend church on Sundays.⁴³ Union Church, Islington, completed in 1889, was an acoustic masterpiece, such that no matter where a lay person sat they could see the minister clearly and hear every word.⁴⁴

These churches were built by way of a joint effort of the minister, building committee, deacons, architect, and congregation, with the effect that Congregationalism was among those free churches that tended to experiment with style more than the Established Church.⁴⁵ Their architects believed in quality in materials and harmony in size and

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Newman to Martineau*, vol. IV (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 47-58.

⁴³ Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, p. 296. Currie et al, *Churches and Churchgoers*, pp. 48, 216. Binfield, *So Down to Prayers*, pp. 6, 15; Gay, *Geography of Religion in England*, pp. 138-9.

⁴⁴ Clyde Binfield, "A Chapel and its Architect: James Cubitt and Union Chapel, Islington, 1874-1889" in Diana Wood (ed), *The Church and the Arts: Studies in Church History*, vol. 28 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), pp. 417-447.

⁴⁵ Binfield, *So Down to Prayers*, chapter 7. Binfield, "Chapels in Crisis", *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, vol. 20, no. 8, October 1968, pp. 237-254; Binfield, "'We Claim Our Part in the Great Inheritance': the Message of Four Congregational Buildings" in Keith Robbins (ed),

ornamentation to make their churches prominent in any town landscape. Congregations developed a free Baroque revival style as they sought to express their catholicity and their churchmanship through sculpture and painting. Churches whose elaborately-decorated interiors showed a congregation's identification with ancient and contemporary Christian figures included the Mansfield College Chapel, Emmanuel Church, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, and Albion Church at Ashton-under-Lyne in Manchester. These churches implied that Congregationalists should assume their place in the British nation, the Empire, and the church universal. Some of the new styles could be confronting. In the late nineteenth century, to coincide with the tercentenary of Cromwell in 1899, Congregationalists presided over a renaissance of churches built in the meetinghouse style. In 1912, Congregationalists in the quiet, seaside-resort town of Fairhaven built a church in the Byzantine style composed of a glistening white-tile.

Liturgy

Inside Congregational churches, the Puritan emphasis on a form of liturgy determined by principles derived from Scripture was replaced with set forms in the mid-nineteenth century as congregations sought to demonstrate their taste and respectability to the community.⁴⁶ The nineteenth century liturgical renewal in Congregationalism was part of a wider movement among free churches who sought to replace prepared free prayer, which was considered before the service but delivered spontaneously, with responsive liturgies. Between the 1840s and the 1890s, Congregationalists produced at least sixteen

Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America c. 1750-1950: Studies in Church History, vol. 7 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 201-24; Binfield, "English Free-Churchmen and a National Style" in Stuart Mews (ed), *Religion and National Identity: Studies in Church History*, vol. 18 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), pp. 519-533; Binfield, "The Story of Button Hill: an Essay in Leeds Nonconformity" in Alistair Mason (ed), *Religion in Leeds* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton, 1994), pp. 90-95.

⁴⁶ Bryan D. Spinks, *Freedom or Order? The Eucharistic Liturgy in English Congregationalism, 1645-1980* (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1984), pp. 4-10, 21; Dale A. Johnson, *The*

different service books. They also printed responsive prayers, collects, and the general confession and thanksgiving prayers from the Book of Common Prayer at the back of their hymnbooks. This liturgical renewal should be viewed in the context of the reaction against the French Revolution and the spirit of Romanticism, which led ministers to abandon the Puritan focus on reason in favour of tradition and sentiment. It was part of a reaction to both the Puritan style service, which could lack beauty, and also the style of service of the Evangelical Revival, which could lack preparation. Proponents of liturgical renewal argued that churches that professed the priesthood of all believers offered few opportunities for congregations to participate in a liturgy. Equally, Puritan and Evangelical forms of worship placed demanding and, at times, unrealistic expectations on ministers for the production of services. With growing social respectability, Congregationalists sought a mode of worship that P T Forsyth, Principal of Hackney College, London, said would suit the travel of the eyes of worshippers from the pulpit to the ceiling of the cathedrals of Nonconformity.

Of the new liturgical forms released in the second half of the nineteenth century, the most popular collection was composed by Dr John Hunter (1848-1917), *Devotional Services for Public Worship* (1882), which had an influence far wider than the bounds of his own denomination.⁴⁷ Hunter was minister at York (1871-1882), Hull (1882-1886), and at the King's Weigh House, London (1901-1904). He had trained for the ministry at Nottingham Congregational Institute (1866-1868) and at Spring Hill College, Birmingham, where he had come under the influence of the Christian Socialists, F D Maurice, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and Charles Kingsley. He was

Changing Shape of English Nonconformity, 1825-1925 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 175-179; Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. IV, pp. 48, 65-74.

⁴⁷ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. IV, pp. 69, 229-31; Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, p. 323; Spinks, *Freedom or Order?* p. 109.

also influenced by Unitarianism and the Church Service Society of the Church of Scotland, formed in 1865 to promote liturgical worship and to develop new forms of worship. Hunter started a similar society for Congregationalists in 1893 and acted as its secretary. While many of the new prayer books simply adapted the Book of Common Prayer, Hunter's prayers reflected his own voice and concern to respond to the impact of industrialisation on British society. His *Devotional Services* has been compared to the work of Walter Rauschenbusch, *For God and the People: Prayers of the Social Awakening*, (1910). By 1920, Hunter's prayer book had begun to sell in its tenth edition and could be found not only in the vestry of most Congregational ministers in England, but in many denominations all over the world.

Hunter re-introduced the observance of the festivals of the Christian year that Puritans had rejected, such as the seasons of Lent and Advent.⁴⁸ He helped to ease the iconoclastic Puritan attitude to symbols arguing that churches could stimulate the intellect with the eye as much as the ear. He remained concerned that hymns, the main way the people learnt theology, should provide an experience of the faith that was neither superficial nor exaggerated. His work prepared the way for denominational books of worship services such as the *Book of Congregational Worship* (1920) and the *Manual for Ministers* (1936), which, in turn, reflected the popularity of his works and his memorialist view of the sacraments.

Congregationalists had always limited their observance of sacraments to two: baptism and Holy Communion.⁴⁹ Hunter's prayers included both a traditional service of baptism

⁴⁸ Spinks, *Freedom or Order?* pp. 135-136, 151; Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. IV, pp. 213-240.

⁴⁹ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. IV, pp. 69, 83-5, 234-43.

and introduced an alternative service of dedication for children that stressed the faithfulness of the parents in bringing their child for dedication, rather than the grace of God of which children could become conscious. Such an understanding did not become widespread, however, until after P T Forsyth's *The Church and the Sacraments* (1917) became popular from the 1930s. The service of Holy Communion, which was held monthly, could be administered by a lay person, but was usually, administered by the minister and deacons. Many Congregationalists saw the service as a memorial of the death of Christ, a view that was dominant until the mid-nineteenth century. Ministers such as R W Dale and P T Forsyth criticised this perspective, viewing the sacrament as a conveying and communicating ordinance of the real presence of God. The setting of a linen cloth and a cup on a central table reflected such a "high" view of communion and Congregational churches began to open the communion table to all, not simply to members. Critics noted that the two communion orders found in the *Manual for Ministers*:

were far removed from the noble traditions of some of the ancient Evangelical Churches on the Continent. The notes of intercession and thanksgiving can scarcely be heard, the main stress being laid upon the benefits to the man conferred in the sacrament...Surely there never was a more unscriptural book than this.⁵⁰

After the First World War, Congregationalists produced worship books that related more directly to the origins of their denomination in Geneva.⁵¹ W E Orchard, who was minister at King's Weigh House from 1914 to 1932, used incense, wore Western eucharistic vestments, and introduced a new communion liturgy that reflected the Roman Catholic Mass. But his Society of Free Catholics had little support in the wider denomination.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Spinks, *Freedom or Order?* p. 151.

⁵¹ Spinks, *Freedom or Order?* chapter 7; Elaine Kaye and Ross Mackenzie, *W E Orchard: A Study in Christian Exploration* (Oxford: Education Services, 1990).

Preaching and the Social Profile of the Congregational Ministry

Preaching was increasingly seen in the context of a liturgy and as the preserve of the professional minister. Before discussing the status of the ministry in nineteenth century Congregationalism, it is important to note that women continued to be excluded from the ministry, even though they accounted for about two thirds of the membership of Congregational churches and the Evangelical Revival had created opportunities for women to preach.⁵² Congregational women focused their attention on the family as a site for evangelisation and the congregation, which offered them a sphere between the private and the public, to perform roles such as teaching Sunday school, visiting the poor and sick, distributing tracts, saying prayers, and preaching. In some places in the 1850s where there were no men available to found churches and to preach, adults could be attracted to Sunday school lessons, and to receive them, effectively, as sermons. The independent structure of Congregationalism therefore allowed women to found churches, which occurred a decade before the growth of Methodist female revival preaching, which, by contrast, expanded from a central or connexional base.⁵³

In nineteenth-century British society, the Christian ministry, whether Church of England or nonconformist, was the dominant influence on public opinion,⁵⁴ but the status and profile of the ministry in Congregationalism would decline during the century

⁵² Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996), p. 160; Clive Field, "Adam and Eve: Gender in the English Free Church Constituency", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 44, no. 1, January 1993, pp. 63-79.

⁵³ Linda Wilson, *Constrained By Zeal: Female Spirituality Amongst Nonconformists, 1825-1875* (London: Paternoster Press, 2000); Wilson, "'She Success with Cloudless Brow...': How Active was the Spirituality of Nonconformist Women in the Home During the Period 1825-75?" in R. N. Swanson (ed), *Gender and Christian Religion: Studies in Church History*, vol. 34 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1998), pp. 347-359; Wilson, "'Constrained by Zeal': Women in Mid-Nineteenth Century Nonconformist Churches", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 23, no. 2, June 1999, pp. 185-202, esp. 197-8.

⁵⁴ J. F. C. Harrison, *The Early Victorians, 1832-1951* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 133.

under the challenge of theological criticism and the secularisation of British society.⁵⁵ In the mid-nineteenth century, the ministry was the preserve of young men but by the century's end, there was a serious crisis of recruits, not just in Congregationalism, but in other nonconformist churches as well. By 1931, 60 percent of ministers were over 51 years of age.⁵⁶ The growth of the white-collar professions and social welfare agencies within the church itself began to challenge the pulpit as the obvious choice for a talented young layman. With numerical decline after the First World War, student quality declined and Congregationalism began to rely on the sons of the manse, but smaller family sizes meant that even these young people were becoming scarce. In 1847, Congregationalists employed 1 400 ministers, which, by 1900, had grown to 3 086, but this increase had not kept up with demand.⁵⁷

Congregationalists valued a trained ministry for its own sake, to keep abreast of the Established Church, and to separate themselves from the Methodists. As a consequence, Congregational ministers were more highly educated than were those of other denominations. Over 70 percent of Congregational ministers came from rural backgrounds.⁵⁸ Over 80 percent of those who entered training in the years between 1820 and 1849 were trained in a college or university. With the opening of the universities to nonconformists from the 1870s, the percentage of university-trained men reached 20 percent by the end of the nineteenth century. While most ministerial recruits were English or Welsh, eight percent of ministers serving in English and Welsh pastorates

⁵⁵ The following section relies on Kenneth D. Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800-1930* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

came from Scottish Congregationalism or Presbyterianism, particularly after the creation of the Free Church of Scotland in 1843.⁵⁹

Commitment to education was demonstrated by the founding of dissenting colleges such as the Western Academy at Ottery St Mary in 1752.⁶⁰ These academies were built on a small scale, and sought to provide a comprehensive education in arts, theology, sciences, and mathematics, which later generations of church leaders would consider was ambitious. In response to the Evangelical Revival, Congregationalists established further colleges such that by 1846 there were fourteen theological institutions in England. Highbury, Stepney, and Airedale Colleges were linked to the London University in the 1840s. New College, London, was founded in 1850 from the merger of Highbury, Homerton, and Coward. While the link with the University of London provided men trained in the classics and literature, the founding of the Congregational Institute in Nottingham in 1860 reflected a reaction against the production of ministers with learned, stilted accents. Such institutes provided enthusiastic converts with short, practical courses in biblical knowledge and extempore preaching to minister to people of their own class in vacant rural or inner-urban pastorates. In the later nineteenth century, the opening of the universities to nonconformists allowed Spring Hill College, Birmingham, to move to Oxford in 1887, when it was renamed Mansfield College, and also for Cheshunt College to shift to Cambridge in 1905. Their re-founding allowed the colleges to specialise in theological subjects as the university taught secular subjects. Access to secular university courses allowed Congregationalists to develop a common examination system and was an important cause of greater integration of Nonconformists into society.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 58.

⁶⁰ Johnson, *Changing Shape of English Nonconformity*, chapters 1 and 2.

Congregationalism had difficulty retaining ministers because of uncertain working conditions. During the nineteenth century, about ten percent of Congregational ministers drifted to other denominations. A minister's stipend was dependent on the capacity of the local church. Stipends varied widely: from the £600 per annum that Thomas Binney received at King's Weigh House Chapel, to the mere £8 that Joseph Sowerby received at Flockton for a year's work. In 1830, the average salary for Congregational ministers was £100, which, according to the Congregational Union of England and Wales, though not great, was better than that of other denominations. In rural areas, a minister could win respect as a community figure due to lack of other educated locals, but in the cities, the minister was reliant on learning and personality to gather large congregations. Most ministers sought a quiet life of preaching and pastoral care. About one in six of the ministers who were educated before 1849 published theological works, while one quarter of Congregational and Baptist ministers trained between 1810 and 1849 were politically active in some formal way. To enter the nonconformist ministry was itself a political statement and religion had its political implications. As Thomas Binney observed: "Politics are a branch of morals, and the bible is the most political of books".⁶¹

The call to a minister was a matter for a local church who might value character, skills, and education, but there were no formal requirements for ministers until the twentieth century. A local congregation conferred ordination on a candidate in response to a call, which, against the background of their lack of respect for episcopal ordination, they saw as more important than ordination. Requirements for candidates for ordination had declined since the seventeenth century, and by the nineteenth the ideal of ordination had

⁶¹ Brown, *Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry*, pp. 155-158, 209.

become vague.⁶² In Old Dissent, candidates were required to submit themselves to a thorough oral examination that could last for up to two days, before being allowed to preach, which was followed by a trial period of some months or even years. Congregations often invited neighbouring ministers and messengers to witness the ordination, their presence indicating their belief that the candidate was worthy of the office. It was optional for these messengers to lay hands on the candidate in the ordination ceremony lest the congregation interpret the action to imply belief in the Apostolic Succession, a fear that, by the mid-nineteenth century, was heightened in response to Tractarianism.

The decline of thorough questioning of candidates could allow ministers with little training to occupy pulpits and the ordination service could degenerate into merely a social function. Ministers could be tempted to perceive the attendance of the congregation and the maintenance of their stipend as solely dependent on their personal appeal. Temperamental ministers could reduce their sermons to what they believed their congregation wanted them to hear, as Clyde Binfield has argued: “secularism yawned incessantly at the preacher’s feet”.⁶³ Not surprisingly, some ministers hankered after greater authority in Catholicism. One such minister was Stanley Bloomfield James, a minister’s son, who, after a sojourn as a cowboy in Canada and the death of his father, “fell in” to his father’s vacant pastorate of Wimbledon and Swansea. He became a Catholic in 1919 and his dissatisfaction with Congregationalism was reflected in his account of his ordination in his former denomination, which occurred in 1900:

This ordination consisted in the reading of a profession of faith drawn up by myself, and of a statement setting forth my conception of the Christian ministry, the asking and answering of a

⁶² John H. Taylor, “Ordination Among Us”, *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, vol. 20, no. 7, May 1968, pp. 210-22; John Huxtable, “Ordination: Aspects of a Tradition”, *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, vol. 2, no. 4, October 1979, pp. 94-107.

⁶³ Clyde Binfield, “Conscience in the Gathered Church, c. 1875-1918” in Diana Wood, *The Church and Sovereignty c.590-1918: Studies in Church History*, vol. 9 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 484.

series of questions previously agreed on by my ministerial neighbour and myself, a statement from him that my declaration and answers were satisfactory, and an extempore ordination prayer. The laying on of hands is sometimes observed in such cases but was dispensed with on this occasion. There was no reference to priestly functions in any part of the proceedings. An ordination sermon was then preached, setting forth the principles of the denomination. This ceremony over, I became a fully recognized minister of the Congregational body... It was an interim religion.⁶⁴

At the other extreme were the ministers called during the late nineteenth century to Highbury Quadrant, a North London Church, which attracted modest ministers who did not let the vagaries of Congregational polity affect them. The Quadrant had a chapel seating 1 200, a Sunday School of 1 100 scholars, and over 550 members who had a taste for liberal theology. Their ministers accepted the idea of the fallibility of the minister, saw themselves as one sinner among many merely set apart to preach the word of God, and they did not indulge in a patronising view of their congregations. While liberal in theology, they often rejected the tendency within the late nineteenth century social gospel to reduce the faith to a political program, arguing instead that the Christian's awareness of divine authority could spark revolution. The Rev Harold E Brierley, a minister's son also, understood preaching as the expression of the aspirations of the laity. He emphasised the priesthood of all believers and worked to lift his congregation's sights. Under his leadership, membership rose from 567 to 656. "The saddest thing that a true minister can come to realise is a lack of efficiency", he argued, for:

The congregation is half the sermon, and two-thirds of the prayer. True preaching and true public prayer are not the effort of an individual. They are the resultant of the interplay of subtle spiritual and psychic forces between the preacher on the one hand and the congregation on the other: and then, between the preacher and the congregation as a unity, on one side, and the Holy Spirit of God on the other side. A Christian congregation is not merely an audience...An audience is present to get. A Church is gathered to give...And the minister's voice is not the voice of an individual, but the expression of the common soul: it is the voice of a thousand personalities fused into one personality uttering its infinite need...(The minister) is not so much the leader of worship as the voice of the worshippers.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 502.

Brierley expounded his understanding of the tradition of the church and the bible, but his awareness of the limits of the ministry and the revelation of God in the individual Christian set him apart from other ministers who were dissatisfied with Congregationalism and sought solace in Catholicism. The Christian was the “most certain witness”, but “Certainty is a very different thing from infallibility. ‘We have the mind of Christ’, says St Paul: but there were many things he wasn’t sure about, all the same.”⁶⁶

Theological shift in a liberal direction and its implications

Congregational theological thought in the nineteenth century was influenced by new developments in biblical criticism and the natural, biological, and social sciences, the impact of industrialisation on British society, and increasing nonconformist engagement in politics.⁶⁷ Some religious intellectuals chose to suspend belief, but over the nineteenth century, a large number of Congregationalists explored questions related to the substance of the Christian faith, and sought to provide their hearers with a defence of it.⁶⁸ Following the Revival, Congregationalists were part of a new category of “evangelical” that sought to recover parts of the heritage of nonconformity that had been neglected for congregations that were more stable, educated, and inquiring than previously. Similarly, a split in professionalisation between “the minister” and “the evangelist” meant that by the end of the nineteenth century, many ministers had engaged in their own personal reconstruction of theology and saw themselves as

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 506.

⁶⁷ Johnson, *Changing Shape of English Nonconformity*; Watts, *Dissenters*, vol. I, pp. 366-70 and vol. II, pp. 262-66; Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. IV, pp. 173-81; Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, pp. 131, 142, 163; Ian Sellers, *Nineteenth Century Nonconformity* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 3.

⁶⁸ Mark D. Johnson, “The Crisis of Faith and Social Christianity: the Ethical Pilgrimage of James Shaver Woodsworth” in Richard J. Helmstater and Bernard Lightman (eds), *Victorian Faith in Crisis: Essays on Continuity and Change in Nineteenth Century Religious Belief* (Houndmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 343-79.

teachers. While John Angell James, minister at Carr's Lane Chapel from 1805 to 1853, a convert during the Evangelical Revival, was concerned about how the faith would be communicated for the sake of conversion, his successor from 1853 to 1895, R W Dale focused his attention on biblical interpretation instead. Dale believed that the emphasis on preaching to convert individuals to Christianity had led to the neglect of traditional Puritan concerns such as the pursuit of truth, and the tasks of building personal character, ideal churches, and an equitable social order. Ministers became concerned with ethics in preaching, a modification of the substitutionary theory of the atonement, the doctrines of creation and providence, and the nature of God and the experience of his love – the latter is seen in the work of P T Forsyth particularly, which is discussed below. This intense engagement with the substance of the faith would be short lived as, in the twentieth century, the production of theological texts became the role of members of a growing a theological professoriate and ministers would spend much more of their time on practical tasks. More importantly, the reconstruction of theology remained hampered by the fact that scientific thought challenged what historian A D Gilbert has called the “plausibility” of a religious worldview.⁶⁹

The new natural and biological sciences questioned the accuracy of bible stories such as the account of the Creation myth in particular. The social sciences, led by Marx, Comte, and Spencer, argued that heredity and the environment determined the course of human lives. By contrast, biblical criticism challenged the historical accuracy of the bible and theologians sought to reconcile the dating in the creation myth of Genesis with scientific thought and to reconstruct the life of Jesus.⁷⁰ They applied evolutionary

⁶⁹ Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, p. 184.

⁷⁰ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. IV, pp. 173-81; Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, p. 262.

theory to theology, producing new interpretations of the Old and New Testaments through the idea of the progressive appropriation of revelation through the Scriptures. Theologians sought to defend Christianity not by an appeal to Paley's evidences, an argument for the existence of God based on design in nature, but by a reconstruction of the Incarnation. They promoted an image of God as father of a household rather than a legislative and punitive Moral Governor. This shift in the nature of God was often expressed in the pithy phrase, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. Theological modernism had implications for Christian spirituality in relation to understandings of the function of prayer and beliefs about the nature of revelation, including miracles. It could also reinforce a memorialist view of the sacraments.⁷¹

Congregationalism was particularly open to new trends in theology because the colleges encouraged ministerial candidates to develop their own theological views and the churches did not require subscription to creeds. Between 1880 and 1900, most Congregational ministers embraced a liberal theological interpretation of the Scriptures. The theological controversies that lead to expulsions of students and the resignations of some heads of theological colleges in the mid-nineteenth century should be understood merely as indicators of a substantial shift in theological understanding that would occur gradually over the next fifty years.⁷² In 1869, six Congregationalists and Baptists, including barristers, ministers, and a physician, produced a book entitled *Religious Republics*, which defended the polity of the two churches and sought to respond to contemporary issues such as the debate over Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* and Irish disestablishment. They were prepared to accept Darwin's theory of evolution outlined

⁷¹ Spinks, *Freedom or Order?* p. 140.

⁷² Johnson, *Changing Shape of English Nonconformity*, p. 127; Brown, *Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry*, p. 98; Sellers, *Nineteenth Century Nonconformity* pp. 26-27.

in his *Origin of Species*.⁷³ By 1897, when a group of Congregationalist and Baptist ministers published the *Ancient Faith in Modern Light*, one of the contributors, William Brock, wrote: “We look at the same spiritual landscape as our fathers looked at, but the entire perspective is shifted... The Ancient Faith must be adjusted to the Modern Light if it is to be visible to the modern eye.”⁷⁴

German scholarship and the Broad Church movement in the Church of England influenced the reconstruction of theology in Congregationalism. A number of nonconformist theologians had studied influential thinkers such as Schleiermacher and Ritschl in Germany. Schleiermacher believed that because of the divisions in Christianity, the faith of a given church was not so much an assent to a number of eternal doctrines as its expression in a particular time and place. Ritschl’s thought was practical and ethical. It focused on the reconciliation of the believer with God through Christ and consisted of an invitation to participate with God in the establishment of the “Kingdom”. For Ritschl, it was neither necessary for believers to be motivated by emotion, nor for them to accept a body of doctrine, but to seek to fulfil their “calling” in everyday life sustained by Christian fellowship.⁷⁵ German theologians argued for the revision of the doctrines of eternal punishment and the substitutionary theory of the atonement. Changes to these doctrines had been stimulated by revulsion against the evangelical emphasis on the individual appropriation of salvation. Political theorists who took a new, restorative view of justice also influenced it. Such concerns led to new explanations of the significance of the crucifixion.⁷⁶ Equally, F D Maurice, an Anglican intellectual and Broad Churchman, was a significant influence on Congregational

⁷³ Binfield, “Free-Churchmen and a National Style” in Mews (ed), *Studies in Church History*, vol. 18, pp. 526-7.

⁷⁴ Johnson, *Changing Shape of English Nonconformity*, p. 125.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-48.

⁷⁶ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. IV, pp. 193-6.

ministers. His focus on the Incarnation altered the interpretation of the atonement from the eternal punishment of individuals found in Augustinian Calvinism, to the reconciliation of the world, or the “Fatherhood of God”. Ministers began to emphasise the love of God, rather than arbitrary judgement.⁷⁷

The following section will explore the thought of a number of ministers R W Dale, J Baldwin Brown, P T Forsyth, and H E Brierley. The most significant in the mid-nineteenth century was Dr R W Dale of Birmingham (1829-1895),⁷⁸ who became renowned for doctrinal sermons based on the bible and patristic learning and his interests in education, municipal government, and disestablishment. Against those who believed that forgiveness was not necessary, Dale argued that the authority of God was found not in Scripture per se, but in the death of Christ. In his revision of the atonement, a central part of evangelical theology, Dale argued that Christ accepted sacrifice voluntarily as a representative of humans who had violated their obligations to God, and to each other, and who were deserving of punishment.⁷⁹

James Baldwin Brown (1820-84), another influential Congregational minister in London from 1846 until his death, believed that ministers should offer intelligent sermons to educated audiences.⁸⁰ By the late nineteenth century, Brown would acknowledge that science had forced the churches to engage with biblical criticism and

⁷⁷ Binfield, *So Down to Prayers*, p. 195; Johnson, *Changing Shape of English Nonconformity*, pp. 135-40, 148.

⁷⁸ A. W. W. Dale, *The Life of R W Dale of Birmingham* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899).

⁷⁹ Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. IV, pp. 197, 285, 322-33; Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1963); David M. Thompson, “R. W. Dale and the ‘Civic Gospel’” in Alan P. F. Sell (ed), *Protestant Nonconformists and the West Midlands of England* (Keele, Staffordshire: Keele University Press, 1996); Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, pp. 266-68; Johnson, *Changing Shape of English Nonconformity*, pp. 153-4.

⁸⁰ Johnson, *Changing Shape of English Nonconformity*, pp. 90, 137; Herbert Schlossberg, *The Silent Revolution and the Making of Victorian England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), pp. 184-5; Moore, “Theodicy and Society: the Crisis of the Intelligentsia” in Helmstadter and Lightman, *Victorian Faith in Crisis*, pp. 153-86; Binfield, *So Down to Prayers*, p. 195.

threatened religious authority itself. Influenced by the thought of Maurice in his work *The Divine Life of God* (1859), he argued that “free trade in religion” had led to the decline of Augustinian theology that had accompanied the collapse of feudalism. He used the middle-class household to support his view that God was not a magistrate, but a father, who sought not punish individuals, but to restore relationships between them. There was no room in his view of God for eternal punishment: “God rules the world so justly because he loves it so well.”⁸¹

The theology of P T Forsyth (1848-1921), Principal of Hackney College, London, from 1876 to 1901, had a significant influence on Congregationalism during the twentieth century.⁸² He built on achievements in liberal theology by predecessors such as Dale, and sought to correct what he saw as overcompensations in it. He was particularly concerned about the accommodation to a scientific worldview that reduced the ability of preachers to appeal to the modern mind and who, as a consequence, focused on cheap love and subjective authority. Forsyth considered the holiness of God in the Lyman Beecher Lectures (1907), the *Cruciality of the Cross* (1909), and the *Work of Christ* (1910). Like Dale and Brown, he challenged older views of the Atonement but was more grounded in the Reformation and focused his attention not on the life and teachings of Jesus, but on his act of redemption in the Cross. His view of how the authority of God was experienced by lay people encouraged ministers to convey to congregations the love of God as motivation for Christian service. His high view of the

⁸¹ Quoted in Johnson, *Changing Shape of English Nonconformity*, p. 138.

⁸² Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, pp. 352-3, 453; Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. V, pp. 157-74; P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (London, 1907), p. 89; Clyde Binfield, “Principal while Pastor: P. T. Forsyth, 1876-1901” in W. Shiels and Diana Wood (eds), *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay: Studies in Church History*, vol. 26 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 397-414; Binfield, “P. T. Forsyth as Congregational Minister” in Trevor Hart (ed), *Justice the True and Only Mercy: Essays on the Life and Theology of Peter Taylor Forsyth* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), pp. 168-96; Ralph C. Wood, “Christ on Parnassus: P. T. Forsyth Among the Liberals”, *Literature and*

Church as created by divine grace rather than by voluntary association, individual experience, or tradition, would be developed further by twentieth century Congregationalists. He said: "Our great response is an obedience more than an assent, and our strength is not so much certainty as trust."⁸³

The effect of the spread of these ideas within the denomination meant that at the local level, ministers such as the Rev H E Brierley at the Highbury Quadrant, North London from 1905 to 1918, combined a modernist's critique of hell with reflection on the serious consequences of sin. In September 1909, he said: "Everlasting punishment is the everlasting defeat of the Eternal...Sin is an affront to His holiness...Our modern theology suffers unmeasurably for its sentimental fear of severity...He must blot out sin...Love says 'forgive'; holiness says 'blot out'."⁸⁴ In June the following year, Brierley used the metaphor of the relationship between the mother and the child as expressed in the mother's use of a baby's playground, (today known as a playpen), to describe the concept of limited free will. The baby had freedom to move within the playground, even to hurt itself, but not irreparably. "[So] there are bounds to our powers of evil, there are limits to our possibilities of hurt. Underneath life, will, yes underneath even sin, are the 'Everlasting Arms.'"⁸⁵

The implications of doctrinal changes for political views: the social gospel

Congregationalists were among those nonconformists affected by the implications of changes in the understanding of the atonement for political economy. Boyd Hilton

Theology, vol. 2, no. 1, March 1988, pp. 83-95; John Thompson, "Was Forsyth Really a Barthian Before Barth?" in Hart (ed), *Justice*, pp. 237-55.

⁸³ Quoted in Johnson, *Changing Shape of English Nonconformity*, p. 122.

⁸⁴ Clyde Binfield, "Collective Sovereignty? Conscience in the Gathered Church, c.1875-1918" in Diana Wood (ed), *The Church and Sovereignty c.590-1918: Studies in Church History*, vol. 9 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 504-6.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

has argued that the shift in the understanding of the atonement from retribution to reconciliation shaped evangelical free trade liberalism, which, in turn, was more important than utilitarianism in the formation of public morality. Within this broad context, the role of individuals in society was influenced by differing views about the millennium. Post-millennialists believed individuals should work towards social improvement, while pre-millennialists, by contrast, believed that the millennium would occur simply with the advent of the Second Coming. Dissatisfaction among nonconformists with early nineteenth century post-millennialism, which encouraged moral rather than political interventions, led to a transformation in the content of nonconformist social advocacy from private relief efforts, to the intervention of the state in welfare.⁸⁶

Congregationalism also called for expanded state intervention as a result of desire to make Christianity relevant to the working classes and greater knowledge about the conditions of the poor. The 1851 Census had shown that large numbers of Britons did not attend church, especially in the large towns, and among the working classes. This concern was reinforced by the findings of a study undertaken by Congregationalists entitled, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883).⁸⁷ Though the *Bitter Cry* exaggerated the conditions of the poor in England, it renewed concern among nonconformists to use the vote to promote reform in relation to overcrowding, and it led to a government inquiry into housing policy. Inspired by experience from the United States and Germany, the social Darwinist theory that humans are the product of their environment, and desire to resurrect declining rural congregations, Congregationalists were prominent among those nonconformists who

⁸⁶ Boyd Hilton, *The Age of the Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

⁸⁷ Rev Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: an Inquiry into the Conditions of the Abject Poor* (London: Cass, 1970).

started rural employment schemes and advocated for planned suburbs and garden cities.⁸⁸

By the 1880s, leading Congregationalists also believed that the received conception of liberalism would leave the individual vulnerable to harm. Social intervention from the state and auxiliary institutions such as churches was required to ensure individuals were protected from such harm.⁸⁹ This view was dependent on the assumption of a large role for the State in society as well as a liberal theological view of redemption. R W Dale was not enamoured with the Quaker and Free Trader John Bright's division between deserving and undeserving poor, believing that the "individual is always innocent and society always guilty."⁹⁰ As part of his reaction to the Evangelical Revival, which had led to an apolitical stance in nonconformity, R W Dale couched arguments for state intervention in terms of the morality of a Christian nation. He viewed state intervention as a practical expression of Christ's redemption for the whole of humanity. Such intervention could consist of the introduction of legislation to secure farmers and labourers against exploitation, and the creation of municipal government to provide safer living conditions in industrial cities. The duty of the Christian citizen was to "carry into municipal and political activity the law and spirit of Christ".⁹¹ Dale believed that if municipal government had been achieved universally by the 1880s, the release of the *Bitter Cry* would not have been necessary. He said:

⁸⁸ David Bebbington, "The City, the Countryside and the Social Gospel in Late Victorian Nonconformity" in Derek Baker (ed), *The Church in Town and Countryside: Studies in Church History*, vol. 16 (Oxford: Basil and Blackwell, 1979), pp. 415-26; Peter D'A. Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877-1914: Religion, Class and Social Conscience in Late-Victorian England* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 413-17; Herbert Schlossberg, *The Silent Revolution*, pp. 158-69.

⁸⁹ David M. Thompson, "The Emergence of the Nonconformist Social Gospel in England" in Keith Robbins (ed), *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America c. 1750-1950: Studies in Church History*, vol. 7 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 255-280.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

All municipal laws that improve the health of a town, reduce the death-rate, promote cleanliness, give fresh air and pure water to the people, are as truly part of that redemptive work which the Church has to carry on in the name of Christ, as the preaching of the remission of sins, or the establishment of Churches and Sunday Schools. He, himself, cured the diseases of men, and we continue His work when we build hospitals; but we do better to remove the causes of disease than to cure it.⁹²

These views became dominant among leading Congregationalists. A M Fairbairn, who became Principal of Airedale College, Bradford, in 1877 and from 1885, Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, used similar arguments and in 1890, he would establish Mansfield House, Canning Town, along the lines of London's Toynbee Hall. He suggested that churches were the "great mothers and guardians of social purity" and that they should require that:

the nation in all its legislation and in all its conduct, home or foreign, follow the righteousness that alone exalteth, recognising no law as good, no action as honourable, that denies or offends Christian principle.⁹³

The Congregational churches in the industrial city of Sheffield provide an example of the extent of the replication of these ideas in local congregations and their expression in practical action. The creation of settlements and the YMCA provided opportunities for the coming generation of young male and female professionals who, shaped by discussion of social problems within the Young Men's and Women's Societies of their denomination, sought to apply their degrees in arts and medicine to a useful cause. Their minister, the Rev William Blackshaw, left his manse to live in the settlement he established at Croft House, Queen's Street, Sheffield. The institution sought to provide social programs designed not only to meet poverty, but also that more serious problem, disinterest, which was described by an American journalist in 1909, en route to an Imperial Press Conference:

No delegate...had ever seen the like in any white country overseas or even imagined it possible within the limits of human nature....It was not that the people were poor. It was not even that they were hungry. Poverty and hunger are curable conditions. What struck every observant delegate was the utter blankness of the faces that looked up at us from the pavement or down at us from the windows, with scarcely enough capacity for human

⁹² Ibid., p. 265.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 267.

interest to wonder who we were or what we wanted. Block after block it was the same. Never a sign of humour. Never even a flush of human envy. Stooped shoulders, hollow chests, ash coloured faces, lightless eyes, and, ghastliest of all, loose-set mouths, with bloodless gums, and only here and there a useful tooth. ... 'What do you think of it?' asked a London reporter of a Canadian editor. 'It's Hell', said the Canadian. And his companion from Australia could not suggest any other fitting word.⁹⁴

Few ministers took their response to the new challenges of science and social problems to the extremes of R J Campbell, minister of the City Temple from 1903 to 1915, but the impact of his ideas would generate controversy within the church at home and the colonies. In the *New Theology* (1907) and *Christianity and the Social Order* (1910), Campbell argued that the revelation of God was immanent rather than transcendent, and that ministers should focus on the humanity of Jesus rather than the doctrine of the fall in the Pauline epistles. But he reduced the purpose of the church to a search for social justice with his argument that such theology would attract the alienated masses to the churches and would become the theology of the emerging labour movement. In the newspapers, this controversy was prolonged and led to the publication of a series of essays edited by Charles Henry Vine and P T Forsyth, *The Old Faith and The New Theology* (1907). Campbell eventually withdrew the *New Theology* in 1911, later resigned his ordination and entered the ministry of the Church of England.⁹⁵

The social gospel was the tail end of a political reform agenda that had begun a century earlier with campaigns for the removal of civil disabilities. The rise of nonconformity had led to a conflict between church and chapel about the relationship between church and state that would be gradually resolved over the

⁹⁴ Clyde Binfield, "A Crucible of Modest though Concentrated Experiment': Religion in Sheffield c. 1840-1950" in Hugh McLeod (ed), *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities, 1830-1930* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 195-96.

⁹⁵ Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, pp. 343-51, 389; Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. V, pp. 124-34; Warren Sylvester Smith, "Non-conforming Nonconformists" in *The London Heretics, 1870-1914* (London: Constable, 1967), pp. 200-23.

course of the nineteenth century.⁹⁶ Since the time of the Civil Wars, dissenters had advocated for the disestablishment of the Church of England, provisions for civil marriage, and a civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths, relief for debtors and poor prisoners, and protection for infants and the insane.⁹⁷ After the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, which allowed dissenters to seek public office, the Municipal Corporation Act (1835) meant that Liberal candidates could be elected in fifty towns throughout England and Wales. Congregationalists were among those Liberal MPs who sought to address various issues such as peace, education, temperance, slavery, burials, church rates, marriages, and a civil registry of births and deaths. Disestablishment, that “great national evil”, according to Thomas Binney, remained the symbol of the list of remaining grievances. This agenda was supported by institutions such as the *Leeds Mercury* (1801), the *Sheffield Independent* (1819), and the Anti-State Church Association (1844), which became the Liberation Society (1853). Reforms included the Marriage Act of 1836, which legalised marriages in dissenting chapels, a civil registry of births, marriages, and deaths, the Charter of the University of London, and the opening of the older universities to nonconformists from the 1850s. Under Gladstone, the number of dissenting MPs doubled, the vote was extended to householders in boroughs, compulsory church rates were abolished, and the Church of Ireland was disestablished.⁹⁸ With a degree of social acceptance and English disestablishment seemingly imminent, Congregationalists developed a celebratory reading of their Independent history that neglected the violence of the Cromwell regime, and emphasised his attempt to challenge the religious establishment.⁹⁹ Similarly, Joseph

⁹⁶ Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, pp. 148, 162.

⁹⁷ Watts, *Dissenters*, vol. I, p. 145 and vol. II, p. 347.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 479 and vol. II, pp. 211-8, 265-303, 349, 382-400, 424, 428, 436-9, 454, 470-8, 567-91.

⁹⁹ Timothy Lang, *The Victorians and the Stuart Heritage: Interpretations of a Discordant Past* (Cambridge University Press, 1995). For Congregationalists who wrote biographies of Cromwell see for example, R. F. Horton, *Oliver Cromwell: A Study in Personal Religion* (New York: Thomas

Parker, in his address to the Congregational Union in 1876, expressed confidence and wit in his summary of the social agenda of Congregationalism:

We have to disestablish the Church, modernise the universities, rectify the policy of School Boards, clear the way to burial-grounds, subsidise magazines, sell hymnbooks, play hose upon Convocation, and generally give everybody to understand that if we have not yet assailed or defended them, it is not for want of will, but merely for want of time.¹⁰⁰

There was the rub: in the lack of resources at the level of the congregation. Important, too, was continued support for Establishment, or growing apathy about the issue in the face of other more pressing ones. The British parliamentary system had become sufficiently open to political pressure for nonconformists to achieve success in some policy areas such as access to universities. But the nonconformist chapel could not adopt more than one campaign at a time and the statements of its leaders could be reduced to condemnation from the sidelines rather than providing constructive proposals.¹⁰¹ The controversy over Irish Home Rule, the Education Act of 1902, and the failure over disestablishment exposed the weakness of nonconformity: the lion's "teeth" had been "pulled."¹⁰² The publication of *Nonconformity and Politics* in 1909 revealed the embarrassment of one anonymous minister at the crass political role nonconformity had begun to play, which had not been developed on the basis of a strong internal consensus and had led to further divisions within its own ranks. Nevertheless, although British politics remained open to discussion, by the end of the century, nonconformity simply did not have a large enough membership to support political advocacy work.¹⁰³

Whittaker, 1897); J. Allanson Picton, *Oliver Cromwell: the Man and his Mission* (New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin and Co, 1882).

¹⁰⁰ *Congregational Year Book*, 1877, p. 88.

¹⁰¹ D. W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), pp. 16, 154-155.

¹⁰² Adrian Hastings, *A History of Christianity, 1920-1990* (London: SCM Press, 1991), p. 130.

¹⁰³ Thompson, "The Emergence of the Nonconformist Social Gospel in England", p. 280.

The First World War and Congregationalism in the Twentieth Century

The First World War was the catalyst in the decline of English and Welsh Congregationalism that was apparent from the late nineteenth century. Though Congregationalists had hoped that England would remain neutral, the denomination supported the war as a defence of civilisation. A small number of Congregational ministers, who supported pacifism, resigned, or offered to resign, their pulpits.¹⁰⁴ The war cut short the capacity of congregations such as that of Newton Park, in Leeds, to respond to changing demographic conditions as the middle class moved out to the suburbs and workers moved in. Moreover, after the war, the growth in population in Leeds was of people from faiths other than Christianity.¹⁰⁵

The war also saw the ordination of the first woman minister. Constance Todd and her fiancé, Claude Coltman, were ordained on 17 September 1917 at King's Weigh House where W E Orchard, a prominent pacifist and Free Catholic, was minister. They were married the following day and had responded to the call of the church to work in its mission at Darby Street, which was hard work on a low salary.¹⁰⁶ Although Congregationalism was divided over women's suffrage and support for women's ordination was far from universal, prominent Congregationalists supported women's suffrage and women in church leadership. Such supporters included: R J Campbell, W E Orchard, R F Horton, of Lyndhurst Road Congregational Church, Hampstead, and Rhondda Williams, of Union Church, Brighton. Dr Selbie, Principal of Mansfield College, was Vice President of the Free Church League for Women's Suffrage (1911).¹⁰⁷ Discussion in local church magazines such as that of

¹⁰⁴ Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, pp. 355-61.

¹⁰⁵ Binfield, "The Story of Button Hill" in Mason (ed), *Religion in Leeds*, pp. 79-107.

¹⁰⁶ Elaine Kaye, "A Turning-Point in the Ministry of Women: the Ordination of the First Woman to the Christian Ministry in England in September 1917" in W. J. Shiels and Diana Wood (ed.), *Women in the Church: Studies in Church History*, vol. 27 (Oxford: Basil and Blackwell, 1990), pp. 505-11.

¹⁰⁷ Kaye, "A Turning-Point in the Ministry of Women", pp. 505-11; Kaye, "Constance Coltman – A Forgotten Pioneer", *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 134-46; Kaye et al, *Daughters of Dissent* (London: United Reformed Church, 2004), p. 20.

the Highbury Quadrant could also develop support for women's suffrage and ordination.¹⁰⁸

Approximately one hundred women were ordained in English and Welsh Congregationalism between 1917 and 1972, when the United Reformed Church was inaugurated.¹⁰⁹ While Constance Coltman enjoyed joint ministries with her husband, many other Congregational women found their acceptance as ministers within the denomination difficult, as the career of Hatty Baker, the first woman in pastoral charge of a church in Congregationalism shows. Baker was asked to share in the ministry of a Congregational hall built by Mrs Louisa Martindale in Horsted Keynes in 1907 and, by 1909, she was involved in mission work in Brighton. As she did not complete the required study she was not ordained, but she was appointed to the lay pastorate of Plymouth in 1917 and used the title "Reverend." She was also the first secretary of the Free Church League for Women's Suffrage. In 1911, she described the "unanimity with which all classes of people of somewhat narrow doctrines and antiquated views bombard me with St Paul."¹¹⁰ As a result of such opposition, women's ministries could be as short as that of Wilna Constable's ministry in Crookes Congregational Church, Sheffield. Having been ordained in 1918, one year after Constance Coltman, in August 1920 she and her husband left the church after "a brief and bumpy ministry".¹¹¹

Women's ordination was achieved as the religiosity of nineteenth-century British culture turned to the confident agnosticism of the twentieth century. With the rise of

¹⁰⁸ Clyde Binfield, "Hebrews Hellenized? English Evangelical Nonconformity and Culture, 1840-1940" in Sheridan Gilley and W. J. Shiels (eds), *A History of Religion in Britain: Practice and Belief from Pre-Roman Times to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 336-338.

¹⁰⁹ Elaine Kaye, "One Hundred Ministers Ordained between 1917 and 1972 in England and Wales", *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, vol. 6, no. 10, July 2002.

¹¹⁰ See her *Women in the Ministry* (London: C W Daniel, 1911) quoted in Elaine Kaye et al, *Daughters of Dissent*, pp. 19-21 and see also chapter 4.

scientific thought, the churches seemed irrelevant to many ordinary Britons and to those who remained within them, the separation of the Church of England and nonconformity was no longer necessary.¹¹² The membership of Congregationalism peaked during the First World War with approximately 290 000 members, but after the war started to decline in England, but not in Wales, by about one percent per annum – the most marked decline of all the free churches. Congregationalism faced decline in its areas of strength in the nineteenth century, in the country, in staple industries, and in industrial areas to the north. From 1923 to 1936, 156 churches and preaching stations closed and only 72 new ones opened.¹¹³ Because of the loss of adherents, the overall influence of Congregationalism on the population became much more limited than previously. Though Congregationalists did not adapt to decline as readily as the churches with more connexional systems such as the Methodists, the position of the General Secretary of the Congregational Union became more important, churches adopted grouping schemes to afford a minister, and rural congregations began to use lay preachers regularly. Grieved that their church no longer appealed to the people of England and Wales, by the 1960s, Congregationalists lowered their sights and viewed membership decline as normal.¹¹⁴

From the 1930s within Congregationalism, there was a significant shift from liberalism to neo-orthodoxy in theology. Forsyth's works began to be appreciated. Biblical scholars such as John Marsh, George Caird, and Nathaniel Micklem, Principals of at various times of Mansfield College, and C H Dodd, the first

¹¹¹ Binfield, "A Crucible of Modest though Concentrated Experiment" in McLeod (ed), *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities*, p. 202.

¹¹² The following section to the end of this chapter relies on David M. Thompson, "The Older Free Churches" in Rupert Davies (ed), *The Testing of the Churches: 1932-1982, A Symposium* (London: Epworth Press, 1982), pp. 87-115; Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity: 1920-1990* (London: SCM Press, 1991), chapters 6, 15, 30, 35 and 39.

¹¹³ Thompson, "The Older Free Churches", p. 91.

nonconformist appointed to a theological chair in 1935, argued for a catholic view of the church. This view was reflected in a more sacramental view of baptism and Holy Communion and the production of new liturgies, but the efforts of scholars such as Nathaniel Micklem and Erik Routley improved the quality of hymnody rather than liturgy. The *Congregational Hymnary* (1916) introduced a large number of hymns of Christian service and missionary work, hymns with choruses suitable for men's meetings, children's hymns, and Christmas carols. *Congregational Praise* (1951) combined hymns from the Reformed tradition and the Evangelical Revival, expanding the number of hymns of Isaac Watts from twenty-four to forty-eight.¹¹⁵ Support for the neo-orthodox view of the church culminated in 1967, with the change of name of the denomination from the Congregational Union of England and Wales, to the Congregational Church in England and Wales. This view also informed the union discussions for the United Reformed Church (URC), a union of Congregationalists and the relatively small denomination of Presbyterians, formed in 1972.¹¹⁶ Despite hope that the union would lead to revival, the URC declined over the next twelve years by over 30 percent to merely 132 000 members. Those who opposed this understanding of church remained outside the union and formed the Congregational Federation or the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches.¹¹⁷

After the landslide election of 1906, political nonconformity declined such that by the 1930s, Liberal nonconformist MPs seemed anachronistic, a mere echo of a lost age. While older Congregationalists continued to support the Liberal Party,

¹¹⁴ Thompson, "The Older Free Churches", pp. 87-89; Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 221, 268.

¹¹⁵ Congregational Union of England and Wales, *Congregational Hymnary* (Hazel, Watson and Viney: Memorial Hall, London, 1916); Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, vol. V, p. 116; Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, pp. 370-1, 456-7.

¹¹⁶ In September 1981, the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ of Great Britain and Ireland joined the URC and in April 2000, the Congregational Union of Scotland also joined the URC.

nonconformist political views diversified after the First World War, and church members began to view public discussion of politics by their leaders as divisive. By the 1930s, there were more nonconformist MPs in office for the Labour Party than for the Liberal Party, but the switch in allegiance to Labour was not as profound as the effect of previous nonconformist support for the Liberal Party. The Labour Party was internationalist and it drew on and reinforced traditional nonconformist support for disarmament in the 1930s, and for nuclear disarmament and world development in the 1950s and 1960s. Equally, there was a shift among Congregationalists to the Conservative Party, especially in the south and Midlands, due to lack of Liberal leadership and fear of socialism. Even the cause of disestablishment, which had developed widespread support in the nineteenth century, waned in the twentieth, with the Liberation Society, having been established in 1843, winding up in 1959.¹¹⁸

The over-representation of Congregationalists among the leadership of the ecumenical movement was perhaps the greatest indicator of their transformation from a persecuted minority to an accepted part of British society. This achievement had been realised against the backdrop of secularisation, which had almost rendered the conflict between church and chapel irrelevant because it had affected the status of the Church of England as much as nonconformity. Congregational leaders in the ecumenical movement included the intellectual C H Dodd, Kenneth Slack, the General Secretary of the British Council of Churches, first Moderator of the URC and the Director of Christian World Aid, and Norman Goodall, Secretary of the International Missionary Council from 1944 to 1963. Lesslie Newbigin, Moderator of the URC in 1978-9, missionary in Asia, and the only Free Churchman to be recognised by the Church of England as Bishop of the Church of South India,

¹¹⁷ Thompson, "The Older Free Churches", pp. 97-106; Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 269, 534, 603.

became a leader in the World Council of Churches. All of these figures stood for a church more united than the URC. At the formation of the church on 5 October 1972 in Westminster Abbey, Archbishop Ramsey and Cardinal Heenan pledged to work with the URC toward greater unity. In this spirit of seeking further Christian unity, English and Welsh Congregationalism reached its twilight.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Thompson, "The Older Free Churches", pp. 106-111; Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 128-130, 262, 266-8.

¹¹⁹ Thompson, "The Older Free Churches", pp. 106-111; Hastings, *A History of Christianity*, pp. 272, 625-6, 628, 658.

CHAPTER 2

Independency and Congregationalism in Australia, 1798-1977

Congregationalists came to Australia at a time when there was still Anglican antipathy to the success of nonconformity following the Evangelical Revival, but nonconformist hopes for complete religious toleration were increasingly becoming accepted in wider British society. As a consequence, nonconformists worked hard for the establishment of the voluntary principle in the colonies. By the late 1880s they had succeeded in all Australian colonies and in 1901, voluntarism was enshrined in the Australian Constitution. Despite this religious toleration, Congregationalism did not become a large denomination in Australia. It peaked in the 1880s but declined markedly in membership as a proportion of the population, especially from the 1930s (see Appendices 1 and 2). As church union discussions with the Methodists and the Presbyterians gathered pace after the First World War, the identity of the church became provisional and Congregationalists increasingly saw themselves as part of a movement towards the goal of a united, world church. This chapter provides an overview of the geographical profile and structure of Congregationalism in Australia. It focuses particularly on an explanation of why Congregationalism declined as a proportion of the population. It also outlines the social profile of the church in relation to ethnicity, class and gender, its polity, worship life and ministry, and how Congregationalism became one of the most theologically liberal Christian denominations in Australia.

The First Independents

The first independents arrived in New South Wales in 1798. They were LMS missionaries who were mostly Calvinistic Methodists fleeing Tahiti for lack of

provisions from the Society, and warfare.¹ Initially, the Church of England had a privileged position in New South Wales and was responsible for the moral discipline of convicts.² Though the Toleration Act did not apply to the colony and nonconformists could be deported for defying the Church of England, authorities were lenient with them. Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden, the first colonial chaplains, supported Independents as long as they were prepared to work within the Church of England. Independent ministers and lay missionaries were generally prepared to comply with the chaplains and they contributed to the itinerant ministry of the Church of England in the area around Parramatta. Only William Pascoe Crook (1775-1846), an artisan missionary of the LMS, educationalist and itinerant minister, despised the Church of England and founded an independent church in his school-room in 1810.³ Marsden reacted against the church as, in his view, Crook had administered communion as a layman, but Crook believed that his status as a missionary of the LMS allowed him to preside at the sacrament. The congregation did not last long, however, because of the conflict with Marsden and the return of the missionaries to the Pacific.⁴

The First Congregational Church

Middle class citizens who longed for the culture of British nonconformity formed the first Congregational church in Australia that was sustained into the twentieth century, in Hobart, in 1830. Frederick Miller (1806-1862), then a young student

¹ Niel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas, 1797-1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 112-3, 121-3.

² Bruce Kaye (ed), *Anglicanism in Australia: A History* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2002), chapter 1.

³ *ADB*, vol. 1, pp. 259-31 and also the entry on James Fleet Cover (1762-1834), vol. 9, pp. 587-8.

⁴ G. Lindsay Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, ed. Bruce Upham (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 2001), pp. 19-93; G. L. Barnes, "The Origins of Australian Congregationalism", *Church Heritage*, no. 1, September 1978, pp. 33-41; G. Lindsay Lockley, "Sydney's Independents: An Introductory Chapter", *Church Heritage*, vol. 1, no. 3, March 1980, pp. 179-198; Niel Gunson, "The Contribution of the Calvinistic Methodist Movement to the Church History of Australia", *Church Heritage*, vol. 4, no. 1, March 1985, pp. 28-59.

from Highbury College, Islington, became the first minister.⁵ Congregationalists expected to become members of a relatively large church in a society without an established church, and they grew in numbers in the nineteenth century quickly, often faster than the Church of England. When and where congregations were founded depended on the coordination, initiative, and financial generosity of the CMS and the first Australian congregations, and their attitude to state aid to religion.

The resources of the CMS were limited. The LMS had not shown much interest in colonial missions as it was preoccupied with ministering to the “heathen” in non-Christian societies, and sought to maintain its public image as an undenominational society. The existing commitment of English congregations to the LMS and the lack of local leaders to develop support for the objectives of the CMS meant that the latter society sent only a small number of ministers to Australia. After six years, the CMS had funded six ministers in Australia in contrast to twenty-six in the Canadas. In the first fifteen years, the Society allocated only £2000 to establish Australian congregations but colonial Australians who became prosperous after the gold rushes increased the Society’s income to £6000 per annum. In New South Wales, the first church opened in 1833. The LMS and the CMS assisted with the selection of the first ministers but relied on local funds for their passage and stipends. The Rev Thomas Quinton Stow (1801-1862), of Halstead, Essex, was the second clergyman to come to South Australia. He travelled with fare and stipend secured, and a tent to erect a temporary church building. He held the first service on 19 December 1837.⁶ In 1837, William Waterfield (1795-1868) went to Port Phillip, and in 1838, John West (1809-1873) and

⁵ *ADB*, vol. 2, pp. 229-30.

⁶ *ADB*, vol. 2, pp. 491-2.

Alexander Morison (1813-1887) went to Van Diemen's Land.⁷ In Western Australia, Henry Trigg, a Congregational layman, held the first service in Perth in 1843 as a split from a union church composed of both Wesleyans and Dissenters.⁸ In Brisbane, settlers formed a church in Ipswich in 1849 and in 1854, the CMS sent the Rev Edward Griffith to minister to them. Eventually, there were enough congregations to form Congregational Unions in Van Diemen's Land (1837), South Australia (1850), Victoria (1852, which lapsed and was restarted in 1860), Queensland (1861), New South Wales (1866), and Western Australia (1895).⁹

By the late nineteenth century, Australian Congregationalism had not grown large enough to exceed five percent of the population. Peter Munster, a member of Australian Congregationalism, suggested that lack of church growth among Congregationalists was a feature of colonies including Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa. Church growth was impeded by lack of interest from Britain, economic instability in the colonies, the excessive identification of congregations with English Congregational polity and culture, and spending on insignificant rural areas.¹⁰ Denominational competitors arrived before Congregational ministers and were more prepared to adopt pragmatic methods, often expanding through use of lay people and itinerant ministries. While Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians accepted state aid to religion, adherence to the voluntary principle meant that Congregationalism struggled to develop a nucleus of support to cover the costs of land, buildings, and stipends, and remained small. Some of the first

⁷ See J. D. Bollen, "English Christianity and the Australian Colonies", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 28, no. 1, October 1977, pp. 361-85. See the entries on Ross in the *ADB*, vol. 2, pp. 298-9, Waterfield, *ADB*, vol. 2, pp. 572-3, West, *ADB*, vol. 2, pp. 590-2, Morison, *ADB*, vol. 5, pp. 291-2; Patricia Fitzgerald Ratcliff, *The Usefulness of John West: Dissent and Difference in the Australian Colonies* (Launceston Tasmania: Albernian Press, 2003); Coralie Jenkin, *Alexander Morison: Independent* (Henley Beach: Seaview Press, 2003).

⁸ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, p. 210.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 137-8, 167, 188, 210, 227-8, 255.

¹⁰ Peter Munster, "Notes on Aspects of Research into the History of Australian Congregationalism", *Proceedings the Victorian Congregational Historical Society*, vol. 1, no. 7, December 1965, p. 7.

Congregational ministers such as Stow and Ridgway William Newland, a pastoralist in Encounter Bay, in South Australia, and Griffith in Queensland were lucid opponents of state aid to religion and this became the majority view.¹¹ Others were unaware of the views within their denomination, such as Frederick Miller in Tasmania, who initially accepted grants for land, building, and a stipend. After advice from a ministerial colleague, William Jarrett, Miller declined the stipend, and his church repaid the land and building grants over the next twenty years. For others, pragmatism triumphed over principle. The CMS was completely opposed to state aid, which restrained early enthusiasm for expansion among Congregationalists in New South Wales. Only a very small minority such as Calvinistic Methodists were in favour of state aid. The Tory views of Alexander Morison that informed his acceptance of state aid created conflict within the Congregational Union of Victoria.¹² A small number of congregations accepted grants for land, and, in some cases, for buildings, in Melbourne, Geelong, Launceston, Fremantle, and the allocation of lots at Kalgoorlie.¹³

Congregationalism became dependent for expansion on the initiative of ministers and lay people, and on the wealth of entrepreneurs. The most generous of these benefactors was Henry Hopkins (1787-1870) in Tasmania, who supported most churches on the island, and many on the mainland, including those of other denominations.¹⁴ Although Congregationalists developed an itinerant ministry, it was not as successful as that of the Methodists. Congregationalists were reluctant to use lay people to lead congregations and became reliant on the CMS to respond to requests for ministers. Efforts to fill ministerial vacancies could take years, and the CMS often failed to fund strong applications such as the one for a minister to work

¹¹ *ADB*, vol. 2, pp. 281-2.

¹² *ADB*, vol. 5, pp. 291-2; Gunson, "The Contribution of the Calvinistic Methodist Movement to the Church History of Australia", p. 59.

¹³ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, pp. 103, 221.

on the building of the first railway in Queensland. Delays in communication could create misunderstandings, such as two ministers being called to same pastorate. Congregations could also suffer from a high turnover of ministers and fail to make a successful transition from one minister to the next. The number of churches and preaching stations that were started but did not continue past the work of the first minister is considerable, especially in rural areas. In some of these places, churches were founded where no services had been held, which then declined as the churches to which members had originally belonged became established. Congregational churches were also founded in insignificant centres that could not be sustained, or were sold to other nonconformist denominations, usually the Presbyterians, the Methodists, or the Baptists.¹⁵

While in the 1870s rural congregations were more numerous than urban ones, Congregationalism became largely urban after the expansion in suburbs from the 1880s. In Tasmania, Congregationalism remained confined to the south-eastern corner of the island, in places including the Huon Valley and the Tasman and Sorell Peninsulas, and in the north of the island around Launceston and Devonport.¹⁶ In Queensland, Congregationalism was mainly located in Ipswich and Brisbane despite energetic and capable bush mission work of men such as J T Warraker (1861-64), J C Kirby (1864-71)¹⁷ and Thomas Jenkyn from the CMS (1869-1873)¹⁸ started to the west and north. In Victoria, Congregationalism was hampered by dissension within the first church, but expanded by the immigration of 15 ministers to the colony in the 1850s, who started churches in Geelong, in suburbs such as

¹⁴ *ADB*, vol. 1, pp. 552-3.

¹⁵ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, for Henry Hopkins see pp. 104, 118, for the Queensland Railway see p. 233, for an example of two ministers called the same pastorate see p. 137, and for decline and sale of churches see, for example, pp. 105, 211.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, chapter 5. See also the map in Theo E. Sharples, *Congregationalism in Tasmania* (Hobart: Congregational Union of Tasmania, 1977), p. vii.

¹⁷ *ADB*, vol. 5, pp. 35-6.

¹⁸ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, chapter 10.

West Melbourne and Kew, and on the gold fields, where most rural Congregational churches were found.¹⁹ In Western Australia, Congregationalism expanded from Perth, Australind, and Fremantle to the south-west through the itinerant ministry of the Rev Andrew Buchanan. The Rev W T Kench, minister of Trinity Church, from 1895 to 1913, formed churches in the suburbs and gold rush areas. Congregationalists also forged an agreement with the Methodists in 1914, allowing the Methodists to work in the Werribee, Chidlow, and Woorooloo areas in return for withdrawing from the wheat-belt.²⁰

Congregationalism became strongest in absolute numbers in New South Wales, although British and local sources did not allocate large resources to church extension there either. The Pitt Street deacons aided new churches and ministers fitfully, supporting some churches such as those at Redfern and in the Hunter, but also driving five of the first ministers into Presbyterianism. Strong congregations could be found in Sydney and the suburbs, the Newcastle area, and the Hunter Valley regions, but Congregationalism remained largely urban because there was very little sustained itinerant bush mission work in New South Wales.²¹

As a proportion of the population, Congregationalism was strongest in South Australia. The colony, which had attracted a higher number of nonconformists and their sympathisers than any other, was described by Douglas Pike, historian of early

¹⁹ Ibid., chapter 8. See also Niel Gunson, *Daniel Gunson: Gippsland's Pioneer Congregational Minister, 1847-1915* (Canberra: N. Gunson, 1983).

²⁰ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, chapter 9; Wendy Snook, "The Development of the Congregational Church in Western Australia, 1829-1914: Part 2", *Church Heritage*, vol. 11, no. 1, March 1999, pp. 2-23, esp. p. 9; Joseph Johnston, *ADB*, vol. 4, pp. 486; See also Patricia M. Brown, *The Merchant Princes of Fremantle: the Rise and Decline of a Colonial Elite, 1870-1990* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1996), pp. 7, 112, 134, 136-7, 146, 172; H. J. Gibbney and Ann G. Smith, *A Biographical Register, 1788-1939: Notes from the Name Index of the Australian Dictionary of Biography* vol. I, A-K (1987), p. 374.

²¹ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, chapter 6 and Lockley, "From Independency to Congregationalism in New South Wales, 1838-1866", *Church Heritage*, vol. 2, no. 1, March 1981, pp. 1-23; See also Gavin Souter, *Heralds and Angels: The House of Fairfax, 1841-1992* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin Books, 1992).

South Australian political history, as the "Paradise of Dissent". The number of churches in South Australia expanded because of the work of the first minister, Thomas Quinton Stow, in founding new churches, and the establishment by William Parkin, a wealthy benefactor, of the Parkin Mission (1882) and the Parkin Trust (1872).²² South Australian Congregationalism expanded faster than the Church of England, and by 1861 it had more than thirty churches and represented five percent of the population, the highest proportion of the population of any colony in the British Empire. These churches existed in pockets such as the South Coast, in the Border Downs district, and on the Upper Murray. There were no churches in country areas north of Alma and Port Pirie, and none in the south near Mount Gambier, where Presbyterians were strong.²³ Principal Kiek, Principal of Parkin College from 1920 to 1957, summarised the frustration of twentieth-century Congregational leaders for the Centenary of the Congregational Union in South Australia in 1950. In particular, he highlighted the problem of secularisation:

Congregationalism in South Australia, especially during the past fifty years, has not shown any progress commensurate with the work that has been put into it. It has been almost stationary in numbers, judging from the census returns...Church extension has been for a long period almost at a standstill, while many places which once supported Congregational Churches have allowed them to die. To some extent these and other disquieting features may be attributed to a tidal wave of secularism which has affected other denominations in no less degree.²⁴

Through settlement in areas where there was no Congregational church, members became associated with other denominations, or none. Equally, some attenders at Congregational churches in South Australia were not Congregational by choice or tradition, but present because of a shortage of churches of their own denomination.

Kiek again:

²² *ADB*, vol. 5, pp. 406-7.

²³ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, chapter 7; John Cameron, *In Stow's Footsteps: A Chronological History of the Congregational Churches in South Australia, 1837-1977* (Glynde, South Australian Congregational History Project Committee, 1987), pp. 113-130, 143. See also the review of this work by David Hilliard in the *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 16, 1988, pp. 181-2.

²⁴ E. S. Kiek, *Our First Hundred Years, 1850-1950: The Centenary Record of the South Australian Congregational Union* (Adelaide: SA Congregational Union and Home Mission, n.d.), p. 113.

Former deacons become Methodist circuit-stewards and Presbyterian elders. I have often visited Methodist and Presbyterian Churches where some of the best workers were ex-Congregationalists. There is also an opposite kind of difficulty. In South Australia, where our rural work is stronger than elsewhere, places exist where ours is the only church and all sections of the community attend. I have discovered churches where few, if any, of the church-members, except the minister, were Congregationalists: such groups are completely without any Congregational tradition and are apt to be Congregational in little more than name.²⁵

The reasons for the decline of Australian Congregationalism

In the twentieth century, Congregationalism did not maintain its members in relation to population growth and declined very sharply in absolute terms in Victoria (see Appendices 1 and 2).²⁶ The economic depression of the 1890s led to church decline because with lack of churches in the suburbs and country areas, moving house to look for work could result in a change of religious attendance or failure to take up religious practices in the new place. Simultaneously, the church failed to develop a strong identity based on difference from other denominations that could withstand the distance and isolation of colonial conditions. As a system of church order rather than a theology, Congregationalists did not have the commitment to believer's baptism of the Baptists as outlined in Chapter 1. They relied on the memory of disadvantage in England, their distinctive polity, and commitment to the LMS to develop a particular sense of identity, which was neither sufficient to maintain membership nor strong enough to halt decline. By the end of the nineteenth century, older people and women were over-represented among Congregational adherents.²⁷

Ethnicity, Class and Gender

The experience of the laity in Australian Congregationalism was determined by the categories of ethnicity, class and gender. Congregational churches were mainly

²⁵ E. S. Kiek, "The Religious Situation in Australia", *Congregational Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 1, January 1952, p. 55.

²⁶ Hugh Jackson, "Aspects of Congregationalism in South Eastern Australia, circa 1880-1930" (Ph.D thesis: Australian National University, 1978), pp. 89ff.

composed of white, English-speaking British subjects, who continued to identify with Britain until after the Second World War. Before the experience of this majority is explored in general terms below, it is important to note the different experience of indigenous people, insofar as they could identify with Congregationalism, and, within the British majority, the minority experience of the Welsh.

Indigenous people

Because of its commitment to missions in the Pacific, Congregationalism was not formally involved in missions to indigenous people, unlike the Methodist and Presbyterian denominations.²⁸ However, individual Congregational ministers and congregations were responsible for Aboriginal missions at various times, such as the mission started at the Congregational church at Katoomba in New South Wales in 1909, which lasted until the 1940s.²⁹ In South Australia, Congregationalists also led missions founded in the nineteenth century by the inter-denominational group, the Aborigines' Friends' Association at Raukkan (Point McLeay, 1850) and Bookayana (Point Pearce, 1868). The Rev George Taplin (1831-1879) was missionary at Point McLeay from 1859 until his death.³⁰ The state government assumed responsibility for the missions in 1916, after the findings of a Royal Commission into the conditions of Aboriginal people in South Australia was tabled in parliament. From 1927, the Parkin Mission, a Congregational trust established in 1882, supported the missions financially.³¹

²⁷ Hugh Jackson, "Moving House and Changing Churches: the Case of the Melbourne Congregationalists", *Historical Studies*, vol. 19, no. 74, April 1980, pp. 74-85.

²⁸ William H. Edwards and Bernard A. Clarke, "From Missions to Aboriginal Churches: the Uniting Churches in Australia and Aboriginal Missions" in Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (eds), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies* (Adelaide: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1988), pp. 185-200.

²⁹ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, p. 152.

³⁰ *ADB*, vol. 6, pp. 242-3.

The relations of early Congregationalists with indigenous people generally reflected the belief that colonisation and dispossession of the indigenous peoples by the British was justified. The experiences of missionaries and farmers could create strong advocates for the indigenous people, however. The first Congregational missionary to indigenous people was the Rev Lancelot Threlkeld (1788-1859), a missionary in the Society Islands, whom the LMS appointed to establish a mission at Lake Macquarie in 1825. He advocated the welfare of indigenous people, assisted them with court cases and provided one of the first descriptions of indigenous life and customs, which has since become a highly contested document in debates about indigenous history.³² Threlkeld argued that his bible translations were not read by many indigenous people, for, by the time they were completed, most of the indigenous people living in the Macquarie area had been killed by whites. Similarly, in South Australia, in response to the Maria massacre of 1840, Congregationalists argued that the white survivors of a shipwreck had provoked indigenous men by sexually abusing indigenous women, who, in retaliation, killed the white survivors. Congregationalists also protested against the economic boycott by Governor Gawler of the *Register*, which had been critical of the government's response to the affair.³³

Recent research has shown that in South Australia only about one-tenth of indigenous people were located on missions.³⁴ Peggy Brock has referred to the missions as “ghettos” that were simultaneously havens for indigenous people from

³¹ Cameron, *In Stow's Footsteps*, pp. 11, 45, 108, 125; Gordon Rowe, *A Century of Service to the Aborigines at Point McLeay, South Australia* (Adelaide?: Aboriginies' Friends' Association?, 1960).

³² *ADB*, vol. 2, pp. 528-9; Niel Gunson (ed.), *Australian Reminiscences and Papers of L E Threlkeld*, vol. I (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1974), pp. 168-70; Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapters 8 and 9.

³³ Robert Foster, Rick Hosking and Amanda Nettlebeck, *Fatal Collisions: The South Australian Frontier and the Violence of Memory* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2001); See also Ridgway William Newland (1790-1864), *ADB*, vol. 2, pp. 281-2; Simpson Newland (1835-1925) a pastoralist, author, parliamentarian and colonial treasurer, *ADB*, vol. 11, pp. 10-12 and William Morley (1854?-1939), *ADB*, vol. 10, pp. 588-9.

³⁴ Robert Foster, “An Imaginary Dominion: The Representation and Treatment of Aborigines in South Australia, 1834-1911” (Ph.D thesis: Adelaide University, 1994), pp. xix, 215.

violent landowners, but were also responsible for the systematic destruction of indigenous cultures.³⁵ On the missions indigenous people were denied basic freedoms and subject to a rigorous daily routine. They were depicted as undisciplined, as being easily influenced by working class people, and as children rather than adults.³⁶ Diane Bell, an anthropologist of the Ngarrindjeri, has recorded the expectation that indigenous people devote considerable amounts of time to religious activities. This evidence stands in chilling contrast to the Congregational ideal of a voluntary church membership. In fact, the records of the missions provide evidence of the resistance of indigenous people to coercion into, or the assumption of, membership. The membership roll of Point McLeay mission, for example, shows the way indigenous people requested the missionary to remove them from the membership roll, as they could not remember having ever provided a public declaration of faith.³⁷ Indigenous children rejected the habits in which they had been educated, and indigenous women resisted the missionaries though traditional activities such as weaving. Simultaneously, indigenous people also internalised aspects of the culture of the missions and came to depend on the routine that the missionaries sought to instil in them. At opportunities for a break in this routine, such as the absence of George Taplin, for example, indigenous people at Raukkan (Point McLeay) requested Mrs Taplin to take services and to preach.³⁸

The basic education that the missions provided helped indigenous people to straddle two cultures and to develop the rhetorical skills to advocate Aboriginal citizenship.

³⁵ Peggy Brock, *Outback Ghettos: Aborigines, Institutionalisation and Survival* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

³⁶ Foster, "An Imaginary Dominion", p. 208.

³⁷ Point McLeay Congregational Church Members' Roll 1930-1938, see especially the years 1930 and 1931, SRG 95/65/1, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

³⁸ Graham Jenkin, *Conquest of the Narrindjeri* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1979); Christobel Mattingley and Ken Hampton (eds), *Survival in Our Own Land: 'Aboriginal' Experiences in 'South Australia' since 1836* revised ed. (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1998); Diane Bell, *Ngarrindjeri Wurrwarrin: A World that Is, Was, and Will Be* (North Melbourne: Spinifex, 1998); John Harris,

When the colonies federated, the government provided suffrage to non-indigenous adult females, but not to indigenous people. They had been entitled to vote in New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania, but had only actually done so in South Australia. At federation, the Senate opposed indigenous suffrage and during the interwar period, indigenous people's right to vote in state elections was gradually whittled away. They would not be granted federal citizenship until 1962.³⁹ David Unaipon (1872-1967), from Raukkan (Point McLeay), became the best known indigenous person in the Commonwealth in the 1930s, and today is remembered as the man on the Australian fifty-dollar note. A writer, inventor, church organist, he was, to use John Alexander's phrase, a "star pupil of a paternalistic mission culture."⁴⁰ His accounts of indigenous customs wove together aspects of Ngarrindjeri culture and evangelical Christianity that reflected the combination of his own beliefs and the cultural norms of the assimilation era. His major work, an extensive account of Ngarrindjeri and south-eastern myths and beliefs was never published in his own name, but was appropriated by W. Ramsey Smith for his *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigines*. Unaipon began political lobbying in 1912, giving evidence to two Royal Commissions on Aborigines and arguing in the 1920s for a model state or a separate territory in central and northern Australia for indigenous people.⁴¹ His distinctive theology proved useful when he needed to challenge racist practices:

One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: A Story of Hope (Sydney: Albatross Books, 1994), pp. 350-72, esp. p. 355.

³⁹ Pat Stretton and Christine Finnimore, "Black Fellow Citizens: Aborigines and the Commonwealth Franchise", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 25, no. 101, October 1993, pp. 521-35; John Chesterman and Brian Galligan, *Citizens Without Rights: Aborigines and Australian Citizenship* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Helen Irving, *To Constitute a Nation: A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Peter A. Howell, *South Australia and Federation* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2002).

⁴⁰ *ADB*, vol. 12, pp. 303-5; John Alexander, "David Unaipon", *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 54/55, 1997, pp. 22-9 esp. 28.

⁴¹ See, for example, John Beston, "David Unaipon: the First Aboriginal Writer, 1873-1967", *Southerly*, September 1979, pp. 334-51; Susan Hosking, "David Unaipon: His Story" in Philip Butters (ed), *Southwords: Essays in South Australian Writing* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1995), pp. 85-101; Hilary M. Carey, "'The Land of Byamee': K. Langloh Parker, David Unaipon, and Popular Aboriginality in the Assimilation Era", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 22, no. 2, June 1998, pp. 200-18.

In various places of the Bible I found the blackfellow playing a part in life's programme. I found it was a blackfellow that befriended the prophet Jeremiah when he was unjustly cast into prison. It was a blackfellow who was there at the right moment to relieve Jesus by bearing the cross when the Saviour fell beneath its weight. It was in this that God made all nations of one blood and that in Christ Jesus colour and racial distinction disappeared. This helped me many times when I was refused accommodation because of my colour and race.⁴²

Later, indigenous women would use similar strategies to renegotiate hierarchies, a process that is discussed in Chapter 4, but, as will be seen, this strategy remained dependent on the broad support in the community for the use of Christian rhetoric to challenge oppression, rather than an appeal to indigenous rights.

Welsh-speaking Congregational churches in Australia

Among the British majority of Congregationalists were a small number of Welsh churches, which flourished mainly on the gold fields in Victoria. The Welsh-speaking churches numbered approximately 20 congregations and could be found not only in Victoria, but also around Newcastle in New South Wales, at Burra and Wallaroo in South Australia, and at Gympie, Charters Towers, and Blackstone in Queensland. The Welsh churches had a disproportionately high number of miners and workers, whose political interests could develop support in their ministers for organised labour and for socialism.⁴³ From the 1870s, the Welsh Congregationalists' fear that they could not preserve their services in Welsh in the next generation had become a reality by the early twentieth century.⁴⁴ The descendants of Welsh Congregationalists would remain proud of their heritage, but would worship in English-speaking Congregational churches.

⁴² David Unaipon, "My Life Story", *Aboriginies' Friends Association Annual Report*, 1951, pp. 10-14.

⁴³ See, for example, James Harold King (1889-1959), *ADB*, vol. 9, p. 596.

⁴⁴ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, pp. 149-50, 197, 238; Bob Reece, "The Welsh in Australian Historical Writing", *Australian Studies*, vol. 4, 1990, pp. 88-104; Emyr Gwynne Jones, "The Welsh Independents (Congregationalists) in Australia", *Church Heritage*, vol. 3, no. 3, March 1984, pp. 238-76; See entry on Welsh minister, David Mortimer Davies (1840?-1894), *ADB*, vol. 4, pp. 26-7; Walter Phillips, "Seeking Souls in the Diggings: Christian Missions to the Chinese on the Goldfields", *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 72, nos. 1 & 2, September 2001, pp. 86-104.

Class

A significant proportion of the membership of the Congregational churches was middle class. In the census of 1901, adherents of the denominations were found in every occupational category. Congregational churches had more members than average who were employers, and their workers were above average in commerce, especially in banking and drapery. They were also above average in skilled trades and manufacturing, and were below average in primary industry.⁴⁵ The proportion of members in commerce remained high, and in the census of 1947, for example, the proportion of members in “commercial” and “clerical” occupations was 23.5%, which was the highest proportion of any other major denomination.⁴⁶

Gender

Increasingly, women became dominant in the membership of the Congregational churches, but with secularisation over the twentieth century, the number of women decreased more rapidly than the number of men.⁴⁷ Many scholars have considered the extent to which religion became “feminised” in the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Of all Protestant denominations, Australian Congregationalists and Baptists experienced the greatest feminisation, particularly from the 1880s to the 1920s. Women constituted up to two thirds of the membership in South Australian Congregational churches such as those at Gawler and Port Adelaide. It is possible to determine the over-representation of women as members in Congregationalism from the 1921 census, particularly for the 25-29 years cohort, and also from membership rolls.⁴⁹ A

⁴⁵ Walter Phillips, “The Social Composition of the Religious Denominations in late Nineteenth Century Australia”, *Church Heritage*, vol. 4, no. 2, September 1985, pp. 77-94.

⁴⁶ Hugh Jackson, “Religious Ideas and Practice in Australian Congregationalism 1870-1930: Part I”, *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 12, no. 3, June 1983, p. 270.

⁴⁷ Paul Barreira, “Protestant Piety and Religious Culture in South Australia, c.1914-1981” (Ph.D thesis: Flinders University of South Australia, 2003), pp. 114, 121-2.

⁴⁸ Barbara Welter, “The Feminisation of Religious Culture: 1800-1860”, in Mary S. Hartman and Lois W. Banner (eds), *Clio's Consciousness Raised* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 137-57; Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Avon Books, 1977).

⁴⁹ Jackson, “Religious Ideas and Practice in Australian Congregationalism, 1870-1930, Part I”, p. 270.

significant role for Congregationalism in the twentieth century, therefore, was the attempt to address secularisation by retaining the numbers of women in the churches. Representation of women on boards and union meetings, and holding civic services, such as Mother's Day, became a means to try to maintain the membership of women and their families in the churches. By the end of the nineteenth century, the lack of men and the institutional weakness of the denomination meant that opportunities for women to enter leadership in the churches were increasing.

Inside the Church: Polity

Congregationalism sought to replicate its distinctive polity in Australia. As outlined in Chapter 1, the autonomy of the individual and of each congregation from other ecclesiastical or secular authority was central to that polity. The church meeting, composed of members of the congregation, was responsible for the life of the congregation, particularly for church property, the conduct of worship, the admission of members, and the choice and maintenance of a minister. The meeting reviewed church rolls and issued tokens to church members in preparation for the monthly holy communion service. The congregation appointed the deacons and called the minister to form its executive, which, until the 1920s, was composed almost exclusively of men. There was deep dissatisfaction with this system, however. Ministers complained about the shortage of people willing to serve as deacons, while a survey conducted between 1913 and 1916 showed enormous apathy among the membership in relation to the church meeting. In some places, the church meeting did not meet at all.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Jackson, "Religious Ideas and Practice in Australian Congregationalism, 1870-1930: Part I", pp. 274-5. See also John Garrett's "Review of Lockley, Congregationalism in Australia", *Church Heritage*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 268-9.

Membership in Congregationalism was open to anyone and did not require baptism or subscription to a creed or a set of doctrines. The right and duty of each member was to interpret the faith and to act according to conscience. The congregation recited the covenant pledge, a statement of commitment to each other, at moments in the church's life such as the reception of new members into communion, and at the anniversary service of the founding of the congregation. By the early twentieth century, requirements for admission to membership had become still more relaxed. Individuals were no longer required to submit themselves to questions in the deacons' meeting about their character, and deacons refused to view personal misfortune or mismanagement, such as bankruptcy, as a basis to refuse membership.⁵¹

Congregationalists maintained fellowship with one another through the half-yearly and annual meetings of the state-based Congregational Unions, which had been formed over the second half of the nineteenth century. The proposed federation of the colonies also stimulated the creation of the Congregational Union of Australasia. This was established in 1892 and re-established in 1904. Renamed the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand in 1916, it included New Zealand until 1960 when it was renamed the Congregational Union of Australia, it met approximately every three years until 1925, when it then met biennially until church union in 1977.⁵² The Unions were composed of ministers and lay people elected by each local congregation. The Union meeting elected a Chairman annually who could be a lay person. In South Australia these meetings were open to women from 1894. By the 1920s, one third of the delegates to meetings of the Congregational Unions of South Australia and New South Wales were women. This

⁵¹ Jackson, "Aspects of Congregationalism in South-Eastern Australia", pp. 21, 37; Jackson, "Religious Ideas and Practice in Australian Congregationalism, 1870-1930: Part I", p. 282.

⁵² Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, p. 255; Geoffrey Barnes, "Congregationalism Centenary 2004", *Church Heritage*, vol. 13, no. 3, March 2004, p. 65.

not only reflected commitment to the equality of the sexes, but also indicated institutional weakness as the church had difficulty in securing male delegates and, increasingly, in securing prominent male citizens to serve on the Union executives.⁵³

Union meetings provided opportunities for Australian Congregationalists to refresh their relationships with other churches overseas and discussion of the activities of the LMS provided the main vehicle for the development of this international identity. Initially, they identified with Congregationalism in England and Wales, but after the Second World War, Australian Congregationalists began to identify with America, reflecting shifts in identity in the wider community. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Rev Joseph King, secretary of the LMS in Australia from 1889 to 1911 viewed Australia's place in the Asia-Pacific region as a launching pad for evangelisation.⁵⁴ By the mid-twentieth century, the Rev G Lindsay Lockley viewed the LMS as valuable in developing international social responsibility among Congregationalists – it “kept the map of the world before its eyes”.⁵⁵ This shift reflected wider modification in Protestant understandings of mission, for, with the growth of indigenous leadership, the concept of the mission field gave way to the ideal of autonomous churches.⁵⁶ Australian LMS families such as the Whytes and the Rileys, who had been trained at Camden College, were responsible for training the leadership of emerging indigenous churches in places such as India, and for

⁵³ Congregational Union and Home Mission of South Australia, *Yearbook for 1920*; Jackson, “Religious Ideas and Practice in Australian Congregationalism, 1870-1930: Part I”, pp. 276, 278.

⁵⁴ Joseph King, *Ten Decades: The Australian Centenary Story of the London Missionary Society* (Melbourne: George Robertson, c. 1895), pp. 5-6, 206; *ADB*, vol. 9, pp. 596-7.

⁵⁵ G. Lindsay Lockley, “Congregationalism in Australia” in Ralph F. G. Calder (ed), *World Congregationalism, 1953-57* (London: International Congregational Council, 1958), p. 25.

⁵⁶ Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chapters 3 and 4.

communicating the ideal of indigenous self-determination in church life to Australian audiences.⁵⁷

Congregationalism did not have written codes of regulations and local church and union meetings relied on the ability of the meeting to determine the “mind of Christ”, reflecting a consensus that was expected to be persuasive. The ideal view, according to the Rev John Garrett, was that authority in Congregationalism was an act of service in a community or “koinonia”. This stood in contrast to the system of Presbyterian churches, which ordered its life by a hierarchical series of courts, or Methodism, which had a connexional system and a Book of Rules. The “magisterium” of Congregationalism was “of the suffering servant,” he said, “not of the ruling lawgiver.”⁵⁸ Unlike Presbyterianism, therefore, heresy trials were not acceptable in Congregationalism by the twentieth century. The Rev J D Northey (1890-1975), Principal of the Victorian Congregational College from 1940 to 1960, remarked on the implications of this understanding of authority: “If fellowship is the meaning and the measure of the Christian life, then it is better for error to flourish than for love to fail.”⁵⁹ This system meant, however, that the Union could be dismissed easily. During the period from 1870 to 1930, when Congregational leaders increasingly emphasised the interdependence of the churches, for example, support for Union funds actually declined.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ John Garrett and L. W. Farr, *Camden College: A Centenary History* (Glebe, Sydney: Camden College, 1964), pp. 24, 45.

⁵⁸ Rev John Garrett, in “Reports from Denominational Groups”, 20 August 1958, in Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/4, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

⁵⁹ *ADB*, vol. 14, pp. 494-5. J. D. Northey, “The Results of the Reformation in Faith and Order” in sundry papers of Henry T. Wells, in Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/7.

⁶⁰ Jackson, “Religious Ideas and Practice in Australian Congregationalism, 1870-1930: Part I”, p. 277.

Congregationalists struggled, therefore, to develop a corporate identity. Some local churches lacked interest in relating to other churches. Others were geographically isolated and could not afford the costs associated with covering long distances to attend meetings. Consequently, in practice the Congregational Union system was not necessarily representative of all Congregational churches, especially in the trans-Tasman body, the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand. At the Biennial Assembly of the Union held in Brisbane in 1939, for example, there were only two delegates, no minister from New Zealand, and no one from Western Australia. The following portrait of the life of Congregational churches provided by the Rev W Blackshaw, Director of Studies, Mansfield House University Settlement, who was visiting from England for the Union meetings in 1939, was bleak:

Ministers see little of one another except in the great cities. The isolation of country churches, their remoteness from centres of interest and enterprise, makes their work and their witness very hard. A minister needs to have a good stout heart to maintain a spirit of hopefulness and enthusiasm under such conditions. He frequently has several small churches under his control in areas where there may be no other church or where, as in South Australia, there are only Lutheran Churches. A man's parish is sometimes more than forty miles in circumference. His pastoral work involves him in long journeys almost daily. A car is indispensable if the ground is to be covered, and the scale of salaries is not high. In the remoter districts the roads are bad and soon wear out tyres. One local preacher, a farmer, told me that to fulfil his engagements the next day (Sunday) he would have to travel 150 miles over mostly unmade roads. That day there was a severe dust storm in the neighbourhood, and in a few minutes the day became night.⁶¹

Inside the church: Worship

Until the 1970s, Congregational worship remained largely derived from England with little Australian material.⁶² The lack of a set liturgy meant that worship could be innovative, but it could also be subject to the particular emphases of local leaders. It could range across the churches and also across time, from a very dry, scholarly Calvinism that was cerebral, appealing to the intellect, to theological

⁶¹ Rev W. Blackshaw, "Congregationalism in Australia", *Congregational Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 1, January 1939, pp. 22-23. See also *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand*, Brisbane 1939.

⁶² No compositions that "caught the colour and inspiration of the new country" had come into general use, see R. W. Dale, *Impressions of Australia*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889), p. 218; Jeffrey Brown, "Congregationalism in Australia", *Congregational Quarterly*, vol. 3, no 2, April 1926, pp. 227-228; See also the "Supplement of Special Hymns for the Overseas Dominions", *Congregational Hymnary* (1916), nos. 1-12; An exception was the poetry and hymnody of N. J.

liberalism that emphasised a life of service in the world, or a passionate evangelicalism that reflected the perfectionism of John Wesley.⁶³ Despite the freedom to follow their convictions in worship, Congregationalists remained dependent on their minister for worship preparation and could become quite inflexible in their approach to particular aspects of worship that bore little relationship to a liturgical heritage in Protestantism.⁶⁴

Liturgical changes introduced from the late nineteenth century not only reflected the search for respectability in England and changing trends in theological ideas as outlined in Chapter 1, but an attempt to respond to falling church attendances in Australia. The shortening of services, and desire to appeal to colonial youth, meant that ministers introduced chants, anthems, and responses into worship to prevent their members from switching to other denominations. Congregational churches acquired organs and included forms of prayer in their services such as the Lord's Prayer, which was a significant addition because, in a previous age, some English Dissenters had removed it from their liturgies as unnecessary. Ministers reversed the response of the laity to the liturgy from standing up for prayers and sitting down to sing, to sitting for prayers and standing to sing. Like England, in the rapid expansion of church building in the 1870s and 1880s, Congregationalists appealed to the wealth and aspirations of their attenders, by building gothic churches that were similar in appearance to Anglican ones.⁶⁵ Stewart Firth, recalling his upbringing in a Sydney Congregational family in the suburb of Strathfield-Homebush, has noted, however, that many Congregational churches

Cocks (1867-1925), who used imagery of the Australian landscape in his works, see *ADB*, vol. 8, pp. 47-8.

⁶³ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, pp. 15-6.

⁶⁴ The Worship of the Congregational Churches in Australia, in Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/6.

⁶⁵ Phillips, "The Social Composition of the Religious Denominations in late Nineteenth Century Australia", pp. 86-7.

were marked by “architectural confusion” and that the organ and the choir stall, rather than the pulpit, could become the focal point of the local church.⁶⁶

The most widely used service book was an English prayer book, *A Manual for Ministers* (1936). Its pietistic and psychological approach to worship did not reflect the Reformed view of the word and sacraments. Its prayers were derived from an amalgam of John Hunter’s *Devotional Services*, W E Orchard’s *Temple and Divine Service* and *An Anthology of Prayers* by A S T Fisher. By the 1960s, newly-ordained ministers began to use the new service books that English Congregationalists released after the Second World War that adopted a more Reformed approach to worship, but in the main, Australian Congregationalists continued to use the *Manual for Ministers*.⁶⁷ Members did not accept such a worship book universally, however, often viewing the use of such books by a worship leader as a mark of weakness in one who had become over-reliant on set forms. During the twentieth century, set forms became acceptable to mark significant occasions and ministers achieved a reverence for the sacraments in their services. After the Second World War and reflecting trends outlined in Chapter 1, Congregationalists increasingly practised one service of the Word and Sacrament and the Minister presided at the Church Meeting. The arrangement of the deacon’s chairs behind the Communion Table suggested that the gathered church celebrated the sacrament together – it was not simply conducted by the minister.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Stewart Firth, “Strathfield-Homebush Church: 1950-1965: A Recollection”, *Church Heritage*, vol. 1, no. 4, September 1980, p. 350.

⁶⁷ *A Manual for Ministers* (London: Independent Press, 1936); J. Huxtable, J. Marsh, R. Micklem, and J. Todd (eds), *Book of Public Worship* (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1948); Congregational Union of England and Wales, *A Book of Services and Prayers* (London: Independent Press, 1959); The Worship of the Congregational Churches in Australia, in Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/6; Interview with the Rev Ken Leaver, 16 January 2002, transcript in possession of the author; see also *World Congregationalism*, January 1963, no. 13, p. 25.

Australian Congregationalists followed the attitude of English and Welsh Congregationalism in relation to their understanding of Baptism. Their widespread opposition to creeds *per se*, rather than the imposition of the creed on an unwilling congregation, was not in line with the Savoy Declaration.⁶⁹ Ideally, Australian Congregationalists believed that the church meeting was the creed or confession of faith in action, which, like the confession, was also “fallible and imperfect”.⁷⁰ Stewart Firth observed, however, that they might also use pride in lack of subscription to a creed to justify ignorance of Christianity.⁷¹

Congregationalists were influenced by the Oxford Movement but there was reaction to this trend as some Congregationalists argued that those who were interested in liturgical forms should simply return to Canterbury.⁷² At Stow Memorial Church in Adelaide in 1907, for example, the Rev Alfred Depledge Sykes moved the pulpit to the side, created a raised sanctuary, and introduced a semi-liturgical service including John Hunter’s *Devotional Services for Public Worship*.⁷³ Eventually, Depledge Sykes transferred to Anglicanism and he denied that this move was a rejection of his ministry in Congregationalism, despite some of his former colleagues viewing his action as a repudiation of his first ordination.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ The Worship of the Congregational Churches in Australia, in Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/6.

⁶⁹ Comments from Rev John Alexander on the ministry of Dr Leatherland in improving Australian Congregational attitudes to creeds in Rev R. A. MacArthur papers, Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1358/3/8.

⁷⁰ Rev H. Cunliffe-Jones, “Comments on Draft” in Reports from Denominational Groups, 20 August 1958 in Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/4.

⁷¹ Firth, “Strathfield-Homebush Church, 1950-1965: A Recollection”, p. 351.

⁷² The Worship of the Congregational Churches in Australia, Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/6.

⁷³ *ADB*, vol. 12, pp. 152-3. David Hilliard, “A Seeker For Truth: Alfred Depledge Sykes”, *Church Heritage*, vol. 6, no. 3, March 1990, pp. 1-17.

⁷⁴ Hilliard, “A Seeker for Truth”, p. 9; *SA Congregationalist*, July 1922, p. 187.

Inside the Church: Ministry

The understanding of ministry in Australian Congregationalism followed the Reformed understanding of the priesthood of all believers. All members were ministers and ordination was conferred by the local congregation, in consultation with an advisory board of the Congregational Unions, on an exceptional lay person set apart from the congregation for full-time ministry. The criteria for the selection of a minister usually included attention to character, intellect, initiative, management skills, and pastoral ability.⁷⁵ Technically, women as well as men could receive a call to the ministry, but tradition prevented it until after the First World War.

As in England, the “call system” created a closer relationship between the minister and the laity in Congregationalism than in other forms of Protestantism such as Methodism, but the small size and decentralised structure of the denomination meant that conditions for ministers were no better than in England.⁷⁶ Ministers were encouraged to maintain an alternative source of income to avoid dependence on a congregation.⁷⁷ The challenge for a congregation was to find a minister who would accept the congregation’s terms and who, in turn, could attract and retain a congregation on a salary that was generally below the minimum wage, although ministers were paid within a wide range of stipends. A minimum stipend gained acceptance from congregations as an ideal, but was not always paid and manses were not always provided. Those pastorates that could not meet the cost of the minimum stipend were generally assisted by the funds of the state Unions, which was especially acute in Victoria. A report accepted by the Congregational Union of

⁷⁵ Jackson, “Aspects of Congregationalism”, pp. 21, 23.

⁷⁶ Clyde Binfield, *So Down To Prayers: Studies in English Nonconformity, 1780-1920* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1977), p. 17.

⁷⁷ Jackson, “Aspects of Congregationalism”, p. 223; Maynard Davies, *Beyond My Grasp* (Sydney: Alpha Books, 1978); Peter Munster, “Independent Ministers – A Profile of Congregational Ministry

Australia and New Zealand in 1941 provided a survey of ministerial settlements and removals, reflecting increased intervention by state Unions in these processes to ease the financial worry of ministers.⁷⁸ In order to understand the context of ministerial conditions for women, which will be discussed in Chapter 5, it is important to convey the findings of this report in some detail. Over half of all churches in Australian Congregationalism were supported by state Unions to fund the salary of their minister (127 of 264 pastorates, or 419 churches as a pastorate can incorporate a number of churches). The dependency of the churches on the Unions was increasing. In New South Wales, the percentage of pastorates that required aid had increased by 10 percent over the previous decade. Stipends were paid in a range between £200-400 per annum. Of 230 stipends, 33 ministers were paid under £200, the majority, 129, were paid between £200-300, 48 were paid between £300-400 and 20 were paid over £400. Stipends had also suffered as a result of the Depression. In New South Wales, for example, before 1930 the average stipend was £330 per annum, but by 1940, the average had dropped to £311. Consequently, the denomination suffered from a serious shortage of ministers. 37 pastorates were vacant and there was a known shortage of 19. Though about one-third of ministers desired a change in pastorate in 1940, only one-fifth of all pastorates, or 58, could afford to move a minister from one state to another. Although it had become virtually impossible to move a minister “from a Church furnishing the inadequate stipend of, say, £300 per year to one paying a still more inadequate stipend”,⁷⁹ the mobility of ministers had increased. The average length of pastorates had dropped from ten years at the end of the nineteenth century,⁸⁰ to

in Victoria, 1838-1977”, *Proceedings of the Uniting Church Historical Society (Victoria)*, vol. 10, no. 1, June 2003, pp. 14-50.

⁷⁸ Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand (CUANZ), *Forward Movement Commission Report, 1939-41* (1941).

⁷⁹ CUANZ, *Forward Movement*, p. 11.

⁸⁰ Jackson, “Aspects of Congregationalism”, pp. 232-3.

less than five years in 1940. Congregationalism was effectively “accepting in practice the Methodist system of itinerancy without its planned basis.”⁸¹

By the late nineteenth century, the requirements for ordination included recommendation from the deacons’ meeting to the council of the nearest Congregational theological college, matriculation, and three years’ theological training.⁸² The establishment of Australian theological colleges in the late nineteenth century reflected the value Congregationalists continued to place on an educated ministry, despite an acute shortage of ministers. Congregationalism could neither depend simply on its first ministers, nor on English Congregationalism, for the supply and training of new ministers.⁸³ Significant investments to found theological colleges came from benefactors such as Thomas Holt, a Queensland cattle baron, in New South Wales, and William Parkin, a South Australian draper and politician.⁸⁴ In Victoria, John Fawkner (1792-1869), a child of convicts who made his fortune editing newspapers, and selling books and stationery, gave his library to the Congregational College.⁸⁵

The churches established theological colleges in four states: the Victorian Congregational College (1862), Camden College in New South Wales (1864) and the Queensland Congregational College (1908). In South Australia, Union College, an interdenominational venture of Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Wesleyans, only lasted from 1872 to 1886 because the Presbyterians transferred their support to their Theological Hall in Melbourne. Congregationalists established Parkin College in 1910 when the Parkin Trust eventually became operative. Like

⁸¹ CUANZ, *Forward Movement*, p. 6.

⁸² See “How the Churches Train their Ministry (Extract from 1895 journal, the *Southern Cross*)”, *Proceedings of the Uniting Church Historical Society (Victoria)*, vol. 9, no. 1, July 2002, pp. 20-27.

⁸³ Garrett and Farr, *Camden College*, p. 18.

⁸⁴ Thomas Holt (1811-1888), *ADB*, vol. 4, pp. 414-5.

the colleges of other denominations, all four Congregational colleges were separated from the universities by the decision of the universities that there would be no place in them for theology.⁸⁶

The first principals of the Congregational theological colleges were usually ministers of exceptional ability such as Llewellyn David Bevan, Alexander Gosman, William Roby Fletcher, Samuel Kent, and Dr J G Fraser.⁸⁷ Students valued the ministerial experience of these men with an affection they would not feel for the next generation of scholarly principals who reflected the increasing professionalisation of the colleges. This latter generation included Edward Sidney Kiek at Parkin College (1920-1957), Griffithes Wheeler Thatcher at Camden College (1910-1933), and James Shaw Griffith at the Victorian Congregational College (1919-1939).⁸⁸ Thatcher and Griffith had been born in Australia. Kiek migrated to Australia from England in 1920. These three and some of their predecessors had had part of their education at Mansfield College, Oxford. Thatcher had been a tutor at Mansfield for twenty years from 1890 to 1910. The Principals expanded the courses and facilities at the colleges, provided significant tuition in ancient languages, and allowed time for scholarship. They did not realise their desire to produce scholars who were educated in theology as well as the humanities. The shortage of ministers meant that young men often completed short courses and

⁸⁵ *ADB*, vol. 1, pp. 368-71.

⁸⁶ Geoffrey Blainey, *A Centenary History of the University of Melbourne*, (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1957), pp. 5-7; W. G. K. Duncan and R. A. Leonard, *The University of Adelaide, 1874-1974* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1974), pp. 2-4; G. R. Treloar (ed), *The Furtherance of Religious Beliefs: Essays on the History of Theological Education in Australia* (Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, Sydney 1997), pp. 4-71; Garrett and Farr, *Camden College*, pp. 1-2; Brian Jones, "The Honourable William Parkin (1801-1889): A Congregational Benefactor", *Church Heritage*, vol. 13, no. 3, March 2004, pp. 90-5; G. Lindsay Lockley, *Grads and Undergrads and Fellows: Cromwell College, the University of Queensland, 1950-1964* (Brisbane: Cromwell College, 1964); Sharples, *Congregationalism in Tasmania*, p. 4.

⁸⁷ Bevan (1842-1918), *ADB*, vol. 7, pp. 283-4; Gosman (1829-1913), *ADB*, vol. 4, pp. 274-5; Fletcher (1833-1894), *ADB*, vol. 4, 189-90; See also Graeme Duke, "Alexander Gosman", *Proceedings of the Uniting Church Historical Society (Victoria)*, vol. 11, no. 1, June 2004, pp. 41-47.

⁸⁸ Kiek, *ADB*, vol. 9, pp. 587-8 and Thatcher, *ADB*, vol. 12, pp. 196-7; Lockley, *Grads and Undergrads*, pp. 1-2.

then entered the ministry.⁸⁹ Initially, the colleges taught a broad range of secular and theological subjects along the lines of the Dissenting Academies of eighteenth-century Britain. In time, though, these colleges, which had very small enrolments, confined their training to theology and practical ministry subjects, and became more isolated from the universities.⁹⁰

The colleges trained only enough students to address normal “wastage” and, as a consequence, the denomination continued to rely on the CMS for supply of ministers from England and Wales.⁹¹ Peter Munster’s work on 540 Congregational ministers, who served in Victoria from 1838 to 1977, has shown the reliance of Australian Congregationalism on English-born ministers even into the mid-twentieth century, when the ministry became more indigenous. At least 236 ministers were born in Australia and 237 or 43 percent were born overseas.⁹² An earlier survey showed that of 595 ministers who spent some part of their ministry in Australia, 332 were born in England, 61 in Scotland, 49 in Wales, and 11 in Ireland.⁹³ The survey related to ministers who had served in Victoria, revealed lack of training among ministers, their movement between denominations, and their entry into other professions. One-fifth of all ministers had university degrees. One-fifth were trained in Britain in the various Congregational theological colleges, which included over twenty different institutions, although postgraduates often chose Mansfield College, Oxford, or New College, London. 72 ministers entered the Congregational ministry from other denominations, mostly Methodism, as they

⁸⁹ Garrett and Farr, *Camden College*, p. 40; See also G. Lindsay Lockley, “Griffithes Wheeler Thatcher 1863-1950” in E. C. B. MacLaurin (ed), *Essays in Honour of Griffithes Wheeler Thatcher, 1863-1950* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1967), pp. 1-18; Phillips, *E S Kiek, Liberal Churchman*; Phillips, ‘*Defending a Christian Country*’: *Churchmen and Society in New South Wales in the 1880s and after* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981), pp. 51-2, 55; Jackson, “Aspects of Congregationalism”, p. 238.

⁹⁰ Garrett and Farr, *Camden College*; pp. 9, 25; Phillips, “Union College Adelaide”, pp. 61-3.

⁹¹ Jackson, “Aspects of Congregationalism”, p. 233; Lockley, “Congregationalism in Australia” in Calder (ed), *World Congregationalism*, pp. 22-25; Kiek, “The Religious Situation in Australia”, p. 54.

⁹² Munster, “Independent Ministers”, pp. 19-31.

⁹³ Peter Munster, “Notes on Aspects of Research Into the History of Australian Congregationalism”, *Proceedings of the Victorian Congregational Historical Society*, vol. 1, no. 7, December 1965, p. 3.

sought an independent form of church organisation and freedom in belief. 34 transferred to other denominations due to upward social mobility, desire for greater centralisation in church life, or the belief that adult baptism was superior to infant baptism. 37 left the ministry to further careers in politics, public administration, law, small business, teaching, psychology, or social work.⁹⁴

Inside the Church: Theological Liberal Evangelicalism

Formal theological education was established in Australia amid international discussion about the implications of science and modern biblical criticism for Christianity. As discussed in Chapter 1, Congregationalists were more responsive to new thought than other denominations, because of their attitude to the creeds.⁹⁵ Following English Congregationalists such as Fairbairn and Forsyth (discussed in Chapter 1), Australian Congregational theologians fostered what they saw as an intelligent, cultured, and socially respectable liberal evangelicalism that was open to new thought while maintaining the authority of Christ. Reaction to these views from conservative ministers and laity is discussed below. Congregationalists generally believed that evangelism should be “informed, reasonable, sane and yet, while passionate, delivered from the false emotionalism that has often characterised it.”⁹⁶ They reacted against the Gipsy Smith Revival in 1926, for example, as they believed it to be limited to the emotions, rather than addressing the whole of life, particularly the intellect.⁹⁷

By the 1890s, like their English co-religionists, Congregationalists had begun to accept the scientific theory of evolution and to re-formulate their theology using

⁹⁴ Munster, “Independent Ministers”, pp. 19-31.

⁹⁵ Jill Roe, “Challenge and Response: Religious Life in Melbourne, 1876-86”, *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 5, no. 2, December 1968, pp. 150, 155.

⁹⁶ CUANZ, *Forward Movement Commission Report, 1939-41* (1941), p. 18.

⁹⁷ Judith Raftery, “Till Every Foe is Vanquished: Churches and Social Issues in South Australia, 1919-1939 (Ph.D thesis: Flinders University of South Australia, 1988), p. 109.

evolution as a metaphor for revelation, which was widely accepted by the First World War. The most learned and enthusiastic proponents of the compatibility of evolution and theology included the Rev Dr Thomas Roseby an amateur astronomer, botanist, and FRAS (1844-1918),⁹⁸ and George Clarke (1823-1913), Vice-Chancellor of the University of Tasmania in 1890 and again from 1898 to 1907, and a Fellow of the Royal Society.⁹⁹ This understanding carried implications for the understanding of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the historical accuracy of the Old Testament, the dating of the New Testament, and a new understanding of miracles and prophecy. It also had implications for the doctrine of eternal punishment and the substitutionary theory of the atonement discussed in Chapter 1.¹⁰⁰ Even by 1897, Jacob John Halley (1834-1910), the bush missionary who became Secretary of the Congregational Union of Victoria from 1872 to 1909, observed that during the nineteenth century, theological thought had reflected the shift in England from Calvinism to liberalism:

The religious life has become essentially one of personal obedience to a personal Christ. Sermons to prove the divinity of our Lord, or to uphold dogmas as to the atonement or justification by faith, are hardly to be heard. Sermons insisting upon absolute obedience to the teaching of the Master, are of everyday occurrence. Sixty years ago, the term "Fatherhood of God" was almost unknown; less than fifty years ago, if uttered in the pulpit it probably would have resulted in the minister being requested to seek a new sphere. Today the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man may be found on the walls of some sanctuaries... Men have learnt that loyalty to the Master is quite compatible with liberality of thought, and towering above theological dogmas, and forms of words, is Love, which is the greatest thing in the universe.¹⁰¹

Congregational theologians such as Principal Kiek promoted theological liberalism in his teaching and general leadership of the denomination. He rejected the doctrine

⁹⁸ *ADB*, vol. 6, pp. 58-9.

⁹⁹ *ADB*, vol. 3, pp. 411-12.

¹⁰⁰ Phillips, "Union College Adelaide, 1872-1886", pp. 59-71; Garrett and Farr, *Camden College*, pp. 17-28; Gosman Alexander, *Scrapbook and Papers MS 8360 MSB 2*, La Trobe Library, Melbourne; Phillips, *Defending a Christian Country*, pp. 113-140; Phillips, "The Defence of Christian Belief in Australia, 1875-1914: The Responses to Evolution and Higher Criticism", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 9, no. 4, December 1977, pp. 402-23; Phillips, "Religious Response to Darwin in Australia in the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 26, May 1990, pp. 37-51; Richard Broome, *Treasures in Earthen Vessels: Protestant Christianity in New South Wales Society, 1900-1914* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1980), p. 18; Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, p. 159.

of original sin, the traditional theory of the atonement, and the verbal inspiration of the bible. He analysed the bible and church doctrine in the context of scientific knowledge and human experience and he believed, following Fairbairn, that modern scholarship enhanced faith. The consequence of such beliefs for church life was particularly apparent in debates about prayers for rain, such as those that occurred during the droughts of 1929-30 in South Australia.¹⁰² Ministers could express their reluctance to pray for rain with wit. The Rev George Scandrett, while minister at Beechworth, Victoria, refused to attend a prayer meeting to pray for rain and instead, he sat outside his manse smoking. As some of the female members of his congregation hurried past his house to the meeting, he called out to them: "Haven't you forgotten your umbrellas, ladies?"¹⁰³

From the interwar period to the 1950s, Congregational theologians gradually shifted their teaching from emphasis on the thought of English Congregationalist Peter Taylor Forsyth to that of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth. From the 1930s, Barth's view that theological liberalism was reliant on the improvement of humanity his return to a focus on the sovereignty of God became popular internationally. The introduction of his ideas into Australian Congregationalism was delayed, however, because of continued interest among the then current crop of theologians in the theology of Forsyth and Ritschl, in which they had been trained. In Victoria, for example, the Rev J D Northey, Principal of the Victorian Congregational College from 1940 to 1960, was not always aware of the latest in scholarship and continued to teach the theology of P T Forsyth and C H Dodd almost uncritically.¹⁰⁴ In South Australia, Principal Kiek, taught Barth in lectures, but admitted that he did not

¹⁰¹ "A Snapshot of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in 1897 (Extract from 1897 journal, the *Southern Cross*)", *Proceedings of the Uniting Church Historical Society (Victoria)*, vol. 9, no. 1, July 2002, pp. 46-47; *ADB*, vol. 4, pp. 326-7.

¹⁰² Phillips, *E S Kiek: Liberal Churchman*, p. 16.

¹⁰³ Munster, "Independent Ministers", p. 45.

understand it. He was heard to say late in life, long after Ritschl's thought had become unpopular, "I'm a Ritschlian; I've always been a Ritschlian".¹⁰⁵ In 1930, the Rev W J Ashford advocated the teaching of Barth at a Camden College meeting, but he was an exception among ministers.¹⁰⁶ The warden of the College at that time, Dr G H Wright (1881-1960), had been trained under Forsyth at Hackney College, London, and continued to teach Forsyth's thought to students.¹⁰⁷ It was only in the 1950s, with the appointment at Camden of the Rev Raymond Abba from 1948 to 1955, and Dr H F Leatherland from 1956 to 1960, that the thought of Karl Barth began to influence a generation of clergy.¹⁰⁸

The theological colleges and the corporate life of the denomination were not, however, the only factors in the development of religious thought and identity among Congregationalists. Lay people were also influenced by the evangelical associations and bible colleges that were founded from the late nineteenth century, to provide an alternative to the liberal theology emerging from the denominational theological colleges. These colleges included the Angas College (1893) and the Chapman-Alexander Institute (1914), both in Adelaide, the Sydney Missionary and Bible College (1916), the Melbourne Bible Institute (1920), and the Perth Bible Institute (1928), which was the only college in Western Australia until 1957.¹⁰⁹ By the First World War, there was a significant minority of conservative evangelicals in the denomination who were especially numerous in the south-western suburbs of

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 20; John Bodycomb, "James Douglas Northey", *Proceedings of the Uniting Church Historical Society (Victoria)*, vol. 11, no. 1, June 2004, pp. 64-8.

¹⁰⁵ Phillips, *E S Kiek: Liberal Churchman*, pp. 8, 19.

¹⁰⁶ Hugh Jackson, "Religious Ideas and Practice in Australian Congregationalism, 1870-1930: Part II", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 12, no. 4, December 1983, p. 440.

¹⁰⁷ Gibbney and Smith, *A Biographical Register, 1788-1939*, vol. II, L-Z, p. 355.

¹⁰⁸ Garrett and Farr, *Camden College*, pp. 51-9; Geoffrey L. Barnes, "Liberalism and the Decline of Evangelical Theology in the Congregational Churches of Australia", *Church Heritage*, vol. 10, no. 1, March 1997, pp. 2-18.

¹⁰⁹ See Ian Breward, "Historical Perspectives on Theological Education in Australasia" in Treloar (ed), *The Furtherance of Religious Beliefs*, pp. 8-23; Stuart Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia: Spirit, Word and World* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 91; See also June

Sydney, along the Cronulla railway line. Conservative leaders included a very diverse range of figures such as the Rev John Alexander Dowie (1847-1907), who was ordained at Alma Congregational Church in 1872, and became one of the founders of Australian Pentecostalism.¹¹⁰ Another was the Rev Lionel Fletcher (1877-1954), who came from a Methodist family and converted to Congregationalism upon marriage, who exercised an international career as an evangelist.¹¹¹ After the Second World War, a notable Congregational conservative was the Rev Fred Nile, Director of the Festival of Light from 1974 and Member of the Legislative Council of the New South Wales Parliament from 1981. He graduated from the Melbourne Bible Institute in 1957 before enduring the theological training necessary to qualify for his ordination, which was held at Revesby Congregational Church, New South Wales, in 1964.¹¹²

Disagreements about theology between hearers of sermons or between clergy and laity were part of church life.¹¹³ The implications of theological criticism for the faith of lay people differed, however, according to variables such as the attitude of their minister, their age, their education, and place of residence. When R W Dale toured Australia for three months in 1887, he observed that Congregationalists in Victoria were uncertain about their beliefs and eager to hear about dogmatic controversy, but in New South Wales and South Australia, Congregationalists sought a sober defence of the Christian faith.¹¹⁴ From the 1870s, however, Congregationalists began to lose faith in the idea of everlasting punishment and the

Epstein, *Rosalie McCutcheon: A Memoir* (Henley Beach, South Australia: Rosalie McCutcheon Memorial, 1993), pp. 10-13.

¹¹⁰ *ADB*, vol. 4, pp. 95-6; Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia*, p. 65.

¹¹¹ *ADB*, vol. 8, pp. 526-7; See also C. W. Malcolm, *Twelve Hours in the Day* (London, 1956).

¹¹² Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia*, pp. 191-2; Fred Nile, *Fred Nile: An Autobiography* (Sydney: Strand Publishing, 2001).

¹¹³ Rev David Davies, "My story, My work and People I have met" Mitchell Library FM4/2661, p. 78; Walter Phillips, "James Jefferis in Sydney: His Ministry at Pitt Street Congregational Church, 1877-1889", *Church Heritage*, vol. 2, no. 2, September 1981, pp. 119-43.

¹¹⁴ *ADB*, vol. 4, pp. 2-3; Dale, *Impressions of Australia*, pp. 217-19, 243-4.

doctrine of the substitutionary theory of the atonement, with anxiety about theology reaching its height in the 1910s. By the 1890s, all categories of lay people had begun to experience doubt: young men, Sunday school teachers, women, and people in old age, which created great tension in the denomination. Conservative Congregationalists believed that there was a clear relationship between the introduction of theological liberalism, with its emphasis on private judgement and individual autonomy, and declining church membership.¹¹⁵ Even the less conservative ministers could regret training their best students in theological liberalism. The Rev Ivan Stebbins, Chairman of the Congregational Union in New South Wales from 1943-44, confessed to a friend on a train journey one day, that he had been part of a committee that had “killed the Congregational Church”. The committee had sent seven of the best ministerial candidates to Germany for theological training, and, when these ministers returned to Australia from overseas, they apparently decimated the membership of the church.¹¹⁶

Before the First World War, the Rev J C Kirby, minister at Port Adelaide Congregational Church from 1880 to 1908, led the most significant theological controversy within Congregationalism. He reacted against a group of young ministers in the South Australian Congregational Union who followed the *New Theology* of the Rev R J Campbell and adopted a progressive view of the atonement. At the October meetings of the Union in 1909, Kirby hoped Congregationalism would resist this trend and would support traditional views by adopting a common creed. In keeping with previous practice, however, the Union refused to adopt such a creed and resolved, instead, to pass a statement that Congregationalists shared in a common faith. The controversy was simply a

¹¹⁵ Jackson, “Religious Ideas and Practice in Australian Congregationalism, 1870-1930: Part II”, pp. 433-44.

¹¹⁶ Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia*, p. 93.

symptom of a larger problem. Ministers began to assume that their congregations would suffer from religious doubt, and, as a consequence, after the First World War, preaching became more topical rather than doctrinal. Ministers also found there was not much encouragement from their theological teachers, who were aware of a failure of modern scholarship to offer convincing solutions to their inquiries. Although E S Kiek argued that ministers should return to a theology of the atonement, he acknowledged that modern theories of the atonement were unsatisfactory.¹¹⁷

Throughout the twentieth century, debates about theology continued to plague Congregationalism with the result that the church became thoroughly divided between theological liberals and conservatives. During the 1920s, the Australian response to these debates generally followed the English pattern, where schism was avoided, which was unlike the situation in America, where debates caused splits in some denominations.¹¹⁸ From the 1950s, however, the conservative reaction from evangelical Congregational ministers in New South Wales to theological liberalism carried implications for the composition of the Uniting Church. Approximately one-third of the Congregational churches in New South Wales objected to the perceived theological liberalism of the *Basis of Union* of the Uniting Church, even though it had been inspired by the thought of Karl Barth. As a consequence, these twenty-seven churches did not join the Uniting Church when it was founded in 1977, and formed a “Fellowship of Congregational Churches”.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Jackson, “Religious Ideas and Practice in Australian Congregationalism, 1870-1930: Part II”, pp. 434-40.

¹¹⁸ Phillips, “In Defence of Christian Belief”, pp. 418-9; Also compare the Angas debate in Sydney, see Susan Emilsen, *A Whiff of Heresy: Samuel Angas and the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1991).

¹¹⁹ Barnes, “Liberalism and the Decline of Evangelical Theology in the Congregational Churches of Australia”, pp. 2-18; Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, pp. 160, 334, 346; Lockley, “Some

Inside the Church: Church activities

A Congregational church offered a round of meetings and activities that sought to provide spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social stimulants after school and work, as a basis for community life. It provided an opportunity for people to meet across the barriers of class and gender, so that families could find networks of support in the local church. It sought to establish environments in which relationships could be developed that would lead to informal conversations about all matters of life, including religion. There were opportunities for the young to grow in leadership ability, and for the old to maintain contact with the freshness of youth. If the church was a “home”, as many ministers liked to describe it, it had all the strengths and all the frustrations of family life.

The congregation provided a calendar of activity that built ties that could last a lifetime. The round of activities involved church, fellowship groups, and sporting teams that often provided many opportunities for fun. The enthusiasm that was generated at Rockdale Congregational Church, in Sydney, for example, when, in the 1950s, the church choir won competitions five years out of eight and proceeded to win the Australian Eisteddfod Championship in 1963, is a highlight of their local church history.¹²⁰ Attendance at church on a Sunday could involve a service in the morning, Sunday school for children, which was transferred from the afternoon to the morning from the 1920s and another service in the evening. The Wednesday evening service, or mid-week meeting, was gradually replaced by sporting activities. From the 1920s, some ministers began to fear that the church had been transformed into a culture of clubs and societies, “a vaudeville show” rather than a church. One minister argued: “Over against the altar the church builds a

Aspects of Congregationalism in New South Wales, 1866-1977”, *Church Heritage*, vol. 2, no. 3, March 1982, pp. 171-195.

¹²⁰ R. W. Rathbone, *Rockdale Congregational Church, 1889-1964* (Rockdale, NSW: The Church, 1964), pp. 41-42.

gymnasium, and the devotional silence of the Wednesday evening service is broken by the shouts of the basketball game, or the Boy Scouts in session.”¹²¹ The worst aspect of this changed environment was the general expectation that membership of the sporting life of the church should be dependent upon religious observance.¹²² For Maynard Davies, who was brought up in a Congregational church in Hawthorn, a suburb of Melbourne, the comprehensive provision for the social life of members, together with a pervading sense of social exclusiveness, gave the church a dominant place in individual lives:

Augustine Congregational, like many other churches of that era, was the social centre of a very large constituency. Quite apart from Sundays which were crammed with religious services, duties, responsibilities or pleasures (depending on the point of view) there was ‘something on’ every evening of the week. Their variety covered all ages, their main aim was to hold the flock against intruders, against back-sliders and against challenges to the ruling diaconate. On Saturdays there was tennis for the faithful only. Strictly speaking ours was never an established Church in the accepted sense. But it was nevertheless governed by an establishment of its own, strictly male and comfortably well-to-do. The various clubs and societies, the fetes and the Sunday School and the lettering on the Notice Board and the destination of contributions vaguely designated ‘for others’, all came within the purview of the diaconate, themselves elected by the Church Meeting... But was it worse than being dominated by a narrow old bishop, or an entrenched presbytery of unfeeling elders? We didn’t know; we just belonged to all the clubs for which we were eligible and never doubted that they would be perennially replenished.¹²³

Like Protestantism more widely, Congregationalism fostered a domestic religious culture that supported existing gender roles. Men were encouraged to pursue secular advancement, philanthropy, and service in the local community, and to earn sufficient income to support a family and to save for old age. Women were encouraged to pursue marriage and children. Neither men nor women were permitted openly to pursue sexual fulfilment outside marriage.¹²⁴

From the late nineteenth century the organisation of female labour in church auxiliaries sought to provide a corporate substitute for the lack of wealthy men. The

¹²¹ *SA Congregationalist*, 1 March 1926, p. 2.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Davies, *Beyond My Grasp*, p. 47.

¹²⁴ Jan Kociumbas, “‘Bless this House...’ Family Religious Culture in Nineteenth Century Australia”, *Women-Church*, no. 24, April 1999, pp. 23-9; Sabine Willis, “Homes are Divine Workshops” in Elizabeth Windschuttle, *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives in Australia, 1788-1978* (Melbourne: Fontana, 1980), pp. 173-91; Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

resources raised by these auxiliaries could help to clear the debt from church buildings and to provide charitable aid and visiting.¹²⁵ After a visit in 1884 from Mary Teresa Bliss, a missionary from Madagascar, Congregational women started auxiliaries to the LMS.¹²⁶ A significant task for these groups was recommending female candidates for missionary service to the LMS and support of women missionaries who were accepted as candidates from the 1890s (for a list of the first women missionaries see Appendix 3).¹²⁷ Women also started “home mission” auxiliaries that sought to provide funds for church extension. This work provided the churches with small amounts of funds, but could not replace the loss of a wealthy benefactor.¹²⁸ Such female “worlds” provided a sphere in which women could find female friendships that were compatible with marriage. These relationships also encouraged women to view their roles as housewives and mothers as playing a part in the churches’ broad social and political goals.¹²⁹

A significant role of the congregation was the education of the young in faith and community service. Like other denominations, Congregationalists organised Sunday Schools, held scripture examinations and started youth societies that were organised by gender until they became coeducational in the late 1930s. Sunday school teachers’ conferences could attract large numbers such as the conference held in Victoria in 1915, which attracted 1 500 people.¹³⁰ The growth of new youth organisations, such as the Congregational Christian Citizenship Movement in New

¹²⁵ Jackson, “Aspects of Congregationalism in South-Eastern Australia”, pp. 111, 133.

¹²⁶ Lockley, “Some Aspects of Congregationalism in New South Wales, 1866-1977”, p. 181.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 182. See also Rosemary Seton, “‘Open Doors for Female Labourers’: Women Candidates of the London Missionary Society, 1875-1914” in Robert A. Bickers and Rosemary Seton (eds), *Missionary Encounters: Sources and Issues* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), pp. 50-69.

¹²⁸ Jackson, “Aspects of Congregationalism in South-Eastern Australia”, pp. 111, 133.

¹²⁹ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America”, *Signs*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1975, pp. 1-29; Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977).

South Wales in the 1930s, formed part of a response both to the need for healthy recreation and to the growth in European countries of Communist and fascist youth movements.¹³¹ Weekend camps that were started after the First World War became a highlight of these societies. They sought to develop a consciousness of distinctive “churchmanship” in Congregationalism and this emphasis increased after the Second World War, as church union debates became more urgent. Stewart Firth remembers that in youth societies during the 1950s he learned as much about the “defects” of other denominations as about the distinctive characteristics of Congregationalism.¹³²

The missionary society, “Pilots”, started in Britain in 1936, became the coeducational movement for young people in Congregationalism aged 8-14 years. “Pilots” helped to foster international responsibility among young people. Through stories, pictures, and lantern lectures, children learned of heroes and martyrs, and the particular areas of the world in which the LMS was active.¹³³ The occasional visits to Australia of the missionary ships *John Williams V, VI, and VII* were popular events for Sunday Schools. They were largely responsible for keeping the story of John Williams, the best known of these martyrs, killed in the Pacific in 1839, in the minds of the following generations of Congregationalists. In the groups, each “pilot” was encouraged “to learn, to pray and to give” in order to help steer both themselves and the missionary ships through the world. Adults encouraged the pilots to pray, to read missionary literature, particularly the paper

¹³⁰ John Ward, “‘Come, Follow Me!’ A History of Youth Work in Congregational Churches of Victoria, 1914-1964”, *Proceedings of the Victorian Congregational Historical Society*, vol. 1, no. 6, 1964, p. 2.

¹³¹ *Congregationalist*, 5 March 1931, p. 7; 8 November 1931, p. 12.

¹³² Firth, “Strathfield-Homebush Church, 1950-1965: A Recollection”, p. 351.

¹³³ For example see Basil Matthews, *John Williams the Shipbuilder* (London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1915); David Hilliard, “Australasia and the Pacific” in Adrian Hastings (ed), *A World History of Christianity* (London: Cassell, 1999), pp. 508-35, esp. p. 516.

News From Afar, to conduct local fundraising, and to send regular financial contributions to the society through the African kraal moneybox system.¹³⁴

Missionary youth activities were more significant for women than for men because missionary work was one of the few opportunities for paid employment in the church for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The LMS Girls' Conferences, which expanded after the First World War, provided an atmosphere of religious devotion, domestic work, games, and fellowship, reflecting the ideal of a woman's role in the local congregation. The conferences often coincided with the sending out of missionaries to their placements overseas or their visits to Australia on furlough. They also provided opportunities for women ministers, where they had been ordained, to lead services. The conferences often involved displays of the food and customs of a particular culture and also provided a critique of social relations in that culture based on the notion of the equality of humanity before God. They emphasised the mutual dependency of the church and the missionary movement and could provide the opportunity for young women to commit themselves to a variety of forms of service, from the simple act of writing a letter to a missionary, to offering herself for missionary service. By the interwar period, missionaries promoted an expression of internationalism found in the broader community that held that understanding between nations would be achieved when all members of the world related to one another as an ideal "family".¹³⁵

After the Second World War, the Congregational Youth Fellowship (CYF) offered a coeducational program of meetings and camps that provided young people from ages 15-30 with an experience of the Christian faith beyond their local congregation

¹³⁴ See for example, *Pilot's Log Book* (Sydney: London Missionary Society, 1938), p. 2; Leaders could consult the *Compass for Pilot Captains* (London, 1947).

¹³⁵ *Congregationalist*, 8 November 1939, p. 7.

and their Congregational Union.¹³⁶ “CYFers” wore badges with a picture of the *Mayflower* on it.¹³⁷ Unlike other denominations such as the Methodist Church and the Churches of Christ, Congregationalism permitted its members to both drink alcohol and dance. Following American and British Christianity, the Congregational Unions of South Australia and Victoria employed professional youth directors who often provided young people with structured projects such as building campsites that were opportunities to share experiences, to grow in confidence and to develop skills.¹³⁸ By the 1960s there were conference centres in each state.¹³⁹ The annual calendar of the CYF included a Work Day For Christ to raise funds for the local church, Easter Camps, and the crowning of the Miss CYF, which was not a beauty contest but a fundraiser for local church extension.¹⁴⁰

Inside the Church: Social justice

The first concern of Congregationalists was evangelisation, but the idea that Christians should work toward a just world was implicit in the bible and in worship. Wider society continued to recognise the role of the churches as moral arbiters in the twentieth century, but their influence over legislation was hampered by numerical decline. How the Christian churches responded to social issues depended on the theological and ecclesiastical structures of their denomination as well as the social habits of the membership. Church statements could be unsophisticated and naïve, however, which reflected contemporary expectations about the quality of comment in an age before the professionalisation and specialisation of social criticism. Where the churches sought legislative reform on issues such as gambling,

¹³⁶ Hazel Hawke, *My Own Life: An Autobiography* (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 25-9; Robert J. Brown (ed), *Peter Mathews: A Memoir* (Adelaide: Geoffrey Pope, 2001), p. 20; Ward, “Come, Follow Me!”, p. 9.

¹³⁷ G. L. Barnes, *Understanding Congregationalism* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1969), p. 12.

¹³⁸ Brown (ed), *Peter Mathews*; Lockley, “Congregationalism in Australia”, pp. 22-25; Firth, “Strathfield-Homebush Church, 1950-1965: A Recollection”, pp. 353-355.

¹³⁹ Barnes, *Understanding Congregationalism*, p. 18.

¹⁴⁰ See for example, *SA Congregationalist*, October 1949, p. 70; August 1950, p. 35.

alcohol, and Sunday observance, they often sought not to address the issue *per se*, as to bolster their waning social influence by recourse to legal means.¹⁴¹

Despite their small number, Congregationalists developed a vigorous and distinctive approach to social issues based on the value they placed on scholarship and the class basis of their membership. Congregationalists also became interested in social issues partly from a desire to make Christianity attractive to that part of its audience that was in decline – the working classes and men, starting with replacing pew rents with freewill offerings in order to make the pews accessible to the working classes.¹⁴² They also appealed to women to achieve their social reform agenda, playing an important role in the extension of the franchise to women in South Australia through the Social Purity Society, started in 1882 by the Rev Joseph Coles Kirby.¹⁴³ Kirby argued for the enfranchisement of women on the basis of gender equality in the book of Genesis and a liberal analysis of the Pauline passages that otherwise seemed to argue for the subjection of women.¹⁴⁴

Congregationalists were more likely to raise social issues through education rather than the development of complex and practical political campaigns, often relying on non-denominational campaigns to achieve their aims. Their contributions to public debates were generally more sober than other churches such as the Methodists. Individuals within Congregationalism such as James Jefferis in South Australia in the 1880s and Principal Kiek in the inter-war period played a decisive role in

¹⁴¹ Raftery, "Till Every Foe is Vanquished", pp. 1-29, 363-405; Walter Phillips, "The Churches and the Sunday Question in Sydney in the 1880s", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 6, no. 1, June 1970, pp. 41-61.

¹⁴² For anxiety about the number of men in Australian Anglicanism see, Patricia Grimshaw, "In Pursuit of True Anglican Womanhood in Victoria, 1880-1914", *Women's History Review*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1993, pp. 331-47; Phillips, *Defending a Christian Country*, p. 31.

¹⁴³ Jim Jose, "Legislating for Social Purity, 1883-1885: The Reverend Joseph Coles Kirby and the Social Purity Society", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 18, 1990, pp. 119-134.

¹⁴⁴ E. S. Kiek, *An Apostle in Australia: The Life and Reminiscences of Joseph Coles Kirby*, *Christian Pioneer and Social Reformer* (London: Independent Press, 1927), p. 200; See also *ADB*, vol. 5, pp. 35-6.

educating the membership of the church on social issues, focusing on broad principles rather than particular policies. They considered a range of social issues, including gambling, alcohol, Sunday, economics, industrial relations, and war.¹⁴⁵ Congregationalists generally supported liberal views, but from the 1880s, a vocal minority such as Albert Rivett, Dr Thomas Roseby, and Alexander Gosman argued that the state should adopt various types of socialism.¹⁴⁶ In the 1930s, Congregationalism reflected the polarisation found in wider society between right and left, and supported the activities of individuals and organisations ranging from the “Red Bishop”, E H Burgmann, to Eric Campbell’s *New Guard*.¹⁴⁷

In the nineteenth century, Congregationalists sought to create a society in which the Church of England would not be privileged and their reform agenda (outlined in Chapter 1) would become a reality. The first generation of Congregationalists became involved in the movement for the abolition of state aid to religion, in founding public institutions such as secular and theological education, and charitable institutions. Partly because of the advocacy of Congregationalists, by the 1880s every colony had established the voluntary principle in religion, with South Australia establishing it first in 1851.¹⁴⁸ Among their concerns were the

¹⁴⁵ Walter Phillips, *James Jefferis: Prophet of Federation* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1993); Phillips, *Defending a Christian Country*, pp. 31, 87-94, 141-2; Raftery, “Till Every Foe is Vanquished”, pp. 72-4, 108-9, 129, 323-4, 351; Judith Raftery, “God’s Gift or Demon Drink? Churches and Alcohol in South Australia Between the Two World Wars”, *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 15, 1987, pp. 16-41 and also her “Betting Shops, Soup Kitchens and Well-Kept Sundays: The Response of the South Australian Churches to Some Social Issues, 1919-1939”, *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 16, no. 4, December 1991, pp. 433-455.

¹⁴⁶ Raftery, “Till Every Foe is Vanquished”, pp. 69-74; Renate Howe, “Protestantism, Social Christianity and the Ecology of Melbourne, 1890-1900”, *Historical Studies*, vol. 19, no. 74, April 1980, pp. 59-73; Bollen, *Protestantism and Social Reform*, pp. 16-21; See entry on Albert Rivett, *ADB*, vol. 11, pp. 398-401; Thomas Roseby, *ADB*, vol. 6, pp. 58-9; Alexander Gosman, *ADB*, vol. 4, pp. 274-5; Gosman, Alexander, Scrapbook and Papers MS 8360 MSB 2.

¹⁴⁷ *Congregationalist*, June 1932, p. 14; Thomas Elias Ruth (1875-1956), *ADB*, vol. 11, pp. 485-6; Raftery, “Till Every Foe is Vanquished”, pp. 300-2.

¹⁴⁸ Walter Phillips, “The Influence of Congregationalism in SA, 1837-1915: A Study of the Congregational Influence on Political and Social Reform in South Australia” (BA Hons thesis, University of Adelaide, 1957); Nancy Turner, *Sinews of Sectarian Warfare? State Aid in New South Wales, 1836-1862* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972); John Gregory, *Church and State: Changing Government Policies Toward Religion in Australia; with Particular Reference to Victoria since Separation* (North Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1973); Peter Munster, “The Influence of Congregationalists on the ‘State Aid Question’ in Victoria, and the Significance of this

establishment of city missions, public hospitals, general cemeteries, and a central register of births, deaths, and marriages, Mechanics Institutes, insurance companies, bible and religious tract societies, missions to seamen and indigenous people, temperance, journalism, and historical writing such as John West's *History of Tasmania*. These concerns changed over time. By the late nineteenth century, initiatives included developing their own denominational missions, arguing for bible reading in state schools, the regulation of housing, immigration, gambling, and prostitution, women's suffrage, and engaging in debates about federation. Congregationalists argued for the introduction of the old-age pension and the protection of children and the disabled.¹⁴⁹ The Rev Charles Bernard Cockett (1888-1965), minister at Wycliff Congregational Church, Surry Hills, Victoria from 1917 to 1920, preached a sermon against the evils of alcohol that involved smashing a beer bottle against the wall of the church.¹⁵⁰

Congregational surgeons, farmers, businessmen, and newspaper editors rose to positions of political power they could not have achieved in England. Prominent medical practitioners included Sir Arthur Renwick (1837-1908) and Sir Philip Sydney Jones (1836-1918), one of the founders of the Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney. Newspaper editors and proprietors included the Fairfaxes, who owned the *Sydney Morning Herald* in Sydney, John Fawkner in Victoria who started the *Melbourne Advertiser*, and John Henry Barrow in South Australia, who founded the *South Australian Advertiser* and *Weekly Chronicle*. Colonial politicians included Joseph Vardon (1843-1913), the South Australian printer; Sir Samuel Davenport

Influence for Public Education", *Proceedings of the Victorian Congregational Historical Society*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1963, pp. 1-12; Ross Border, *Church and State in Australia, 1788-1872* (London: SPCK, 1962); Douglas Pike, *Paradise of Dissent: South Australia, 1829-1857* (London: Longman, Green and Co, 1957); David Hilliard and Arnold Hunt, "Religion" in Eric Richards (ed), *Flinders History of South Australia: Social History* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), pp. 194-234; Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, pp. 102-4.

¹⁴⁹ Munster, "Independent Ministers", p. 43; Phillips, "The Influence of Congregationalism in SA", pp. 28, 61-3, 107-9. Bollen, *Protestantism and Social Reform*, p. 107; Kiek, *An Apostle in Australia*, pp. 193-225; Phillips, *The Protestant Churchmen's Campaign Against Secularism in Australia in the late Nineteenth Century* (Melbourne: Uniting Church Historical Society, 1983).

¹⁵⁰ *ADB*, vol. 13, pp. 455-6; Munster, "Independent Ministers", p. 46.

(1818-1906), a farmer from Macclesfield; David Jones (1793-1873), the Sydney draper, and the Cribb brothers in Queensland. In Tasmania, Sir Philip Oakley Fysh (1835-1919), was twice Premier of Tasmania from 1877 to 1878, and from 1887 to 1892, and the Rev Bolton Stafford Bird was Treasurer of the colony from 1887 to 1892 and from 1899 to 1903.¹⁵¹ During his 18 years in the Legislative Council of Victoria from 1851, John Pascoe Fawkner sat on 96 select committees. He was opposed to squatters but favoured yeoman farmers, was against Chinese and American immigration, manhood suffrage, and the secret ballot, but he favoured rights for women, whether they were married, divorced or deserted.

The institutions Congregationalists established on behalf of their own denomination included inner-city missions, schools, and orphanages. Inner-city missions provided Congregationalists with practical experience of poverty from which to advocate social reform. These missions sought to bring Christianity to the poor in industrial suburbs, but were never as extensive as the inter-denominational city missions and the Methodist Central Missions. They established missions in Victoria at Queensberry Street (1872), La Trobe Street (1893), and Boundary Road (1894), in New South Wales at Sussex Street (1885), and in South Australia at Halifax Street (1866), Port Adelaide, and Whitefield's, Hindmarsh (1926). They also established schools to create generations of elite, committed church members. In 1924, Congregationalists established a school, King's College, in a joint venture with the Baptists in South Australia, and supported St Phillips College in Alice Springs, a boarding school run by Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists. In New

¹⁵¹ See entries on Sir Arthur Renwick, *ADB*, vol. 6, pp. 20-21; Sir Philip Sydney Jones, *ADB*, vol. 4, pp. 490-1; John Fairfax, *ADB*, vol. 4, pp. 148-9; John Pascoe Fawkner, *ADB*, vol. 1 pp. 368-71; John Henry Barrow, *ADB*, vol. 3, pp. 104-5; William Hareus, *ADB*, vol. 4, pp. 340-1; Joseph Vardon, *ADB*, vol. 12, p. 311; Samuel Davenport, *ADB*, vol. 4, pp. 25-6; David Jones, *ADB*, vol. 2, p. 22-4; Thomas Bridson Cribb (1845-1913), James Clarke Cribb (1856-1926), Henry Smart Cribb (1864-1944), *ADB*, vol. 8, pp. 148-9; Sir P. O. Fysh, *ADB*, vol. 6, pp. 602-3; Bolton Stafford Bird, *ADB*, vol. 3, p. 165-6.

South Wales, the Milton Grammar School lasted from 1927 to 1933. Children's homes included Tahmoor Homes in New South Wales, the Marsden Home for Boys established in 1927 at Kallangur in Queensland, and also at Booval in 1961.¹⁵² In addition, Congregationalists supported non-denominational children's homes such as the Protestant Children's Homes at Morialta, South Australia.¹⁵³

These institutions provided women with opportunities to show leadership in the churches. As Protestants began to appropriate aspects of the Anglican and Roman Catholic model of sisterhoods with the appointment of bible women and deaconesses, upper class women could direct their philanthropic efforts toward their church, and women of middle to low class could earn an income.¹⁵⁴ Deaconesses were often the daughters of the founders of Congregationalism such as Sarah Ann Threlkeld (1830-1912), daughter of the Rev Lancelot Threlkeld, who worked in the Sydney City Mission from 1888. Similarly, Mary Harriet Griffith (1849-1930), daughter of the Rev Edward Griffith, exercised a visiting ministry in Brisbane at the end of the nineteenth century and became the first Australian "Lady of Grace of the Order of St John of Jerusalem" in 1911.¹⁵⁵ The support of the clergy for women's pastoral roles helped deaconesses to justify their activity, which could lead to non-political responses to poverty, but for a small number of educated women, it led

¹⁵² Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, pp. 158, 201, 289; Barnes, *Understanding Congregationalism*, p. 18. For the Marsden Home, see *Queensland Congregationalist*, 23 March 1929, p. 8.

¹⁵³ For the ethos of the Protestant Children's Home, see *SA Congregationalist*, 1 March 1926, p. 19; December 1922, p. 393. Mrs Parkin, a Congregationalist, was the first woman appointed to the Board the Protestant Children's Home, see *SA Congregationalist*, June 1927, p. 109; October 1928, p. 269.

¹⁵⁴ Elizabeth Windschuttle, "Feeding the Poor and Sapping their Strength: the Public Role of Ruling-Class Women in Eastern Australia, 1788-1850" in Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed), *Women, Class and History*, pp. 53-80; E. Windschuttle, "Women and the Origins of Colonial Philanthropy" in Richard Kennedy (ed), *Australian Welfare History: Critical Essays* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 10-31; Penny Russell, 'A Wish of Distinction': *Colonial Gentility and Femininity* (Carlton. Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1994); Judith Godden, "British Models and Colonial Experience: Women's Philanthropy in Late Nineteenth Century Sydney", *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 19, November 1986, pp. 40-55; Judith Godden, "'Work for Them and the Glory for Us!' Sydney Women's Philanthropy, 1880-1900" in Kennedy (ed), *Australian Welfare History*, pp. 84-102; Shurlee Swain, *Constructing the Good Christian Woman* (Uniting Church Historical Society Synod Lecture, 1993), p. 9.

to political activism.¹⁵⁶ By the late nineteenth century, women began to request the denomination to remunerate them financially for their labour.¹⁵⁷

More research is required into the various ways people experienced these denominational institutions. For the missions, it is difficult to locate qualitative sources that are not celebratory. While there was debate within the denomination on the utility of the missions, conditions in the orphanages were not discussed and abuse suffered within them was not widely known within the church. Recent government inquiries into conditions of life for state wards in government and non-government homes have shown that children suffered from systemic emotional, physical, and sexual abuse that seriously impaired their future life chances. Poor and violent conditions affected health, educational outcomes and life expectancy, such that state wards had great difficulty in forming constructive, lasting relationships and in securing employment. One submission to the Senate “Forgotten Australians” Inquiry tabled in Parliament on 20 August 2004, related experiences at the Marsden Home for Boys at Kallangur in the late 1940s:

I spent two years in one of these homes after my mother and father were divorced. I often remember those terrible years. Child slave labour was enforced after school, every weekend and on public holidays. The work included cutting up huge trees with cross cut saws, weeding pineapples, attending to boilers and working in the Dairy and vegetable gardens. I received many thrashings from the Superintendent. If I wet the bed, there was always another beating.¹⁵⁸

The experience of residents at the home in Booval in the 1960s was no different. After staying in two other boy’s homes, a period of homelessness, and living with

¹⁵⁵ Gibbney and Smith, *A Biographical Register, 1788-1939*, vol. II, L-Z, pp. 302, 285.

¹⁵⁶ Shurlee Swain, “Religion, Philanthropy and Social Reform: Meanings, Motivation and Interaction in the Lives of Nineteenth Century Australian Women”, *Women Church: An Australian Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, no. 23, October 1998, pp. 29-35; Shurlee Swain, “Women and Philanthropy in Colonial and Post-Colonial Australia”, *Voluntas*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 438-443.

¹⁵⁷ See the first Report of the Ladies Auxiliary to Home Mission to the Congregational Union of New South Wales quoted in Lockley, “Some Aspects of Congregationalism in New South Wales, 1866-1977”, p. 175.

¹⁵⁸ Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Forgotten Australians: A Report on Australians who Experienced Institutional or Out-of-Home Care as Children* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2004), Additional Information received from CLAN on 11.07.03, Submission no. 22.

bikies, James Jarman arrived at the Marsden Home. He had begun to accept his years of degrading treatment as normal:

It wasn't too bad because thay (sic) made me work on the Dairy Farm. This involved early morning starts although we were issued with work cloths (sic) and boots we were sent out barefoot to bring the cows in. We used to fight over the fresh cow patties to warm our feet, which were cracked and bleeding. If you stepped out of line at all you were made to hang on to the electric fence. Looking back I realise how hard I had become to think this was OK.¹⁵⁹

Following the release of the Forgotten Australians report, the Uniting Church, the main continuing church of Congregationalism, issued an apology and has begun to allocate resources to a national reparation fund.

Direct involvement of Congregational church members in the inner-city missions fostered broad support for their work, raised awareness of their limitations to some extent, and the need for various forms of government intervention to address poverty. In the 1930s, debates within Congregationalism in relation to welfare reflected the polarisation between left and right found in wider society. Political liberals were suspicious of state activity and some feared state relief could reinforce dependency. After the Second World War, Principal Kiek believed that the welfare state threatened individual "initiative", penalised the hard working, and was a "precursor" to totalitarianism.¹⁶⁰ Ministers on the political left such as the Rev Wallace Pratt from Broken Hill, and the Rev G H Bayly from Barmera, argued for structural solutions to poverty and unemployment, rather than what they saw as the meagre efforts of the missions. Pratt and Bayly criticised the work of Whitefield's as a "pauperising palliative".¹⁶¹ The majority of Congregationalists saw the attempt to feed, clothe, and provide employment for young people and men as a provisional step toward the goal to bring an end to poverty. "The challenge to our denomination is to do its utmost to bring in a Christian social order," argued Hugh R Ballard in

¹⁵⁹ Submission no. 327, pp. 5-6.

¹⁶⁰ Bollen, *Protestantism and Social Reform*, p. 135; Phillips, *E S Kiek: Liberal Churchman*, p. 18.

¹⁶¹ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1935, p. 203; April 1937, p. 299.

1937, “but in the meantime, and with no diminution of our activity for the final issue, to help with our best such work as is done by Whitefield’s.”¹⁶²

Inside the Church: Ecumenism

Congregationalism gradually became a provisional identity as the church sought union with other denominations. Australian Congregationalists became increasingly interested in ecumenism based on a theological rationale presented by church leaders: the prayer of Jesus in John 17 “that they may be one”. They were also attracted to ecumenism because of the failure of their system of church order to flourish in Australian conditions. Australian Protestants became interested in the ecumenical movement earlier than their co-religionists in England. On his visit to Australia in 1887, R W Dale found closer cooperation between the denominations than in Britain, and a keen interest in such co-operation among young clergymen in particular.¹⁶³ The extent of the commitment of Congregationalists to ecumenism will be explored in Chapter 7. It is sufficient here to note briefly how the church culture developed support for ecumenism from the mid-nineteenth century.

Congregationalists had cooperated with other denominations as part of the British Evangelical tradition. They helped create union churches in which congregations shared buildings and sometimes services with other denominations. While some of the first union churches in Western Australia and Queensland did not last because of the development of denominational consciousness and population growth, others, especially in rural areas, were an efficient way to provide a Protestant church in the local area.¹⁶⁴ English visitors to Australia, such as Thomas Binney in 1858, advocated closer co-operation between the denominations towards a

¹⁶² Ibid., April 1937, pp. 14-6.

¹⁶³ Dale, *Impressions of Australia*, p. 221.

“confederation” of all churches.¹⁶⁵ By the late nineteenth century, Protestant Christians formed councils of churches in each colony, and directed their efforts toward church union, social reform, and to combat growing secularism.¹⁶⁶ From 1901, the Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches began to work toward church union.¹⁶⁷ During the First World War, Congregational ministerial candidates were trained with students from other denominations.¹⁶⁸ Christian Endeavour, which was founded by American Congregationalists in 1888, began to flourish in Australia from the 1890s, and allowed young Congregationalists to meet people from other denominations in societies and conventions. By the 1930s, the movement had reached a membership of approximately 90 000 young people who learned the spiritual disciplines of prayer and leadership.¹⁶⁹ Equally, the Australian Student Christian Movement, started in the universities in 1896, created leaders who not only appreciated the distinctive features of their denominations but also their limitations, and the need for ecumenical co-operation among churches in an increasingly secular society.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁴ David Parker, “The United Evangelical Church of Brisbane, 1849-1855”, *Church Heritage*, vol. 11, no. 3, March 2000, pp. 155-65; Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, pp. 110, 196, 199, 241; Cameron, *In Stow's Footsteps*, p. 131.

¹⁶⁵ *ADB*, vol. 3, pp. 164-5.

¹⁶⁶ Phillips, *Defending a Christian Country*, pp. 11-15.

¹⁶⁷ Frank Engel, *Australian Christians in Conflict and Unity* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1984); Engel, *Times of Change: 1918-1978* (Melbourne: JBCE, 1993); Andrew Dutney, *Manifesto for Renewal: the Shaping of a New Church* (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 1986).

¹⁶⁸ Garrett and Farr, *Camden College*, p. 29, 38; Margaret Knauerhase, *Straight on Til Morning: A Brief Biography of Edward Sidney Kiek* (Adelaide: E S Wigg and Son, 1963), p. 18.

¹⁶⁹ H. Bush and W. J. E. Kerrison (eds), *First Fifty Years: The Story of Christian Endeavour Under the Southern Cross* (Sydney: National Christian Endeavour Union of Australia and New Zealand, 1938); Robert Evans, “The Contribution of the Christian Endeavour Movement to Australian Revivals and Evangelism, 1883-1914”, *Church Heritage*, vol. 13, no. 4, September 2004, pp. 143-67.

¹⁷⁰ Renate Howe, “‘The SCM is Going to Hell’ The Australian Student Christian Movement and the Emergence of the Evangelical Union in the early 1930s”, *Proceedings of the Uniting Church Historical Society (Victoria)*, vol. 8, no. 1, July 2001, pp. 27-42 and her “Movement of Influence: The Australian Student Christian Movement in the 1930s” in Brian Howe and Phillip Hughes, *Spirit of Australia II: Religion in Citizenship and National Life* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2003), pp. 86-96.

Inside the Church: the impact of war

The backdrop to the entry of Congregational women into leadership within their own church was the First World War. Australian Protestants had lost many of their young male leaders in the war. In the public domain, the churches would be caught increasingly between the dismissive tone of politicians who saw their political lobbying as undemocratic and the suspicion of uncommitted citizens who saw their views on social issues as naïve, irrelevant and controlling.¹⁷¹ Congregationalists were among South Australian Protestants who enlisted in response to what they saw as a moral imperative to defend liberal democracy. War sermons preached between 1914 and May 1915 were popular, and, as the war drew on, dedication services were held to encourage the bereaved to enlist.¹⁷² Congregationalists hoped that the war would bring religious renewal and the denomination was affected as ministers signed up as chaplains and the supply of theological students was heavily reduced.¹⁷³ At Truro Congregational Church in South Australia, for example, by 1916, there were no young men left in their local area, as they had all “joined the army”.¹⁷⁴ Eventually, army officials became so desperate for recruits that despite protests from white soldiers, they enlisted small numbers of indigenous men from Point McLeay and Point Pearce.¹⁷⁵

Congregationalists were firmly opposed to compulsory military training for young people, but they were ambivalent in their support of conscription. The Congregational Unions in Victoria and New South Wales passed resolutions in support of conscription but the South Australian Union did not. Congregationalism

¹⁷¹ Linder, *The Long Tragedy*, pp. 162-3.

¹⁷² Barreira, “Protestant Piety and Religious Culture in South Australia”, pp. 48, 62-3.

¹⁷³ Jackson, “Aspects of Congregationalism in South-Eastern Australia”, p. 149; Hilliard, “A Seeker After Truth”, p. 8; Garrett and Farr, *Camden College*, p. 36.

¹⁷⁴ Congregational Church Men’s Society, Minutes, 17 July 1916, SRG 95/33/1, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

¹⁷⁵ Harris, *One Blood*, pp. 612-13; Doreen Kartinyeri, *Ngarrindjeri Anzacs* (Adelaide: Aboriginal Family History Project, SA Museum and Raukkan Council, 1988).

became the Christian denomination in the community that was most identified with opposition to the compulsory training of young men. Half the members of the ministerial committee of the Australian Freedom League, the most important committee in the campaign against the Defence Act, were Congregational ministers.¹⁷⁶ Congregationalists were also strong supporters of peace in general. A significant minority of members, such as Albert Rivett (1855-1934), the editor of the *Murray Independent*, and George Arnold Wood (1865-1928), Professor of History at the University of Sydney, had been involved in the peace movement since the Boer War.¹⁷⁷ As Wood argued that during the Boer War, Britain had been unjust and that the Great War, Germany had been unjust, there was no alternative but to fight as a “ferocious pacifist” in a just struggle for individual freedom.¹⁷⁸ Leading Congregationalists supported international arbitration, simultaneous reduction by states of armaments, and the nationalisation of arms manufacture. Some ministers resigned from their pulpits for their criticism of the war, but most were tolerated.¹⁷⁹ The war stimulated concern among Protestantism internationally for ecumenism as a means to influence public opinion so that political leaders would never support war again.¹⁸⁰

Australian Christian denominations would maintain their members for only another generation, although the churches would not dwindle away completely. Anzac Day,

¹⁷⁶ Jackson, “Aspects of Congregationalism in South-Eastern Australia”, pp. 149-152.

¹⁷⁷ See entries in the *ADB* on Albert Rivett, vol. 11, pp. 398-401 and George Arnold Wood, vol. 12, pp. 556-8.

¹⁷⁸ Carolyn Anne Rasmussen, “Defending the Bad Against the Worse: the Peace Movement in Australia in the 1930s – its Origins, Structure and Development” (Ph.D thesis, University of Melbourne, 1984); Linder, *The Long Tragedy*, pp. 78, 91-3; R. M. Crawford, ‘A Bit of a Rebel’: *The Life and Work of George Arnold Wood* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1975); John A. Moses, “The Christian Basis of George Arnold Wood’s Historiographical Assumptions”, *St Marks Review*, no. 146, Winter 1991, pp. 17-24; Moses, *Prussian-German Militarism 1914-1918 in Australian Perspective: the Thought of George Arnold Wood* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1991).

¹⁷⁹ Linder, *The Long Tragedy*, pp. 78, 97; For discussion of Leyton Richards, who served as a minister in both Australia and England during the war, see Binfield, *So Down to Prayers*, p. 241.

¹⁸⁰ Rev George Tait, *Church Union: Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian: What Canada is Doing Lessons of the War Unity of Spirit, Aim and Action* (Melbourne: Brown, Prior and Co, 1917).

a non-sectarian civil religious observance, became popular from 1915.¹⁸¹ Congregationalism began to promote the memory of the war as an opportunity for the nation to repent, to offer thanksgiving for salvation from the threat of tyranny, and to work for peace as a living memorial to those who had died.¹⁸² The war provided a new context for the common religious rhetoric that God had created a covenant with the Australian people and that if they were to be fit instruments for God's purpose, they should show their obedience to God's law through their national life and institutions. By 1942, after the fall of Singapore, the Rev C Bernard Cockett, minister of Pitt Street Congregational Church, Sydney, appealed to a consciousness that had become highly developed: "Let every Australian become a spiritual Anzac, protected by prayer and fighting as a good soldier in a crusade for righteousness."¹⁸³

Conclusion

Congregationalism was transplanted to Australia at a time when it had almost become redundant as a form of church order separate from other churches because of the achievement of voluntarism in the Australian Constitution. During the nineteenth century, Congregationalism became established as a minor denomination in the Australian religious scene and, by the twentieth century, began to decline. Congregationalism had played its part in securing the voluntary principle in all Australian colonies and its leaders became established commentators on social policy. As the differences between the denominations ceased to matter and their experience of violence and conflict deepened as a result of war, they saw

¹⁸¹ Janice Pavils, "The Emergence of South Australian Anzac Culture, 1915-1925", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 89, Part 2, December 2003, pp. 123-44.

¹⁸² John A. Moses, "Anzac Day as Religious Revivalism: the Politics of Faith in Brisbane, 1916-1939" in Mark Hutchinson and Edmund Campion (eds), *Reviving Australia: Essays on the History and Experience of Revival and Revivalism in Australian Christianity* (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994), pp. 170-84; Moses, "Canon David John Garland and the ANZAC Tradition", *St Marks Review*, no. 154, Winter 1993, pp. 12-21.

ecumenism as a way to respond to the secular world-view of Australian life and as part of their contribution to an international moral consciousness.

Congregationalism had sought to impart liberal principles of honesty, integrity, and independence of thought through a community life that could alleviate the potential harshness and loneliness of conditions in Australia. It could also be prone to isolationism, philistinism, violence, and self-righteousness. The apparent lack of concern of Congregationalists about unjust conditions in relation to labour, the children resident in their orphanages, and indigenous people, remains an indictment against them.¹⁸⁴ Yet for those who were caught in the web of its contradictions, the best aspects of Congregationalism could provide a means for reform. When it was still acceptable for indigenous people to appeal to a latent Christian consciousness in the Australian community, the descendants of the missions could use religious rhetoric to support their challenge to social norms. For white middle class Congregationalists such as Stewart Firth, such a highly developed justification was not necessary. Firth recalled how church membership could be as significant as the bond of a family even if its members gradually ceased to attend its services. Growing up in Congregationalism had given him values and critical tools for life that stood firmly opposed to the materialism of Australian culture. Firth summarised the legacy of the Strathfield-Homebush Congregational Church and the ways it had shaped his thinking. Even though the church had been:

inadequate as a transmitter of the truth...without Strathfield-Homebush we would not have known what standards to judge it by. It was a place where a number of unloved people found acceptance simply because they came to church, and where the proud among us were at least reminded that pride was a sin...Strathfield-Homebush did not stop us from doubting and questioning; and the result was to make us dissatisfied with the answers we were given. But that was a part of the Congregationalist tradition (of which) we could be proud...the idea that no institution, no formula could contain the whole truth, that more light is still to come...If some of us were dissatisfied with Strathfield-Homebush, we were also dissatisfied with the shallow answers offered by secular society: the promise of a life

¹⁸³ Richard Ely, "Forgotten Nationalism: Australian Civic Protestantism in the Second World War", *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 20, May 1987, pp. 59-67.

¹⁸⁴ Phillips, "The Churches and the Sunday Question in Sydney in the 1800s", pp. 41-61; Phillips, *Defending a Christian Country*, pp. 173-206.

dedicated to self and to self-adoration. Because of Strathfield-Homebush we shall never lose that dissatisfaction. What we live for, what we value most owe much to that early church experience.¹⁸⁵

Part II of this thesis will consider the effect of the pursuit by Congregational women of prophetic and priestly roles for their own lives, for the ecumenical movement, and for wider society, from the end of the First World War to the creation of the Uniting Church in 1977.

¹⁸⁵ Firth, "Strathfield-Homebush Church, 1950-1965: A Recollection", p. 357.

PART II
THE ROLES AND RESPONSES OF AUSTRALIAN CONGREGATIONAL
WOMEN, 1919–1977

CHAPTER 3

Australian Congregationalism, Maternal Feminism and Christian Citizenship

The access of Congregational women to roles within their own church should be seen in the context of the history of the women's movement, particularly the role of ideas in the missionary movement, access to new roles as a result of rise of the welfare state, and the relations between white women and indigenous people. A large body of literature by scholars of gender has demonstrated that Evangelicalism provided part of the impetus for the emergence of the modern women's movement.¹ Part of this movement was concerned with reform of religious institutions, with women seeking access to the priesthood to counter stereotypical views of womanhood.² Scholars of gender have begun to show that women's involvement in various reform movements was shaped by the way they gained access to such movements. Research on Britain and the United States has suggested that as women secured access to education, to missionary roles, and to suffrage, they also reinforced cultural assumptions about gender roles, and national and racial superiority. The argument that women should be educated in order to become better mothers could serve to reinforce the role of women as mothers even as these responsibilities were undermined by their emancipation from the home.³

¹ For the British context see, Olive Banks, *Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981); Barbara Caine, *English Feminism: 1780-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); For the American and international contexts, see Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1991); Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: the Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Patricia Ward D'Itri, *Cross Currents in the International Women's Movement* (Bowling Green OH.: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999).

² Nancy A Hardesty, *Evangelical Feminism in the Nineteenth Century: Women Called to Witness* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984); Cynthia Grant Tucker, *Prophetic Sisterhood: Liberal Women Ministers of the Frontier, 1880-1930* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990); Beverly Zink-Sawyer, *From Preachers to Suffragists: Woman's Rights and Religious Conviction in the Lives of Three Nineteenth Century American Clergywomen* (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003); Jenny Daggers, *The British Christian Women's Movement: a Rehabilitation of Eve* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2002).

³ Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 108-25.

Recent studies of white Christian women missionaries have revealed the contradictory behaviour of women who sought to leave the home – including hastily arranged marriages – in order to extend to other women the ideal of Christian domesticity.⁴ Female missionaries failed to instil Western domestic values in indigenous populations, contributing, instead, to imparting the value of professionalism to indigenous women through the recruitment of local “bible women”, whose role was to evangelise other indigenous women and to teach them domestic skills.⁵ Indigenous women found that they could not achieve full equality with white women missionaries, and Susan Thorne has argued that the “whole edifice of missionary feminism” including employment, recognition, and activism “rested on the existence of a degraded female other in the colonies and at home”.⁶ At a time when white women had an opportunity to set the boundaries upon which they would negotiate gender norms, they reinforced the notion that indigenous women were in need of assistance. When indigenous women applied for missionary service, they continued to be rejected as no substitute for European women.

Over time, white women’s vision of the inability of indigenous women to speak for and to govern themselves would change gradually. Thorne’s work on missionary women

⁴ Patricia Hill, *The World Their Household: the American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985); Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984); Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty, American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1989); Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener (eds), *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Providence, Oxford: Berg, 1993); Leslie A. Flemming (ed), *Women's Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia* (Boulder, San Francisco and London: Westview Press, 1989); Rhonda Anne Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 230-1; Margaret Jolly, “‘To Save the Girls for Brighter and Better lives’: Presbyterian Missions and Women in the South of Vanuatu, 1848-1870”, *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 26, no. 1, June 1991, pp. 27-48.

⁵ Jane Haggis, “‘Good Wives and Mothers’ or ‘Dedicated Workers’? Contradictions of Domesticity in the ‘Mission of Sisterhood’ Travancore, South India” in Kalpana Ram and Margaret Jolly (eds), *Maternities or Modernities: Colonial and Post-colonial Experiences in Asia and the Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 81-113.

⁶ Susan Thorne, “Missionary Imperial Feminism” in Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (eds), *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999), p. 60.

has been informed by the scholarship of Antoinette Burton, who has shown how British women conceived a feminist imperialist vision on the basis of the need to speak on behalf of Oriental women, who were assumed to be unable to speak for themselves. This vision lasted well into the inter-war period, informing the rhetoric and structures of the international women's movement.⁷ But war, increased travel, and representation in the fora of the ecumenical movement meant that white Christian women could come to acknowledge their complicity in wider cultural norms and to recognise indigenous leadership. Sarah Chakko, an Indian, would become President of the Report of the World Council of Churches on the "Status and Role of Women in the Church" established in 1948, and, eventually, the first woman elected President of the World Council of Churches.⁸ The position of white and indigenous women in the ecumenical movement as a whole was largely related to the representation of women at Assemblies, which increased from 6 percent in 1948 to 30 percent in 1983.⁹ In the various Protestant churches within nation-states that made up the ecumenical movement, the relations between indigenous and non-indigenous women varied and should not be seen as completely negative. Deborah Gaitskell, in seeking to explain the relatively smooth transition to democracy in South Africa in 1994, argued that the liberal theology of white women missionaries, their personal interaction with indigenous women, and their joint efforts in education, mission, and social welfare, contributed to the idea of one, multi-racial society. During the inter-war period, white women created support groups for indigenous women, which led to anti-apartheid activism.¹⁰

⁷ Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

⁸ Anna Karin Hammar, "After Forty Years – Churches in Solidarity with Women?" *Ecumenical Review*, vol. 40, no. 3-4, July-October 1988, p. 530.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 531.

¹⁰ Deborah Gaitskell, "Female Faith and the Politics of the Personal: Five Mission Encounters in Twentieth-Century South Africa", *Feminist Review*, no. 65, Summer 2000, pp. 68-91.

Feminist historians have also sought to recover women's role in the creation of the welfare state.¹¹ Scholars have argued that women gained access to civil rights, welfare work, and political lobbying on the basis of "maternalism", their responsibilities for their own children and the children of wider society, by applying the principles of the Christian home to public life.¹² Women's appeal to maternalism could reinforce their inequality, such that the origins of "women's (current) inequality...can be found in maternalist social policy".¹³ Patrick Wilkinson, who has reviewed the literature for the United States recently, has argued that women were not so much agents of the creation of the welfare state, but were limited by contemporary discourses about gender that were themselves products of social structures. Traditional gender norms shaped political action and elicited from women a maternalist social reform agenda. In a political context that supported the notion that individuals were responsible for their own fates, maternalists constructed their identity and emancipation on the basis of an image of other women as victims, thereby incorporating, rather than challenging, the apportioning of blame to the poor found in liberal political discourses. Maternalists cast themselves and the objects of their reform efforts respectively, as the "selfless helping the helpless".¹⁴

¹¹ Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: the Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard/Belknap, 1992); Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: the Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Gisela Bock and Pat Thane, *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s-1950s* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

¹² Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (eds), *Mothers of A New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York & London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1, 3.

¹³ Gwendoline Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917-1942* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 73.

¹⁴ Patrick Wilkinson, "The Selfless and the Helpless: Maternalist Origins of the US Welfare State", *Feminist Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3, Fall 1999, pp. 571-97; See also, Lisa D. Brush, "Love, Toil and Trouble: Motherhood and Feminist Politics", *Signs*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1996, pp. 429-54; Kalpana Ram and Margaret

Recent work on Australian maternalism has begun to explore similar themes, but unlike the literature for the United States, the religious basis of maternalist rhetoric and policies has not been explored in general histories of feminism as discussed in Chapter 1. Marilyn Lake located the question of Australian maternalism within the framework of religion initially, but has not sustained an analysis of how religion might inform such maternalism. She has also failed to provide a thorough critique of the attitudes of white women maternalists to race.¹⁵ Fiona Paisley has argued that Australian white women's maternalism was predicated upon a paternalistic approach to indigenous women. She explored the role of religion in the development of these ideas only in part, focusing on the foundations of Bessie Rischbieth's spirituality in particular, but her work has not explored how theosophy informed Rischbieth's feminism. Neither has she explored the difference of theosophy from other forms of Protestantism that formed the commitment of the majority of Australian feminists in the interwar period.¹⁶

Christian women sought to justify feminist activism by appeal to religious authority.¹⁷

While Kerreen Reiger has argued that modernisation brought the disenchantment of the

¹⁵ Marilyn Lake, "Mission Impossible: How Men Gave Birth to the Australian Nation – Nationalism, Gender and Other Seminal Acts", *Gender and History*, vol. 4, no. 3, Autumn 1992, pp. 305-22; Lake, "A Revolution in the Family: The Challenge and Contradictions of Maternal Citizenship in Australia" in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (eds), *Mothers of A New World*, pp. 378-95; Lake, *Getting Equal: A History of Australian Feminism* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1999).

¹⁶ Fiona Paisley, "White Women in the Field: Feminism, Cultural Relativism and Aboriginal Rights", *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 52, 1997, pp. 113-25; Paisley, *Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights, 1919-1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000); Jill Roe, *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia, 1879-1939* (Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press, 1986).

¹⁷ Judith Smart, "A Mission to the Home: The Housewives Association, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Protestant Christianity, 1920-1949", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 28, 1998, p. 217; Judith Smart, "Christian Women and Changing Concepts of Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities in Interwar Australia" in Joy Damousi and Katherine Ellinghaus (eds), *Citizenship, Women and Social Justice: International Perspectives* (Department of History University of Melbourne, 1999), pp. 190-203; Judith Smart, "Modernity and Mother-heartedness: Spirituality and Religious Meaning in Australian Women's Suffrage and Citizenship Movements, 1890s-1920s" in Chris Fletcher et al (eds), *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 51-67.

domestic sphere,¹⁸ Judith Smart has shown that a much broader tradition of female religious reformers assumed that in order for society to be transformed, the principles of the well-run Christian home should be extended to the public sphere. For significant numbers of Australian women, religion provided both the impetus toward reform efforts and helped to sustain them, and may be considered partly responsible for their strengths and weaknesses. The notion of “mother-heartedness” or the “mother spirit” provided a unifying spiritual basis, virtually a “civil religion”, for the women’s movement after the First World War, which had created divisions as a result of the conscription debate and new realignments in response to the growth of party political women’s organisations. The new feminist organisations, the National Council of Women, the Australian Federation of Women Voters, and the Housewives Associations remained explicitly non-party political. These societies were dependent on the base of women created by the home and foreign mission auxiliaries formed in the late nineteenth century and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. Like Paisley, Smart has noted the commitment of leading feminists to theosophy, but more work needs to be done on the membership of Australian feminist organisations to determine whether theosophy was the dominant commitment of its leaders. These new movements combined the liberal demand for equality with belief in a maternalist contribution to national and, after the war, international politics. As a result of the increased cost of living during the war, women often responded to social issues through material assistance as well as community education and political lobbying, even though their basis in spirituality required a vague and general rhetoric.¹⁹

¹⁸ Kerreen Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernising the Australian Family, 1880-1940* (Melbourne, Oxford, Auckland, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹⁹ Smart, “Modernity and Mother-heartedness”.

The views of white women missionaries towards indigenous people both in Australia and overseas would inform those of the emerging feminist movement in the late nineteenth century. Australian women sought to develop an identity located between what they saw as the autocratic oppression and cold reserve of British culture on the one hand, and the primitive state of indigenous people on the other.²⁰ Margaret Allen has shown for white women Baptist missionaries that their Church directed them to Asia, particularly to India, rather than work with indigenous people, who were considered one of the most difficult mission fields internationally. In Asia, they could identify with Britain, while adopting a more sympathetic view of Oriental gender relations.²¹ Renate Howe has shown that other Australian Christian organisations also concentrated on training indigenous leaders in missions in Asia rather than at home. These women missionaries, who located themselves between American cultural imperialism and British colonialism, responded to cross-cultural experiences progressively during the age of the white Australia policy, often supporting visits by Asian leaders to Australia and raising awareness of racism and the Asia-Pacific region.²² Although progressive views such as these were aired, women missionaries to indigenous people in Australia could continue to denigrate indigenous women's practices of early marriage and infanticide into the 1970s.²³ While early Congregational missionaries such as Lancelot Threlkeld did not employ his wife Sarah in reform of indigenous gender relations, by the end of the century, it was generally accepted that mission wives would seek to

²⁰ Angela Woollacott, "All This is Empire, I Told Myself": Australian Women's Voyages "Home" and the Articulation of Colonial Whiteness", *American Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 4, pp. 1003-29; Marilyn Lake, "Between Old World "Barbarism" and Stone Age "Primitivism": The Double Difference of the White Australian Feminist" in Norma Grieve and Ailsa Burns (eds), *Australian Women Contemporary Feminist Thought* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 80-91.

²¹ Margaret Allen, "White Already to Harvest": South Australian Women Missionaries in India", *Feminist Review*, no. 65, Summer 2000, pp. 92-107.

²² Renate Howe, "The Australian Student Christian Movement and Women's Activism in the Asia-Pacific Region, 1890s-1920s", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 16, no. 36, 2001, pp. 311-23.

eliminate prostitution, and to teach women to maintain a household.²⁴ They never realised their vision of domestic reform, however, as the experience of indigenous women was shaped more profoundly by cultural dislocation, disease, sexual abuse by white men, and lack of response from mission authorities to their attempts to negotiate aspects of their lives, such as housing.²⁵

Indigenous and migrant women were not initially part of white women's vision for citizenship and their limited contact with indigenous women could reinforce existing stereotypes. White women did not question the general assumption that indigenous people were not yet prepared for the responsibilities of citizenship. After the vote was won, Australian white women turned to educating women in citizenship and enacting progressive legislation that would protect women and girls. Leading proponents of women's suffrage argued that they could not trust men to enact their reforms and that women would be especially concerned about the needs of women and children. By the late 1930s, however, under the impetus of their involvement in the League of Nations and international feminism, women such as Mary Bennett and Constance Cooke became concerned with the material conditions of indigenous people. Their advocacy began to inform the views of Australian women who felt contrite for their complicity in the marginalisation of indigenous women.²⁶ Non-indigenous women, who legitimated

²³ Tony Scanlon, "'Pure and Clean and True to Christ': Black Women and White Missionaries in the North", *Hecate*, vol. 12, nos. 1-2, 1986, pp. 83-105;

²⁴ Hilary Carey, "Companions in the Wilderness? Missionary Wives in Colonial Australia, 1788-1900" *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 19, no. 2, December 1995, pp. 227-248; Hilary Carey, "'Women's Peculiar Mission to the Heathen' – Protestant Missionary Wives in Australia, 1788-1900" in Mark Hutchinson and Edmund Campion (eds), *Long Patient Struggle: Studies in the Role of Women in Australian Christianity* (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994), pp. 25-44.

²⁵ Annette Hamilton, "Bond Slaves of Satan: Aboriginal Women and the Missionary Dilemma" in Margaret Jolly and Martha MacIntyre (eds), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and Colonial Impact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 236-59; Patricia Grimshaw and Elizabeth Nelson, "Empire, 'the Civilising Mission' and Indigenous Christian Women in Colonial Victoria", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 16, no. 36, 2001, pp. 295-309.

²⁶ Patricia Grimshaw, "A White Woman's Suffrage" in Helen Irving (ed), *A Woman's Constitution? Gender and History in the Australian Commonwealth* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1996), pp. 77-97;

their right to speak equally with men, had effectively “silenced” indigenous women as they believed they were the “selfless” helping the “helpless”. Their advocacy had led to new forms of intervention in indigenous women’s lives that contributed to their further marginalisation during the twentieth century.²⁷ After the Second World War, indigenous and non-indigenous women contributed to developing support for the referendum of 1967, which addressed the legal but not the economic disadvantage of indigenous people.²⁸

Prophetic and Priestly roles

Within this broad context, Australian Congregational women gained access to prophetic and priestly roles within their own church, Congregationalism. A. Maude Royden, a suffragist, peace activist, and candidate for the ministry in the Church of England defined these roles clearly. Royden was a significant influence on Congregational women due to her appointment in 1917 as Assistant Minister to Dr Fort Newton at the City Temple, the cathedral church of Congregationalism in England.²⁹ There, the debate about the ordination of women was accelerated by the events of the First World War and it coincided with a debate to include women in church councils of the Church of

Grimshaw, “Gender, Citizenship and Race in the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union of Australia, 1890 to the 1930s”, *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 28, 1998, pp. 199-215; Grimshaw, “Reading the Silences: Suffrage Activists and Race in Nineteenth Century Settler Societies” in Grimshaw, Holmes and Lake (eds), *Women’s Rights and Human Rights: International Historical Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 31-48.

²⁷ Fiona Paisley, “Feminist Challenges to White Australia, 1900-1930s” in Diane Kirkby (ed), *Sex, Power and Justice* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 252-69.

²⁸ Marilyn Lake, “Citizenship as Non-Discrimination: Acceptance or Assimilationism? Political Logic and Emotional Investment in Campaigns for Aboriginal Rights in Australia, 1940 to 1970”, *Gender and History*, vol. 13, no. 3, November 2001, pp. 566-92.

²⁹ Sheila Fletcher, *Maude Royden: A Life* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 156-184.

England.³⁰ In Congregationalism in England, women had gained access to the lay pastorate due to pulpit vacancies during the war, and, from 1917, to ordination.³¹

Maude Royden encouraged women to adopt the roles of “prophet” and “priest”. In one of her pamphlets, she argued that theology and ministry had been developed “almost entirely in the hands of men”. Women were generally excluded from preaching by the notion made popular by Ruskin that theology was not the concern of women. Royden argued that women should contribute to theology on the basis of their different experience from men. She believed that if women pursued the roles of “prophets” and “priests”, the community would benefit from “a new apprehension of God, a new wealth of spiritual knowledge, when women as well as men have their part in the spiritual education of the world.”³²

The prophetic role, which will be defined in detail below, related to a special message women offered the church based on their experience, which was different from that of men. In the culture of the church, the prophetic role was largely expressed through access to the Christian ministry. As Australian women did not have access to that ministry until 1927, they developed a prophetic role through a new female culture, which sought to reflect their particular perspective within their church and also to provide a spiritual perspective within the women’s movement. The prophetic role was not informed by consideration of the needs of indigenous women as equals as they were structurally excluded from membership of this female culture, which accepted

³⁰ Brian Heeney, “The Beginnings of Church Feminism: Women and the Councils of the Church of England, 1897-1919”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 33, no. 1, January 1982, pp. 89-109; Heeney, *The Women’s Movement in the Church of England: 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

³¹ Elaine Kaye et al, *Daughters of Dissent* (London: United Reformed Church, 2004), pp. 203-204.

³² *The Ministry in the Church of Tomorrow*, 379/25, Maude Royden Papers, Fawcett Library, City of London Polytechnic; *SA Congregationalist*, December 1926, p. 307.

representatives of churches, not missions. In order to express the prophetic role further, Congregational women also sought access to the priestly role, which referred, in a narrow sense, to a mediating role between God and believers with particular focus on the administration of the sacraments. The priestly role was also understood to refer more broadly to the life of sacrificial service of a Christian believer, or, the priesthood of all believers.

Prophetic role

Congregational women based their understanding of the prophetic role on the notion of the prophet in the Hebrew Scriptures. Prophets believed they were divinely inspired deliverers of God's message that referred, not only to the future, but also to God's will for the present. A prophet received a divine message through audition, a vision, or a dream that they then delivered to others. Understandings of prophecy changed over time. In early Christianity, prophecy began to decline and to be replaced with scholarship, as Paul believed that prophets should test their ideas with other prophets, and that their content should reflect a growing body of Christian thought. The decline of prophecy in the early church was also due to the institutionalisation of authority in an official ministry and the growing tendency toward rational forms of speech. Gradually scholarly leaders replaced prophets, whose authority rested on their exposition of a tradition of thought that had been expressed in the canon of works that eventually became the bible.³³

³³ J. D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), pp. 823-28; F. L. Cross, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* 3rd ed. revised by E. A. Livingstone (Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 1336-7; Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (eds), *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 620-23.

During the Reformation and the English Civil Wars, Protestants sought to recover the prophetic role. In Chapter 1 we have seen how the Civil War and Interregnum provided the conditions for a wide variety of prophetic activity. This activity assumed a pre-scientific worldview in which it was considered possible to predict the future. By the twentieth century, the effects of intellectual and social controversies meant that audiences expected prophetic utterances to accommodate modern biblical criticism and social concern. These developments effectively limited prediction of the future to the assertion that individuals and nations should accept the consequences of their actions. The prophetic role became increasingly concerned with the responsibility of the modern nation state to care for all its citizens, especially the poor.

For women, this prophetic role had often meant challenging male authority and cultural gender norms by appeal to religious responsibilities. By the late nineteenth century, such a role was directed toward seeking social reform through influencing the rhetoric of church leaders in the hope that they would incorporate the concerns of women arising from their experience and thereby influence the development of social policy more broadly. Cecilia John (1877-1955), an Australian Congregationalist of Welsh parents who was a founder of the Women's Peace Army and the Children's Peace Army during the First World War, a member of Collins Street Church and the Women's Political Association, made this view explicit. During the First World War, John edited the *Woman Voter*, which argued that the Christian churches were not supporting sufficiently the concerns of women for reforms such as an equal moral standard and the age of consent. By omission, therefore, they supported violence against women and children. An article urged church women to: "use their influence to bring more

prominently before the church authorities the terrible suffering which our unequal standard of morality...is creating in the community.”³⁴

Congregational women had a number of avenues by which they could influence the prophetic role of their church. Denominational structures allowed women to become members of the Congregational Union meetings, and their committees such as the Public Questions Committee and the Executive. In 1917 Congregational women established the Congregational Church Women’s Societies (CCWS) to provide a single prophetic role for women within the Congregational churches. Following the achievements of the women’s suffrage movement before the First World War, the CCWS sought to educate women in Christian citizenship. The organisation sought to combine an earlier focus of women’s groups on missionary activity and community service with education and advocacy for legislative change. Judith Smart has shown that Congregationalists and Baptists were the only two denominations to form women’s societies that were explicitly interested in politics and citizenship. By contrast, women’s organisations in other denominations remained focused on missions. The female citizenship societies of the Congregational and Baptist Churches were also developed to represent the women of these two denominations in the new feminist organisations such as the National Council of Women and the Australian Federation of Women Voters, that formed after the First World War. With the creation of the mass movements of the Housewives Association and the Country Women’s Association during the interwar period, these new feminist societies sought to provide a basis for united female action in order to channel the power of the women’s vote.³⁵

³⁴ *Woman Voter*, 21 July 1914, p. 2; *ADB*, vol. 9, pp. 490-1 and Darryn Cruse and Charles Sowerine, “Feminism and Pacifism: ‘Woman’s Sphere’ in Peace and War” in Norma Grieve and Ailsa Burns (eds), *Australian Women: New Feminist Perspectives* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 42-58.

³⁵ Judith Smart, “A Mission to the Home”, pp. 215-234; Smart, “Christian Women and Changing Concepts of Citizenship Rights”, pp. 190-203.

The founder of the Congregational Church Women's Society was Mrs C R (Emma) Morris, a member of Vardon Memorial Congregational Church, who had moved easily from leadership in her congregation to responsibility in the wider denomination and also in state politics. Morris was intelligent, assertive, and regarded by some South Australians as a "successor" to Catherine Helen Spence, the suffragist and Unitarian preacher.³⁶ Born in 1864, she founded churches and women's auxiliaries, and also served as a lay preacher, deacon, and member of the executive of her denomination. She was President of the CCWS from 1917 until 1933, and represented the society in the re-formation of the National Council of Women in 1920. She was appointed President of the Women's Branches of the Liberal Federation in 1924 and also served on a number of community auxiliaries as President of the Traveller's Aid Society and the Unley Women's Service Association. She helped to form King's College, a school for boys run jointly by Congregationalists and Baptists, in 1924.

By the 1930s Congregational women had formed a CCWS in each state.³⁷ Membership was open to men and women and sought to appeal to young women especially. In reality, however, it became composed of women who were generally white, middle class, and middle-aged. They held a meeting of women at state and national meetings of the Congregational Unions that ran parallel to the main meeting. Indigenous women who had been educated on the missions at Point Pearce and Point McLeay were excluded from the CCWS, but they developed their own advocacy role in relation to policies of child removal that relied on the concepts and phrases of evangelical Christianity. Their work will be addressed insofar as it was informed by

³⁶ *Congregationalist*, July 1927, p. 8; *SA Congregationalist*, July 1934, pp. 86-8; January 1931, pp. 335-6; September 1933, p. 143.

³⁷ *Proceedings of the Eleventh Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand*, Brisbane, 1929.

Congregationalism, and formed an act of resistance to the advocacy work of white Congregational women. A full assessment of the lives of indigenous Congregational women is outside the scope of this thesis.

Congregational women developed a distinctive identity for the CCWS through rituals, symbols, and networks. The organisation's motto: "I serve" reflected the traditional role of the Christian woman and was so widely used in Christianity that it became the motto of the Australian Federation of Women Voters, which was founded in 1921. In the CCWS, the lighting of candles at state functions to represent the membership of each guild helped to foster a sense of dual loyalty to the local guild and the state association.³⁸ In states where Congregationalism was numerically strong such as Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales, Congregational Church Women's Societies affiliated with organisations such as the National Council of Women, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Good Films League, and the Travellers' Aid Society. They also encouraged support of the Red Cross, various hospital committees, denominational missions, and women's ecumenical activities such as the Women's World Day of Prayer started in 1887, Women's Inter-Church Councils started in the interwar period, and interdenominational community services. The personal affiliations of the leaders of the Congregational Church Women's Societies also influenced the character of the society in each state, such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Australian Federation of Women Voters, and organisations within the peace movement. In Western Australia and Queensland, however, Congregational women did not affiliate with women's political organisations. In Western Australia Congregational women focused on the local church, and in

³⁸ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1929, p. 283.

Queensland they were mainly involved in the National Council of Women and their denominational orphanage, the Marsden Home for Boys.³⁹ Congregational women supported their identity with poems based on biblical characters printed in the Congregational press such as the following:

Martha's Hymn

Lord of all pots and pans and things
Since I've no time to be
A saint by doing lovely things, or
Watching late with Thee,
Or dreaming in the dawnlight, or storming heaven's gates,
Make me a saint by getting meals and washing up the plates.
Although I must have Martha's
Hands, I have a Mary's mind;
And when I black the boots and
Shoes, Thy sandals, Lord, I find.
I think of how they trod the earth,
What time I scrub the floor;
Accept this meditation, Lord, I
Haven't time for more.
Warm all the kitchen with Thy love,
And light it with thy peace;
Forgive me all my worrying, and
Make all grumbling cease,
Thou who didst love to give men
Food, in room or by the sea,
Accept this service that I do – I do it
unto Thee.⁴⁰

In international relationships, Australian Congregational women looked to their female co-religionists in Britain, especially from the late 1930s. Through correspondence with the secretaries of the Women's Guild of the Congregational Union of England and Wales that was founded in 1922 and was renamed the Federation of Congregational Women in 1939, Australian Congregational women maintained contact with a network of women throughout the British Empire. During the Second World War, Doris Feeney, who had been secretary since 1932, became known as the "Florence Nightingale of the air raid shelters", for she had made the shelters "a home during the darkest hours" of the war. Reflecting the tone of the international women's movement, Feeney encouraged

³⁹ May Renwick, Standing Committee of Women Report Presented to the Biennial Assembly, 1937, pp. 4, 7, Congregational Union of Victoria Archives, MS 9239/126, La Trobe Library, Melbourne.

⁴⁰ *Queensland Congregationalist*, 20 November 1931, p. 11.

Congregational women to express the liberal ideals of education, prayer, and international friendships in their relations with women of enemy nations.⁴¹

A further source of the identity of Congregational women was their construction of their own history, which was represented in a *Pageant of Congregational Women*, a lavish cavalcade of figures from the Reformation to modern Australian Congregationalism. Originally written by the Congregational Women's League of London for the Festival of Britain, the play was adapted for Australian Congregational audiences in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide to celebrate the jubilee of the Women's Home Mission Auxiliaries in 1952. The play provided an account of the introduction of a new member of the church to the history of women in Congregationalism, and was designed to inspire her to acts of service and self-sacrifice. The pageant included hymns that focused on the history of the church such as "For all the saints who from their labours rest" and "For the might of thine arm we bless thee". The female characters included Independents who had been imprisoned such as Margaret Race, Mother Maner, and Alice Roe, and women who had been persecuted, such as Ann Hutchinson in New England. It also included women who had been "faithful wives, mothers and friends" such as Elizabeth Milton, Sarah Watts, and Lady Abney, and women who had built religious institutions such as Lady Huntingdon in England, and Mary Lyon in America. Other women among the cast of characters present from the nineteenth century included those who had been missionaries, educationalists, hymn writers, and authors such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, and poets such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Finally, the play included Australian Congregational women such as the wives of the men who had

⁴¹ R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962), p. 408; Kaye, *Daughters of Dissent*, p. 40; Doris Feeney, *Lest We Forget* (Congregational Women's Association of Australia and New Zealand, 1945); See also *SA Congregationalist*, February 1946, p. 167.

founded Congregationalism in Australia, women who had served in the assemblies and committees of the denomination, and women who had worked as missionaries and doctors.⁴²

Congregational women also sought to inform their work with a number of influences from within the broad context of the British, American, and eventually, the international women's movement. They drew particularly on the example of Christian women such as Florence Nightingale, Josephine Butler, Christina Rossetti, Frances Willard, Jane Addams, and Maude Royden who used religion to justify their challenge to male authority.⁴³ As members, these women had critiqued the church from within, and they believed that Christianity could play a role in the transformation of gender roles if the theology and structure of the church could be reformed. They were part of a broader group of women in Britain and America who used knowledge of ancient languages and the tools of modern biblical criticism to challenge the Pauline notion that women should not speak in church. In addition, they argued that women's authority to speak was also derived from traditional gender roles.⁴⁴ Paradoxically, they challenged the church to consider the leadership of women within it, while they also sought to maintain traditional gender roles.

⁴² "A Pageant of Congregational Women Through the Ages" pamphlet, 1952. Uniting Church Synod of Victoria Archives, 2055C/1/1, Elsternwick, Victoria; see *SA Congregationalist*, February 1952, p. 67.

⁴³ For the interest of Congregational women in Frances Willard see, for example, *Western Congregationalist*, 5 October 1922, p. 7. For Christina Rossetti, see *Western Congregationalist*, December 1919, p. 22. The influence of the other women on Congregational women will be discussed below, with the exception of Jane Addams, who will be discussed in Chapter 4.

⁴⁴ For Florence Nightingale see, Sue Zemka, *Victorian Testaments: The Bible, Christology and Literary Authority in Early-Nineteenth Century British Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 148-87; Frances Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit* (Chicago: Woman's Temperance Publication Association, 1888); Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard: A Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press); Susan M. Marilley, "Frances Willard and the Feminism of Fear", *Feminist Studies*, Spring 1993, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 123-46; Nancy A. Hardesty, *Evangelical Feminism in the Nineteenth Century: Women Called to Witness* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), pp. 21-25, 166-7; Linda K. Schott, *Reconstructing Women's Thoughts: The Women's International League of Peace and Freedom Before World War II* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1997); Louise Knight, "An Authoritative Voice: Jane Addams and the Oratorical Tradition", *Gender and History*, vol. 10, no. 2, August 1998, pp. 217-51.

Florence Nightingale was a significant example of a woman who had appealed to religion to justify challenging gender hierarchies. Australian Congregational women such as Mrs Absalom Deans, President of the Congregational Women's Association of New South Wales, encouraged her members to acts of service by arguing that the first Congregational pioneer women followed the example of Florence Nightingale. They "did not wait until learned men discovered Woman's place in the Church. The love of Christ constrained them to service where they saw the need." She argued that the women thus put into practice "those wise words of Florence Nightingale – Keep clear of all jargon about man's work and woman's work and go your way straight to God's work in simplicity and singleness of heart, each to do what each one can do best."⁴⁵ Equally, in Victoria during the Second World War, Mrs Hurst quoted Florence Nightingale's challenge to authority claiming that she had "bearded all sorts of lions in their dens, in the shape of army leaders and cabinet ministers".⁴⁶ Historian Sandra Holton has explored how Nightingale resolved the conflict between the implications of her worldview and the limitations of her social role as a woman by using the metaphors of motherhood and home to advocate for an autonomous sphere of action for women. While this advocacy helped to generate broader understanding of the significance of women's private roles and the need for public support for nurturing, scientific forms of knowledge challenged such authority and women's justification for public roles remained limited to an appeal to private responsibilities.⁴⁷

Josephine Butler was another model of maternal authority for Congregational women, who celebrated the centenary of her birth in 1928, and often reflected the rhetorical

⁴⁵ *Congregationalist*, 11 March 1922.

⁴⁶ *Victorian Independent*, 2 October 1942, pp. 18-19.

⁴⁷ Sandra Stanley Holton, "Feminine Authority and Social Order: Florence Nightingale's Conception of Nursing and Healthcare", *Social Analysis: Journal of Cultural and Social Practice*, no. 15, August 1984, pp. 59-72.

structures of her reading of scripture as it related to women.⁴⁸ Recent work on Butler has investigated the complex relationship between her religion, liberalism, feminism, and support for racial hierarchies. Through the campaign for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts that regulated prostitution in England by the medical examination of the bodies of women rather than those of men. Butler challenged the prevailing silence about sexuality and the double standard of morality, by criticising assumptions about the construction of masculinity. She believed that women's bodies were controlled by a large network of men who, under the then current legislation, were able to move easily between the roles of client, police officer, magistrate, or doctor. After a religious crisis at age 17 she sought to respond to what she identified as the call of God to a life of service and used religion to justify public work. She argued for equality between men and women in general, while maintaining that women should not have equal access to all forms of education with men. This partial vision of equality would allow women to extend the influence of feminine virtues that they had developed through domestic responsibilities. She argued that the state could benefit from "generous womanliness" and "wise motherliness" in the service of neglected children in orphanages and on the streets. Butler focused on political campaigns in contrast to rescue work, which tended to sheet the blame for prostitution at the individuals concerned, for whom she felt great pity, rather than the moral indignation that others felt. She believed that women would benefit from protection from male sexual licence and stricter moral standards. Aware of the limits of political reform, she hoped that ultimately religion would bring about the moral transformation required to address the cause of prostitution in male desire. She justified her intervention in political debates by the idea of a weak, helpless other, who was in need of genteel women to highlight the

⁴⁸ *Congregational Quarterly*, 1928, pp. 217-221; *SA Congregationalist*, July 1928, pp. 139-140.

existing state of legislation for both women at home and, even more desperately, in the colonies. After the acts were repealed in Britain in 1886, Butler focused her reform efforts on India, where she saw the Indian woman as the victim of the advances of British military officers stationed there.⁴⁹

The eschatology of Josephine Butler and her alternative view of scripture was central to her analysis of gender relations and the way she legitimated her public role. She developed three principles: that God created men and women equally, that this equality demands liberty and that God authorised women's prophecy through the prophet Joel.⁵⁰ She saw herself as a prophet, a female saviour delivering women from oppression at the hands of men. She argued that to adopt such a position was not, as many male critics might argue, selfish, but, on the contrary, selfless. In seeking to advocate for women less fortunate than herself, however, Butler failed to consider women, particularly prostitutes, as anything other than victims.⁵¹

She outlined her view of Christ's ministry to women in an edited collection of essays entitled *Woman's Work and Women's Culture* (1869). In this work, Butler styled herself as a prophet who brought a message about women's subordination to the whole of society, not just women. She believed her style was reminiscent of that of the slaves who read the bible to find the tools for their liberation. She argued for equal pay for women and men, for she believed that rescue work failed to address the lack of

⁴⁹ Barbara Caine, "Josephine Butler" in her *Victorian Feminists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 150-195; Burton, *Burden of History*, chapter 5.

⁵⁰ Lucretia A. Flammang, "'And Your Sons and Daughters Will Prophesy': The Voice and Vision of Josephine Butler" in Julie Melnyk (ed), *Women's Theology in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Transfiguring the Faith of their Fathers* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), pp. 151-163.

⁵¹ Alison Milbank, "Josephine Butler: Christianity, Feminism and Social Action" in Jim Obelkevich et al (eds), *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 157.

adequate employment for the millions of women who were suffering on starvation wages. She argued that women should extend the influence of the home on the basis of the fact that Christ's teaching was superior to Paul's view that women should be silent in church. Moreover, Butler claimed sexual equality was a principle of Christ's ministry to women: "His dismissal of each case was accompanied by a distinct act of *Liberation*."⁵² Women then became disciples, being present at the cross and the tomb, and the first to witness to the resurrection of Christ: "the most stupendous announcement ever made to the world".⁵³ The witness of these women, she argued, had been "accounted as idle tales" and should be considered more important than that of St Paul.⁵⁴

Butler also drew on Catholicism for an alternative theological perspective to Protestantism, which had focused on the masculine in the divine exclusively. Eileen Janes Yeo has argued that from the mid-nineteenth century, some Protestant British women such as Butler began to appropriate aspects of Catholicism because its icons could offer role models to single women, and its sisterhoods could provide legitimate public work. Women could use the Madonna and the lives of saints to convey the idea that mothering was possible without full biological motherhood and that women could pursue a life of active, public discipleship. One example was in the establishment of institutions that would act as substitute "homes" in which virgin "mothers" could care for young women.⁵⁵ Butler cast this contribution to pastoral care against bureaucratic forms of state intervention. A woman, she argued, represented the feminine, "the

⁵² Butler, *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture: A Series of Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1869), p. lviii.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. lvi (sic lvii).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Eileen Janes Yeo, "Protestant Feminists and Catholic Saints in Victorian Britain" in E. J. Yeo (ed), *Radical Femininity; Women's Self-Representation in the Public Sphere* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 127-48.

independent, individual ministering, the home influence” against the masculine, “the large comprehensive measure, the organisation, the system planned by men and sanctioned by Government.”⁵⁶

Congregational women not only saw Butler’s public work as a model they should emulate, but they also followed her religious ideas. Congregational women such as Mrs N J Cocks, of Sydney, argued that among the many women who had been disciples of Jesus, some women had been “first at the Cross and last at the Tomb.” Mary had been “the first to give his messages of the new kingdom to the disciples.”⁵⁷ Pearl Wasley, who had studied theology under Principal Kiek in South Australia during the Second World War and had married a minister, also reflected this alternative reading of scripture in her talks and sermons. Wasley believed women such as Elizabeth Fry, Josephine Butler, and Florence Nightingale were female examples of practical Christianity that Australian Congregational women should emulate. She argued that “only when women & men co-operate with God & with one another with no thought or place for inferiority or superiority can we hope to see the fulfilment of God’s plan for the world.”⁵⁸ Wasley also followed Butler’s comparison of the teaching ministry of Christ with the verses in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians that women should be silent in church, arguing that the ministry of Christ was superior.

Australian Congregationalists were also aware of the thought and advocacy work of Maude Royden, particularly through her media coverage, books, and her world tour in 1928, in which she became the first woman to preach in St Peter’s Cathedral in

⁵⁶ Butler, *Autobiographical Memoir*, pp. 81-3 quoted in Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 114-7.

⁵⁷ *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 28 June 1906.

⁵⁸ See Pearl Wasley, *Women in the Church*, unpublished manuscript in possession of the author.

Adelaide.⁵⁹ Congregational women supported her tour and her publications, such as *The Church and Woman* (1924), with articles in their women's pages in the church press.⁶⁰ Royden had been heavily influenced by Butler and believed that the Christian church would continue to be impoverished if its leaders were chosen from only one class or gender. She remained faithful to the Church of England while also accepting invitations to preach in nonconformist churches. After her ministry in the City Temple from 1917 to 1920, she founded an ecumenical venture, the Guildhouse, which lasted until the late 1930s.⁶¹

Through her involvement in the women's suffrage movement, settlement work, pacifism, and ministry, Royden developed a liberal theology that was particularly concerned with the position of women as mothers in militaristic states. She argued that if Christians saw God as a parent, they would be more likely to view international relations as a home, in which political leaders had a responsibility to invest in their constituents as children. From this perspective, political leaders might come to see themselves as bound together by the law of love and no longer resort to war as a way to resolve conflict. Christian citizens would work towards a world in which all persons would have the security to develop as individuals in a community regardless of class or gender.⁶² In her book, *Sex and Commonsense*, published in 1921, she focused on the plight of the single woman for whom there was no chance of marriage, advocating that society should allow such women opportunity to sublimate their sexual desires in an occupation. The First World War had increased the numbers of single women. While conceding that promiscuity was preferable to prostitution, Royden used the publication

⁵⁹ Royden Papers, 377/3, 378/5, Fawcett Library, City of London Polytechnic. See also *SA Congregationalist*, June 1928, pp. 99-100.

⁶⁰ *Congregationalist*, 10 December 1924, p. 5; 10 February 1928, p. 6.

⁶¹ Fletcher, *Maude Royden*, chapter 9.

⁶² "The Purpose of the Christian State" and sermon notes 26 February 1919, Royden Papers, 218/1-2.

to reinforce her views on the sexual double standard, arguing that women as well as men should abstain from sex, which, she believed, was a sacrament. Part of the cause of votes for women had been to address the sexual double standard and since her suffrage days she had argued for women's enfranchisement so that their particular "maternal" perspective would not be excluded from politics. A woman's particular political goal should be for society to recognise the physical weakness of women in relation to men through appropriate policy.⁶³

As a consequence of these influences, Australian Congregational women argued that the traditional responsibilities of the woman in the home should be extended to the public sphere. The following speech by Mrs W W F Pratt MSc, given at the Annual Assembly of the South Australian Congregational Union in 1936, provides a good example of this view. Mrs Pratt, who was from the industrial town of Broken Hill where her husband was the Congregational minister, addressed the afternoon session of the Minister's Wives Association in Rose Park Church Hall. She rejected what she identified as the current governance of national life by the principles of self-interest, class conflict, materialism, and preparation for war. She believed that the special qualities of women, the spirit of service, sacrifice, love, and practical care, should be applied to public life in order that it might be transformed. Women should extend their hopes and desires for the lives of their own children to those of the whole nation. The advent of war was the most critical issue, because it would almost certainly destroy "the exercise of womanliness or Christianity". By this she meant firstly, that war would threaten the capacity of women to bear and rear children in the Christian faith and to see the fruit of that work realised

⁶³ Fletcher, *Maude Royden*, pp. 85-86, 91, 230-235.

in the next generation, and secondly, that war would threaten the Church as a basis for social life and as an advocate for social reform.⁶⁴

Pratt argued that as women formed over half the membership of the Christian Church, they should be involved in its task of shaping public opinion through the training of children in Christian citizenship. She also argued that women should seek to influence the policy of the churches, especially as the Protestant churches worked toward church union, for Pratt was confident that a united Church would have “almost unlimited power.” Influenced by Kagawa, a Japanese theologian and social reformer, she asked women to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts for social reform.⁶⁵ It was “good to rule a home by love,” she argued, “but it would be better to stir a city to rely on service and sacrifice instead of armaments as the international weapon.”⁶⁶

Pratt took Mary of Nazareth as her ideal, a model of the divine transformation of the lowly into social leaders. She quoted the Magnificat: “He hath put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree...He hath scattered the proud...He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.” For Pratt, Mary’s song extended “beyond her own happiness to joy in the revolutionary results which Christ’s coming will have for all the world.” She urged Congregational women to “realise how desperately the world needs the revolution of which she dreamt.”⁶⁷

The CCWS provided the institutional stimulus for such rhetoric. It saw the vote as an important vehicle for women’s activism and sought to educate its members to use it

⁶⁴ Mrs W.W.F. Pratt, M.Sc., “Women and Public Affairs”, *Community: A Christian Sociological Organ*, no. 12, April 1936, pp. 6-7; *SA Congregationalist*, April 1936, p. 5; May 1936, pp. 46-7.

⁶⁵ William Axling, *Kagawa* (London: SCM Press, 1932).

⁶⁶ *Community*, April 1936, p. 7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

wisely.⁶⁸ Members focused their concern on two broad and related issues: the conditions of women in maternity and the militarism of democratic states. They formed voluntary associations to support white women to raise children in Christian citizenship, which they considered would be superior to secular forms of citizenship and would compliment the new interest among professionals in women's health.⁶⁹ The women's guild system was an important avenue for Congregational women to develop rhetoric and support for intervention in the daily lives of poor women in order to improve their skills as mothers. They developed an advocacy role for the sake of "the rising generation":

It was not only a question of mending the clothes and cooking the meals, but it was vitally important that good laws be made, that proper housing and employment should be found for the rising generation. Even if her own children would be satisfactorily looked after, every woman owed a certain duty to the welfare of the less fortunate offspring of others. It behoved every woman, then, to take an interest in the political and welfare affairs of the State, and to lend a hand where she could, always aiming to obtain the highest standard of life.⁷⁰

Congregational women also became concerned with the circumstances of raising children in militaristic states. Jo Vellacott has shown for the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom the interdependence of women's work for social justice and their work for peace.⁷¹ Some Congregational women had become concerned that their church did not reflect a feminine perspective on war. During the First World War, Ethel May Gardiner, from Victoria, for example, had suggested that there was not a Congregational church where she could be sure that the "gospel of war" would not be preached Sunday by Sunday.⁷² Later, the experience of that war and the internationalism of the inter-war period led Congregational women to develop a

⁶⁸ See, for example, *SA Congregationalist*, April 1937, p. 19; *Congregationalist*, 10 January 1923, p. 4; *Western Congregationalist*, February 1920, p. 8.

⁶⁹ *Congregationalist*, 8 November 1934, p. 18; 10 October 1924, p. 5.; 10 December 1924, p. 5.

⁷⁰ *SA Congregationalist*, November 1938, p. 204.

⁷¹ Jo Vellacott, "A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory: the early work of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom", *Women's History Review*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1993, pp. 23-56.

⁷² *Victorian Independent*, August 1915.

particularly Christian and feminist argument about the role of women in the peace movement. At a meeting of the Congregational Church Women's Society in New South Wales in 1934, Mrs Annie Deans, a minister's wife, suggested that lack of interest in international affairs in the churches could be explained as one result of the "poverty of a merely individualistic interpretation of Christianity". Next, Mrs Baily argued that to "make the world safe for our children, we must exercise a ministry that will make war impossible." Mrs R J Lyons, another speaker at the same meeting, argued that greater friendship among nations would lead to disarmament. "It was not the will of God who filled the earth with plenty that multitudes should starve. He did not give sons to women that they might be trained to hate the sons of other women, and be slain in their twenties on some battlefield."⁷³

For Mrs William Warren (Jane) Kerr, a Congregationalist from Kew, Victoria, who was the daughter of the Rev Alexander Gosman, the death of her eldest son at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 led her to commit her life to pacifism.⁷⁴ Kerr was President of the Sisterhood of International Peace (later Women's International League of Peace and Freedom) from 1917 to 1920. The members focused on education to deflect the barbs of opponents whether they were family members, hecklers, or politicians. Kerr reacted to what she saw as an inadequate response to Gallipoli both from the British government and also from Australian politicians. She published a pamphlet entitled "An appeal to women". On the one hand, she despaired at Churchill's own "utter disregard" for the loss of life at Gallipoli as "a legitimate war gamble for a prize of inestimable value". On the other, she despaired at the lack of an independent response from Australian politicians to his rhetoric. The pamphlet issued the following clarion call:

⁷³ *Congregationalist*, 8 November 1934, p. 18.

⁷⁴ *ADB*, vol. 9, p. 577.

I think it was then that the iron entered my soul and I finally decided what my life's work should be. Was it my loved one's life they gambled with? What a degradation to motherhood! 'Australia makes no complaint,' I read elsewhere. Women, have you no hearts, who can 'utterly disregard' this?⁷⁵

The Congregational Church Women's Societies provided Congregational women with an opportunity to develop their feminist perspective on scripture and social policy, but few speeches by Congregational women have survived in their entirety. Mother's Day services, which were a special type of civic service designed to attract women and their families, provided an opportunity to extend these views further. In some cases, Congregational women ran these services completely.⁷⁶ A small number of Congregational women sought to pursue a regular ministry.

Priestly role

Congregational women sought access to the priestly role in order to extend the prophetic role to a wider sphere. Maude Royden believed, for example, that if worshippers were to hear the special message of women in relation to the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God adequately, ministers would need to present it from the pulpit.⁷⁷ The priestly role was understood in two ways: first, as the life of sacrificial service of the believer and second, as an institutional role within Congregationalism such as ordination, or an official position in the church bureaucracy such as an administrator who mediated between the individual believer and God. In order to understand the meaning of the priestly role fully, it is important to examine the development of the notion of the priesthood over Christian history in some detail.

⁷⁵ Eleanor M. Moore, *The Quest For Peace as I have Known it in Australia* (Melbourne: Wilkie and Co, c1949), p. 41.

⁷⁶ See, for example, *Congregationalist*, 2 May 1921; *Western Congregationalist*, 8 June 1922, p. 8.

⁷⁷ Maude Royden Papers, Box 376A.

The idea of priesthood as belonging to the Christian ministry arose gradually from the notion of priesthood in the Hebrew Scriptures as mediator between God and humanity. The priest was appointed to the service of God in a sanctuary. The priest in the Hebrew Scriptures was believed to have attained the greatest holiness among human beings such that only the priest could enter holy spaces. In the New Testament, the idea of Christ as High Priest or head of the Jewish Nation is apparent in the letter to the Hebrews, where the life and death of Christ is understood as the administration of a sacrifice. This application of priestly and sacrificial imagery to the life of Christ affected Christian understandings of the priesthood significantly. The author of the letter to the Hebrews compared the death of Christ to the annual ritual in which the high priest, having performed the atoning sacrifices that were repeated each year, entered the sanctuary on behalf of the nation.⁷⁸

The term “priest” was not applied to Christian ministers until the end of the second century. By the medieval period, the priest was viewed as the representative of God to the people and was believed to carry supernatural powers. The Reformation challenged the whole structure of the medieval church, particularly the notion of the priesthood as mediator between God and people, with the Reformers advancing the idea of the direct relationship of the individual to God. As a result, the understanding of the priest was modified to mean a person who was set apart for study and exposition on behalf of the community of faith, leadership and pastoral care. The Reformation also rejected the sacerdotalism or supernatural power of the priest and stressed the importance of preaching the word of God over the administration of the sacraments. By the Victorian period, the notion of priestly holiness had been transformed into the expectation that the

⁷⁸ Cross, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 1325-6; Metzger and Coogan (eds), *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, pp. 608-10; Hastings (ed), *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, pp. 565-7.

minister would be a good preacher and community leader and would lead an exemplary family life.⁷⁹

Notions of priesthood have also remained inherently contradictory. While Christians have maintained an almost universal desire for mediation with God, they have also maintained the belief that no mediation is necessary. Christians have rejected the performance of priestly functions by established religious authorities, only to justify their own appropriation of the priestly role.⁸⁰

Congregational women reflected the ambivalence present in wider Christianity in relation to the priestly role. On the basis of the priesthood of all believers, they justified the repudiation of the individual priest and pursued lives of sacrificial service and also preaching. After the Reformation and the closure of the monasteries, the ideal of sacrificial service for women shifted from a life of celibate service to motherhood. By the twentieth century, the shorter length of time women devoted to child-bearing and improved education of women meant that they had time and interest in community service. The scope of the priestly role was enlarged to include work in health and education, deaconess work, missionary service, and ordination. Australian Congregational women had begun work as deaconesses and missionaries in the late nineteenth century. Higher education and low birthrates among Congregational women in contrast to women of other denominations meant that they were over-represented in some of the professions, such as medicine.

⁷⁹ Hastings (ed), *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, p. 566.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 565.

The exclusion of women from the medical profession meant that they sought access to it on the basis of traditional roles.⁸¹ As the first women medical graduates had difficulty finding full-time work; they gained some of their experience in refuge work. The structure of this work, as women working with women as peers and also as patients, shaped the development of female medical institutions and their prophetic role. Dr Emma Constance Stone (1856-1902) recognised the extent of women's disadvantages as a result of multiple births, their lack of confidence in confiding in male doctors, as well as the slim employment prospects of her peers. She therefore founded the first women's hospital in Australia, the Queen Victoria Hospital in 1896.⁸²

The arguments Congregational women used to gain access to the priestly role within their own church reflected similar rhetorical strategies. But before exploring how Congregational women negotiated access to the priestly role in the church, it is important to note the broad context within which the ordination of women was achieved – outlined in the findings of international research on the topic. Australian Congregationalism had structural characteristics that predisposed it to become the first church to ordain women in Australia in 1927. Recent scholarship on the movement for the ordination of women in the United States has shown that there are several factors that make a denomination more likely to ordain women at an early date.⁸³ Australian Congregationalism shared all these characteristics: there were no formal barriers to women's leadership; there was cultural pressure from churches that had ordained

⁸¹ See, for example, Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Eileen Boris, *Home and Work: Motherhood and the Politics of Industrial Homework in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁸² *ADB*, vol. 12, pp. 98-100. M. Hutton Neve, 'This Mad Folly!' *The History of Australia's Pioneer Women Doctors* (Sydney: Library of Australian History, 1980), pp. 28, 37-8, 158-9; Emma Russell, *Bricks or Spirit? The Queen Victoria Hospital, Melbourne* (Monash Medical Centre: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1997).

⁸³ Mark Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organisations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

women in Congregationalism overseas; theological liberalism was dominant; and the church did not adhere to sacramentalism. Moreover, the church was decentralised in polity and Congregational women had gained considerable education and experience in aspects of the ordained ministry's tasks, such as administration, pastoral care, and public speaking. Public discussion of the role of women as ministers and deaconesses had increased after the First World War and male mentors had encouraged Australian Congregational women to become candidates for ordination.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, a major stumbling block for church members was the image of a woman in the pulpit. Further to the discussion in Chapter 1 regarding opposition to women preaching, from the time of the Restoration of the Monarchy in England, women preachers had been seen as symbols of social anarchy. Millenarian and chiliastic women preachers, such as Joanna Southcott and Kate Barmby, and early nineteenth century secular Owenite preachers, such as Emma Martin and Eliza Sharples, reinforced this perception.⁸⁵ The idea of priesthood as the representation of a deity that was traditionally described in male forms meant that many church members could not imagine that a female preacher would be legitimate. If they sought justification for such a view, they referred to St Paul's injunction against women speaking in church in his letter to the Corinthians.

By the end of the First World War, Australian Congregational women had begun an apologetic for the ordination of women. They provided a liberal theological interpretation of the parts of Scripture that church members had used to sustain their

⁸⁴ *Congregationalist*, 10 April 1924, p. 5; 10 October 1934, p. 10.

⁸⁵ Jenny Dagers, "The Victorian Female Civilising Mission and Women's Aspirations Toward Priesthood in the Church of England", *Women's History Review*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2001, p. 654.

opposition to women ministers. Initially, their apologetic was delivered to audiences largely internal to the church. Though the Australian feminist movement recognised the significance of the movement for women's ordination by following debates about it and noting ordinations overseas, its leaders argued that responsibility for the resolution of the question was a matter for individual denominations.⁸⁶ They had a certain degree of success such that by the 1920s, debate and discussion about women's ordination in the wider community had affected public opinion favourably. In 1926, for example, Mrs P O Fysh, a Congregationalist from Tasmania observed that the desire of a woman to enter the ministry: "does not excite the same comment and active opposition as it would have even a few years ago."⁸⁷

Events in England during the First World War sparked debates about the ordination of women in Australian Congregationalism. In 1916, the Church of England refused to allow women to preach in churches during the National Mission of Hope and Repentance. The Bishops of London and Chelmsford had given women such as Maude Royden and Edith Picton-Turbevill permission to speak in their churches for the mission. However, lay people protested against their preaching and had threatened the mission as a whole. As a consequence, the bishops withdrew permission for the women to preach, although they spoke in halls and other unconsecrated buildings. The ordination of women in English Congregationalism also helped to raise the question of women's ordination in Australia. During the war, Constance Todd was the first woman ordained in English Congregationalism, as she had found no access to ordination in her

⁸⁶ Vivienne Newson, Acting President to Bishop Stoors, Rt Rev Bishop of Grafton regarding Anglican women members of Synod, 18 January c1950s, United Associations of Women ML MSS 2160/Y794/56, Mitchell Library, Sydney; *Woman's World*, 1 August 1923, p. 418.

⁸⁷ Congregational Union of Tasmania, *Yearbook 1926*, pp. 48-9.

own church, Presbyterianism. A number of women had occupied the lay pastorate, with Maude Royden the most significant.⁸⁸

Congregational women's defence of the ordination of women was indebted to the thought of a number of English women from both Anglicanism and Congregationalism; particularly Josephine Butler, A. Maude Royden, and Louise Creighton – the latter two had been directly involved in debates about women's leadership within Anglicanism. From within Congregationalism, the Rev Constance Coltman and the Rev Dorothy Wilson were the most important influences, especially Wilson who visited Australia three times between 1930 and 1935.⁸⁹ Australian Congregational women were selective in their appropriation of the thought of Anglican women, because the latter's concern with the implications of sacerdotalism for women was not particularly relevant to Congregationalists.⁹⁰ Furthermore, they were among Australian women who also saw themselves as having realised British women's policy agenda, particularly that of Maude Royden when she visited Australia in 1928.⁹¹ But Congregational women appropriated the ideas of Royden, Coltman, and Wilson on pastoral care particularly. Dorothy Wilson worked for the Presbyterian Church of England as Young People's Secretary from 1914 to 1918, producing lessons and manuals on religious education for children. Like Coltman, she moved from Presbyterianism to Congregationalism to be

⁸⁸ Elaine Kaye, "A Turning-Point in the Ministry of Women: the Ordination of the First Woman to the Christian Ministry in England in September 1917", in W. J. Shiels and Diana Wood (eds), *Women in the Church: Studies in Church History*, vol. 27 (Oxford: Basil and Blackwell, 1990), pp. 505-11; for the National Mission see Jacqueline R. deVries, "Transforming the Pulpit: Preaching and Prophecy in the British Women's Movement" in Beverley Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (eds), *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 318-34. For Australian response to the ordination of Constance Todd see *Victorian Independent*, 1 January 1918, p. 6.

⁸⁹ *Congregationalist*, 9 May 1935, p. 10.

⁹⁰ *Western Congregationalist*, 9 August 1928, p. 15; *SA Congregationalist*, December 1926, p. 306.

⁹¹ Angela Woollacott, "Australian Women's Metropolitan Activism: From Suffrage, to Imperial Vanguard, to Commonwealth Feminism" in Ian Christopher Fletcher et al (eds), *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation, and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 207-223.

ordained, and was educated at Mansfield College. She was appointed Assistant Minister to the Rev Leyton Richards at Carrs Lane, Birmingham from 1927 and worked as Director of Religious Education at Mills College, California in the 1930s.⁹²

The earliest accounts of arguments for the ordination of women are from women who were the wives of ministers and prominent lay people. They considered whether, for example, the number of women in the lay pastorate and the ordination of women in England was simply, as Mrs G J Williams said: “another phase of woman’s activity during war, or are we to consider it a claim permanently made?”⁹³ Women who had formal training in theology also contributed to the debate. They included women such as Winifred Kiek (1884-1975) of Parkin College, Adelaide, the daughter of a Manchester Quaker tea salesman, who gained her Bachelor of Divinity from Melbourne College of Divinity in 1923 and was to become the first woman ordained in Australia.⁹⁴ Another significant contributor to the debate was Miss Susannah Jane Williams (1875-1942), the daughter of a Welsh grocer who was Principal of the Women’s College at the University of Sydney from 1919 to 1934. Williams had been the Annie Grice Scholar at Melbourne University (1894-1895), before travelling to study at Newnham College, Cambridge, where she achieved an upper 2nd in the classical tripos in 1900. She returned to Australia where she tutored in Classics at Trinity College, Melbourne and in Classics and English at the Melbourne Church of England Girls’ Grammar School. In addition to her teaching commitments, she served on the national board of the YWCA, the executive of the National Council of Women of New South Wales, and the board of the Rachel Foster Hospital for Women and Children.⁹⁵

⁹² Kaye et al, *Daughters of Dissent*, pp. 46, 57, 73, 169.

⁹³ *Western Congregationalist*, January 1919, p. 12; *Victorian Independent*, 1 January 1919, pp. 12-13; Congregational Union of Tasmania, *Yearbook 1926*, pp. 46-51.

⁹⁴ *ADB*, vol 9, pp. 588.

⁹⁵ See entry on Miss S J Williams, *ADB*, vol. 12, pp. 506.

Congregational women set their arguments for the ordination of women within the context of the First World War and its implications for women's roles. They argued that the war had created conditions that meant they should now be able to offer themselves to the church as candidates for ordination. In a debate in 1919 on whether women should enter the ministry, Mrs C R Morris took the affirmative and noted the women in the bible, the fact that women were "not inferior to men" and the need for the presentation of the distinctive perspective of women in the church. She argued that one consequence of the war had been the achievement of equity with men on boards, in the League of Nations and in divorce laws. In the future, she foresaw, "churches will be the centre of social intercourse instead of preaching" and women would "be ready as ordained ministers."⁹⁶ The same year, Mrs G J Williams argued that as a result of the effects of the war, society had a responsibility to develop new roles for women. The absence of men during the war had allowed women to demonstrate their ability. Furthermore, the war had shattered the traditional female role of service through the support of husbands and the training of children. She argued that: "we have the pain of knowing that for many – too many – of the women of today the sweet old path of service, through her home, her man, her children, is a broken road."⁹⁷ She claimed that though the cloister had been abolished at the Reformation, a life of devotion equal to it was possible as a result of the war. Driven "by need or led by the spirit of helpfulness," women "must seek for new and wider paths of service."⁹⁸ She stated that the war had provided the church with an opportunity for internal reform and if it refused to endorse the ordination of women, it would create widespread grievances among women. Following Louise Creighton, who had been active in the debates about women's

⁹⁶ Minutes of the Ladies Auxiliary to Home Missions, 1 August 1919, SRG 95/10/2, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

⁹⁷ *Western Congregationalist*, January 1919, p. 13.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

leadership in the Church of England, she concluded that women would serve, “if not inside, then without the Church.”⁹⁹ A Christian woman “must serve the multitude, and surely it is wise not only to accept but to claim all her gifts for the Church.”¹⁰⁰

Congregational women appealed to a liberal and also to a gendered theological perspective to negotiate access to ordination. Women such as Winifred Kiek believed that the church should ordain women from a rationale derived from its own internal methodology that would include a response to wider social forces. She argued that women should be ordained, as they would provide a particularly gendered contribution to the ministry of the church.

A significant theme in arguments for the ordination of women was the responsibilities of men and women as equals who would need to give an account to God of how they had used their abilities on earth as expressed in the Parable of the Talents.¹⁰¹ In 1921, Winifred Kiek sought to establish gender equality as a theme of Christianity, as a faith that recognised: “men and women as standing on exactly the same plane of need, responsibility, privilege and opportunity.”¹⁰² She argued that the Christian churches should demonstrate their commitment to the principle of sexual equality by opening their leadership to women. In addition, Kiek also argued that women would bring a special feminine perspective to leadership in the church. She was concerned that women, who constituted the majority of church members and were widely believed to be naturally predisposed toward religion, remained excluded from the Christian ministry by tradition. Moreover, she sought to expose the irony that “the Church, whose

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Congregational Union of Tasmania, *Yearbook 1926*, p. 48.

¹⁰² *Australasian Intercollegian*, 1 October 1921, p. 190.

teaching made possible the social, political, and economic emancipation of women lags behind secular societies in the application of its own professed ideals.”¹⁰³ Kiek recognised the movement for the ordination of women as a central part of the women’s movement, itself simply a characteristic of modern societies. She also maintained, however, that the movement for the ordination of women differed from the women’s movement significantly. Access to the ministry would not be a “triumph for womanhood” she argued, but a sacred trust or responsibility, for which women should be accountable to God:

I do not regard the ministry as an ordinary profession, nor women’s admission to it merely as the conquest of another masculine stronghold. I think we should have a woman ordained by our denomination to demonstrate our principle of sex equality in the Church...I do not think ordination is a mere weapon of feminism.¹⁰⁴

A central issue for Congregational women was the way opposition to women preachers among Christians in modern times had been based upon what Congregational women considered was a misreading of St Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. Congregationalists were among Christians who had used the letter to argue that women should be silent in church. Congregational women countered this argument with a number of discursive techniques derived from modern biblical criticism and also the heritage of the church. Mrs J E James for example, a minister’s wife at Collins Street Independent Church from 1917 to 1928, applied the phrase of John Robinson, the Independent, that the Lord had “more light and truth to break forth from his Holy Word” to the New Testament.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Mrs P O Fysh noted the precedent of women preachers in Baptist and Independent churches in England during the Civil War period in the late 1640s.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Winifred Kiek to Mr Bedome, 11 March 1927, Kiek Papers PRG 225/2, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

¹⁰⁵ *Victorian Independent*, 1 January 1919, p. 12.

¹⁰⁶ Congregational Union of Tasmania, *Yearbook 1926*, pp. 49-50.

The Rev Dorothy Wilson and Miss S J Williams used modern biblical criticism to provide the church with a close reading of the passage from Corinthians. They argued that the text had been translated from the New Testament Greek incorrectly. The verb for preaching in the original Greek was different from the word that authorities had translated as “to preach”. The original was more accurately translated as “to chatter”.¹⁰⁷ The Congregational press recorded the exegesis of the text by Miss S J Williams more fully than that of Wilson, probably because it was written on the eve of Winifred Kiek’s ordination. Williams argued that the verb “to speak” was intended to refer to interruption of church leaders by women asking questions of them. She argued that Paul had in fact advised the women to obtain the information they sought from their husbands outside the service of worship. Williams also argued that the verse needed to be set in the context of the life of the congregation in Corinth and also in relation to attitudes to women in Greek culture. In the congregation, scandals had arisen that had led to calls for circumspect behaviour. Furthermore, at that time women were secluded from life in Greek cities. Williams argued that it was irrational to apply this text to women throughout Christian history, especially in the twentieth century, an age in which “thoughtful people” believed in a “progressive and continuous revelation by the spirit in the spheres of knowledge and of conduct.”¹⁰⁸

Williams argued, moreover, that if this aspect of St Paul’s teaching was evaluated against the body of his teaching, it could be shown to contradict important verses. In the letter to the Corinthians, for example, Paul had argued that the spirit of the law was more important than the letter of it. Furthermore, in a letter to the Galatians (3:26), Paul had argued that the Christian community should transcend human distinctions,

¹⁰⁷ *Congregationalist*, 9 May 1935, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 10 April 1927, p. 10.

including gender “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ”. Williams speculated that because Paul had departed from some of the traditions of his age, were he to visit twentieth century Australia he might depart from opposition to the ordination of women. Finally, Williams charged that if Christianity in the twentieth century failed to permit the ordination of women, then it would fail to follow in the tradition of St Paul. She challenged her readers: “And will the word of him who gloried in the freedom of the Spirit be made into shackles to bind this so much later age of which he never dreamt?”¹⁰⁹

In addition to a close study of the writings of Paul, Congregational women also sought to set his writings in the literary context of the New Testament canon. They followed the thought of Josephine Butler, who had argued that the ministry of Jesus had greater authority than the work of St. Paul. Mrs P O Fysh, for example, had argued that Jesus’ ministry to women offered them emancipation from Eve’s sin, which had been used to support the view that all women were more sinful and therefore inferior to men.¹¹⁰ Similarly, Mrs G J Williams argued that the place of women in the Christian Church had been secured not by the legislation of Jesus, but by its absence and the assumption that “all he said” and did “applied to women as well as to men.”¹¹¹ In particular, Mrs J E James and Winifred Kiek applied Jesus’ command not to sin against the Holy Spirit to the church. James argued that “men and women have been *taught*, CONVERTED, and INSPIRED through the testimony of women preachers” and therefore should be ordained. The one “who sets bounds to the use that God may make

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Congregational Union of Tasmania, *Yearbook 1926*, p. 49.

¹¹¹ *Western Congregationalist*, January 1919, p. 13.

of such women holds a position which no humble and reverent disciple of the Holy Spirit would dare adopt."¹¹² Kiek argued that the church, by excluding women from the ministry, lowered ministerial standards by "arbitrarily restricting the area of selection", which may have been a "sin against the Holy Spirit."¹¹³ For James, the Christian ministry should be open to a woman on the same terms as it was open to a man. To refuse a woman access on the basis of arbitrary judgement could be idolatrous, she claimed:

No man, apart from the call of God and its abundant equipment, has a right to act as minister to his fellows in the Church of Christ, and any woman who has received the same call and equipment has the selfsame right. To deny this is disloyalty to God; it implies that the Lord himself does not understand where to bestow His own gifts, and that we must correct His mistakes.¹¹⁴

In their apologetic for the ordination of women, Congregational women also sought to address the practical concern among Congregationalists that the maternal duties of women would be an impediment to their ministry. Some dismissed it: Dorothy Wilson argued that the principle of gender equality should not be "over-ruled by the question of practicability".¹¹⁵ Others argued that they could adopt a double burden: when Winifred Kiek was studying theology, she argued that she had been able to combine the work of home, study, and social service successfully.¹¹⁶

The movement for the ordination of women also relied on an understanding of the special ministry of women based on their authority as wives and mothers. Congregational women used the notion of the special ministry of women as an "additional argument" for their ordination.¹¹⁷ Josephine Butler speculated that women

¹¹² *Victorian Independent*, 1 January 1919, p. 13. Original italics and capitals.

¹¹³ *Australasian Intercollegian*, 1 October 1921, p. 191.

¹¹⁴ *Victorian Independent*, 1 January 1919, p. 13.

¹¹⁵ *Congregationalist*, 9 May 1935, p. 10.

¹¹⁶ *Woman's World*, 1 August 1923, p. 418.

¹¹⁷ *Australasian Intercollegian*, 1 October 1921, pp. 190-191.

could receive revelation more clearly than men could because: "His communications of the deepest nature were not confined to male recipients; and what took place during his life on earth, may, through His Holy Spirit, be continued now."¹¹⁸ Constance Todd, the first woman ordained in English Congregationalism, had argued that women would make a special contribution to religious education and young families on the basis of their traditional roles. She argued that their presence in the ministry would act as a symbol of equality, that women were likely to be sympathetic to working people, and they could also strengthen the peace movement.¹¹⁹ During her visit to Australia in 1935, Dorothy Wilson had argued that women should be ministers in order to present a particular reading of the bible to the church that would focus on aspects that had been neglected by men such as Jesus' special ministry to women: "There is a distinctive message in the New Testament for women, and women are needed to present the woman's point of view."¹²⁰

The idea of a distinctive contribution was particularly apparent in arguments relating to pastoral care. Maude Royden believed that women could have opportunities to minister to other women who would go without pastoral care rather than ask a man for fear of judgement.¹²¹ Constance Coltman argued that "motherly Christian women" had heard confessions from women that they would not discuss with a male minister and that therefore women ministers should be available to them. She also argued that men might want to seek the counsel of a woman minister.¹²² Dorothy Wilson had testified that in Birmingham, the ministry provided opportunities for pastoral care for women who had

¹¹⁸ Butler (ed), *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*, pp. lvi-lvi (sic lvii).

¹¹⁹ Kaye, "A Turning-Point in the Ministry of Women", pp. 510-511.

¹²⁰ *Congregationalist*, 9 May 1935, p. 11.

¹²¹ *Guardian*, 2 July 1920, *Japan Chronicle*, 28 August 1928 in Royden Papers, 376, 377/3, Fawcett Library; Fletcher, *Maude Royden*, pp. 189, 246.

¹²² Constance Coltman, "The Need for Women Confessors", *The Free Catholic*, April 1921, p. 67 quoted in Kaye et al, *Daughters of Dissent* (London: United Reformed Church, 2004), pp. 57, 153.

come to her to discuss topics that they felt they could not discuss with a man.¹²³ But the view that women had a special contribution to make to the priestly role was an insecure basis on which to build access to the ministry. Miss S J Williams, for example, endorsed the view prevalent in wider society that when the pulpit eventually became open to women, they would be expected to reach a “higher average standard” than men would be expected to achieve.¹²⁴

In 1919, Mrs J E James declared confidently that the ministry of women would mark a new era in the spiritualisation of humanity, but that this era remained in the future. In Congregationalism the opportunity to enter the ministry was available to women who were already preparing for it.¹²⁵ But in 1927, on the eve of the ordination of the first woman in Congregationalism, Miss S J Williams noted soberly that the pulpit no longer enjoyed the dominant role in shaping public opinion that it had occupied in a previous age. Due to almost universal education and the rise of other forms of communication, she argued, the significance of the admission of women to the pulpit should be viewed as having been usurped by other forms of popular exhortation. Its place had been “largely taken by the lecture, the essay, articles in the periodical and daily press, in plays and novels with a serious purpose.” She argued, moreover, that “more people read books, even serious ones, than go to church and listen to sermons.”¹²⁶

For those women who entered the ministry, however, and for those with whom they ministered, it is likely that they remained confident that the pulpit continued to play a role in personal and social renewal as one influence among many. Contemporaries

¹²³ *Congregationalist*, 9 May 1935, p. 11.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10 April (sic May) 1927, p. 10.

¹²⁵ *Victorian Independent*, 1 January 1919, pp. 12-13.

¹²⁶ *Congregationalist*, 10 April (sic May) 1927, p. 10.

rebutted the argument of the lack of significance of women's access to the pulpit, recognising that the spiritual development of individuals was as important as their education. Upon the ordination of Isabelle Merry in 1937, (see Appendix 4 for details) for example, Principal J S Griffith of the Victorian Congregational College suggested that the two most powerful men in the world, Hitler and Mussolini, had developed personal and political power on the basis of their oratory. As such, the ministry should be among those professions in which the holder of the office should not underestimate their power. Griffith warned against the tendency of the argument of the insignificance of women's access to the ministry to reduce the understanding of the Christian ministry to mere public speaking. The ministry was not just a matter of public exhortation but also a matter of pastoral care, he argued. It was a profession in which there was an interaction between preaching and personal concern that had the potential to transcend "class-consciousness and patronage", and could provide a context for self-determination.¹²⁷

Conclusion

After the First World War, Congregational women sought to express Christian citizenship through prophetic and priestly roles. They developed the prophetic role on the basis of their different experience from men, drawing on a feminist perspective on Scripture and social policy. The prophetic role was often expressed corporately in the creation of the Congregational Church Women's Societies that sought to influence the public role of the denomination, the ecumenical movement, and the women's movement. Congregational women sought to extend the exercise of the prophetic role through access to the priestly role, which referred to the priesthood of all believers and

¹²⁷ *Victorian Independent*, 1 February 1938, p. 31.

the ordained ministry. Congregational women sought access to the priestly role through the application of modern biblical criticism to texts that supported opposition to women's ministry, and also by way of an extension of traditional female religious roles. They therefore contributed to the extended sacralisation, rather than the disenchantment, of the home. As will be seen in the following chapters, as Congregational women imagined their social role as that of "mother" and viewed the subjects of their ministry as children, however, they produced relationships that could "diminish the agency of others and undermine the possibilities of a more egalitarian sisterhood."¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Yeo, "Protestant feminists", pp. 144.

CHAPTER 4

Prophetic Roles Between the Wars, 1919-1939

After the First World War, Congregational women developed a prophetic role that promoted pacifism and welfare within their denomination, the feminist movement, and Australian society. White Congregational women worked through their church and affiliated societies towards goals including the creation of a welfare state, disarmament, and a new international order. As background to Congregational women's pacifist and ecumenical work, this chapter will explore the international ecumenical movement, the Australian peace and feminist movements, highlighting the turn to pacifism and the new social attitude to religion after the war. It will also consider the views of Congregationalists in relation to child protection and *social policy* before addressing the specific response of Congregational women to these issues. The final part of the chapter will consider the response of Congregational women to the rise of fascism in Europe, and the threat of another war. Congregational women developed their prophetic role as a way of seeking public recognition for women's traditional cultural roles, such as mothering. In the shadow of debates about conscription, they also argued for a role in politics, on the basis of their vulnerability as citizens in modern war and their labour as mothers in raising sons who faced certain death in battle. The end of the chapter will show that white Congregational women were among those women who sought to speak on the assumption that others, who they saw as less privileged than themselves, could not speak. This assumption had a particular impact on indigenous women. Despite this, indigenous women developed their own prophetic role that assumed a Christian identity in wider society, but white Congregational women remained largely uninfluenced by their indigenous sisters' message.

Before discussing the content of the message of white Congregational women in detail, it is necessary to place their development of a prophetic role in the context of the impact of the First World War on the feminist movement and Christianity. Recent scholarship has challenged substantially the notion that the women's movement declined after the war. Historians have explored the ways women expressed their citizenship through community education and sustained political lobbying.¹ Scholars have only recently paid attention to the role of religion in the maintenance of the women's movement after the war. Jacqueline de Vries has argued that British Anglican and Catholic women achieved considerable reform in religious contexts that helped to shape feminist activity. Because of the impact of the war on the role of religion in national life, feminists, such as the members of denominational suffrage leagues, for example, emerged from the war with a greater sense of confidence and purpose than did their secular counterparts.²

In her work on inter-war Australian feminism, Judith Smart has argued that the ideals of Protestant Christianity were the most significant influence on the non-denominational women's institutions of the period. Although their aims and objectives were increasingly expressed in secular terms, the shared Christian values expressed in these societies transcended class and political loyalties. The experience gained by the female leaders of these organisations allowed them to become politically astute, and their

¹ Dale Spender, *There's Always Been a Women's Movement This Century* (London: Pandora Press, 1983); Brian Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries: Portraits of British Feminists Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1959* (London: Macmillan, 1992); Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1780-1980* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

² Contrast, for example, Margaret Higonnet et al, *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); and Jacqueline R. de Vries, "Challenging Traditions: Denominational Feminism in Britain, 1910-1920" in Billies Melman (ed.), *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1870-1930* (New York, London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 265-283; Jacqueline R. de Vries, "Transforming the Pulpit: Preaching and Prophecy in the British Women's Suffrage Movement" in Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J Walker (eds.), *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 318-34.

Christianity diluted their political conservatism. These new forms of association meant that women could maintain membership in a number of church and secular female organisations and seek leadership in the ones that best fitted their own political interests. The focus on the role of women as consumers allowed women of liberal social conscience to consider issues such as disarmament and international relations, and, from the 1930s, the position of the Australian Aboriginal population.³ Congregational women used the Congregational Church Women's Society as a base for political and social action in their church. Their membership in a range of women's organisations allowed them to gain broad political experience, which, in turn, could influence wider society.

The turn to religion after World War I

Changing attitudes to religion after the First World War also shaped the role of women in Australian Congregationalism. General reflection on the role of religion in society, and calls for renewal in leadership within the churches prepared the ground within Christian denominations for debates about the movement of women into leadership. Politicians and intellectuals in industrialised societies had recognised that the Christian churches played a significant role in the development of public opinion. Against the disillusionment and questioning of returned servicemen, the perceived failure of political and spiritual leadership to prevent war also began to spark questioning within Christianity for internal renewal.⁴

³ Judith Smart, "A Mission to the Home: The Housewives Association, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Protestant Christianity, 1920-1940", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 28, October 1998, pp. 215-34; Judith Smart, "'For the Good that We Can Do': Cecilia Downing and Feminist Christian Citizenship", *Australian Feminist Studies*, no. 19, Autumn 1994, pp. 39-60.

⁴ Robert D. Linder, *The Long Tragedy: Australian Evangelical Christians and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Adelaide: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity and Open Book Publishers, 2000), pp. 159-65; *SA Congregationalist*, November 1922, pp. 137-8.

Like their co-religionists overseas, Australian Congregationalists emerged from the First World War with great optimism, and were as slow as other citizens of western societies to abandon such hope in the light of the rise of fascism. Martin Ceadel has argued that the period between the two world wars was “strongly conditioned by memories of the one and gloomy forebodings of the other.” In the space of less than twenty years, the growth of Christian and secular pacifism, which, to many, had seemed the only appropriate response to the war, was slowly whittled away by the threat of Hitler’s militarism.⁵

In the 1920s and 1930s, Australian Congregationalists remained anxious about future war in the light of the militarism of democratic states and the rise of fascism and communism in Europe. They channelled their concern into the peace movement and tried to articulate a particularly denominational understanding of the relationship of the individual to the state which emphasised the value of religious freedom in democratic societies as a means of maintaining independent thought. They saw the League of Nations as akin to an ideal church and believed that the world could prevent war if it developed an international consciousness that was supported by religious beliefs and practices. An increasing number of Congregational leaders identified the fragmentation of the Christian Church into denominations as hindering the development of this world consciousness. They hoped that the international ecumenical movement could give expression to a shared Christian consciousness.

Congregationalists had two concerns about the relationship of the individual to the state in communist and fascist societies. Such totalitarian societies did not consider two

⁵ Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of A Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 1.

principles that Congregationalists had held from the Reformation: firstly, the primary loyalty of the individual to God rather than to the state; and secondly, provision for the individual to critique the state on the basis of an independent moral authority. Congregationalists held that the role of the state was to serve the will of God and that if an individual believed the state had not served this will, then loyalty to the faith required the individual to protest. The urgent task of Congregationalism was to train children in Christian citizenship, with the independence of mind necessary to protest if they had cause to believe that the state did not fulfil the will of God.

Australian Congregationalists were affected by distinctions within attitudes to war that historian Martin Ceadel has outlined. He has distinguished between “pacifism” a moral creed, as a belief that war is always wrong; and “pacifism”, which is a political philosophy. Adherents to pacifism believe that war is sometimes necessary, but is always an irrational and inhumane way to resolve disputes so that its prevention should be a political priority. In practice, pacifism meant appealing to the consciences of individuals to refuse to support war in any way, and to call for total disarmament at the political level. By contrast, adherents of pacifism realised that the use of armaments might be necessary to prevent war. Within pacifism, two strands of commitment pulled its adherents in different directions in their relationship to society. On the one hand, there were those who sought to maintain an apolitical moral stance, and, on the other, there were those who believed that if they were to have any influence in the political process at all, then compromise was required.⁶

⁶ Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, pp. 1-8.

Ceadel has also identified three strands of pacificism: liberal, socialist and liberal-socialist. Liberal “internationalists” believed nations shared common interests that could be realised through international contact and through efforts to diminish national sovereignty by the transfer of some of their powers to a world federation of institutions. A smaller number of pacificists were socialists who believed that war was caused by capitalism and imperialism and that the only way to end war would be to establish world socialism. A third position, widespread before the First World War, tried to reconcile these liberal and socialist traditions by asserting that vested interests in the armaments industry promoted power politics based on rearmament and the threat of war. In this context, pacificists hoped that the League of Nations, though empowered to call for military sanctions, would actually police international politics by “moral sanctions”, that is, by bringing the disapproval of world public opinion to bear on a defaulting nation.⁷

The First World War also had a significant impact on the development of the international ecumenical movement, which hoped to use the international Christian community to help in providing the public support for the international “moral sanctions” outlined above. Church leaders and theologians promoted the image of world Christianity at prayer in order to provide a powerful vision of the extent of support for such sanctions. Theologians such as Dr J H Jowett, a Congregationalist from Britain, had called for international disarmament, for workers to fight against “the warlike spirit” in the individual and for the churches to set aside a day of prayer for peace.⁸ Dr F W Norwood, an Australian graduate who was Minister of the City Temple, London from 1920 to 1936 and addressed large audiences when he visited Australia in

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *British Weekly*, 7 September 1922, quoted in *SA Congregationalist*, November 1922, p. 317.

1934, lent support to such concerns.⁹ He was not a pacifist, but was opposed to the arms trade and a keen supporter of the League of Nations. He concluded a series of articles for the 1927 Lausanne Conference, in which 500 representatives of Protestant churches met together, with the hope: “that the [armament] crisis might send all the Churches to their knees and also bring them together for concerted action.”¹⁰

The growing ecumenical movement was important not only for the development of support among Christians the world over for pacifism, but also for generating their support for the growth of the welfare state. The Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship in Birmingham in 1924, an interdenominational gathering of 1 500 Christians, was significant in this regard. Although the conference passed a large number of resolutions that were very vague in content, it helped to educate the leadership of the Christian Church internationally to accept the case for the welfare state.¹¹ Over time, the conference resolutions were often transformed into pithy slogans that became common parlance among Australian Congregationalists, such as the resolution in relation to the Christian attitude to industry: that the “motive of service” be substituted for the “motive of gain”.¹²

During the interwar period in Australia, nonconformist Christians provided significant support for the development of an independent foreign policy and the creation of the welfare state. W J Hudson has shown that the interwar period was a coming-of-age for Australian foreign policy, in which a small number of pragmatic policy makers began to

⁹ *SA Congregationalist*, February 1934, p. 323; April 1935, p. 37. See also Kenneth Slack, *The City Temple: A Hundred Years* (London: City Temple, 1974), p. 29.

¹⁰ *English Christian World* quoted in *SA Congregationalist*, September 1927, p. 194.

¹¹ Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity: 1920-1990* (London: SCM Press, 3rd edition, 1991), p. 179; Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, pp. 66-7.

¹² *SA Congregationalist*, October 1931, p. 200.

develop a policy position independent of Britain. From time to time, they sought, but generally ignored, public opinion that had been formed by academics, the leaders of trade unions and the churches.¹³

A significant concern of these shapers of public opinion, who often worked closely together in coalitions, was the maintenance of peace. Nonconformist Christians, women, and socialists formed a significant part of the Australian peace movement. They were often affected by war through the casualties of family members and close friends. The Australian peace movement was larger on a per capita basis than the peace movements in Britain, the United States, Canada and the continent. It was more difficult, however, for the Australian peace movement to influence foreign policy than it was for the British peace movement, due to the different location of the respective governments in international relations and, in particular, the continued Australian reliance on British expertise. After the anti-conscription victory during the First World War, the greatest achievement of the Australian peace movement was to mobilise mass support for world disarmament in the 1930s.¹⁴ Carolyn Rasmussen has shown how peace activists laboured in an environment in which there was little support for public discussion of Australia's foreign policy. But these activists expressed their confidence in democracy through the LNU, which, by the 1930s, had managed to achieve broad support for disarmament. In the latter part of the decade, it held a relatively constructive interaction with the Federal Government in relation to aspects of its foreign policy.¹⁵

¹³ W. J. Hudson, *Australia and the League of Nations* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1980), pp. 1-16.

¹⁴ Malcolm Summers and Ralph Summy, *The Australian Peace Movement: A Short History* (Canberra: Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, 1986), p. 5.

¹⁵ Carolyn A. Rasmussen, *The Lesser Evil? Opposition to War and Fascism in Australia, 1920-1941* (Parkville, Vic.: University of Melbourne Press, 1992), chapter 1.

In the 1920s, Australian Congregationalism moved toward pacifism as talk of further war unearthed the bitter memories of 1914. Similarly, support for pacifism among English and Welsh Congregationalists increased. Its intellectuals contributed to the task of developing a broad theological basis for pacifist commitment.¹⁶ During the meetings of the Congregational Union of England and Wales held at Leicester in 1926, a group of Congregationalists formed an organisation called the Congregational Pacifist Crusade. At a communion service to launch the organisation, over 80 ministers pledged their support for pacifism. The Rev G Stanley Russell presided at the communion service using a chalice made in prison by a conscientious objector. The war and the rise of fascism in Italy had moved him to a pacifist conviction that he would not have contemplated previously:

There may be those here who have always taken the position...(that)...this crusade indicates. To them be great honour. There are also those, amongst whom I rank myself, who have not always taken this position, but who have been...driven to it by the irresistible logic of events...We have come to believe that there is no allegiance that can be entertained the moment it conflicts with the Lord we serve and the Gospel we preach. We have come to the conclusion that he that loveth not only father or mother but country or flag more than him is not worthy of him.¹⁷

Australian Congregationalists supported the peace movement through membership of the Australian LNU and the local ecumenical movement in each state. They also helped to put pressure on the British government through support of English and Welsh Congregationalism.¹⁸ Among the prominent Australian Congregational ministers who became pacifists was James Harold King (1889-1959), whose experience of enlistment in the First World War in the Australian Imperial Forces led him to work for the Peace

¹⁶ Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, pp. 330-6; See also Alan Wilkinson, *Dissent or Conform? War, Peace and the English Churches, 1900-1945* (London: SCM Press, 1986); Leyton Richards, *The Christian's Alternative to War: An Examination of Christian Pacifism* (London, 1929), pp. 108-09; W E Orchard, *From Faith to Faith: An Autobiography of Religious Development* (London, 1933), pp. 120-1.

¹⁷ *SA Congregationalist*, May 1927, p. 66; R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962), p. 419.

¹⁸ *Proceedings of the Eleventh Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand*, Brisbane, 1929, p. 11.

Pledge Union and the Fellowship of Reconciliation.¹⁹ Many more Congregationalists remained pacifists and were influenced by an interdenominational culture of internationalism. In the universities, the Student Christian Movement increasingly became concerned with the application of Christianity to society and did much to develop a spirit of internationalism among future Australian leaders including Congregationalists.²⁰ The state councils of churches fostered observation of Armistice Sunday in congregations in November each year and continued to advocate peace. The ecumenical movement supported activities such as the preparation of Sunday School lessons for use on Peace Sunday, that leaders distributed to 15 000 teachers throughout the Commonwealth.²¹ Following the 1924 Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship (COPEC), ecumenical groups started study circles in Adelaide to discuss the issues raised at the conference, but by 1928 these circles had ceased operating as they overlapped with other organisations. Of all the denominations, Congregationalists remained most influenced by the COPEC resolutions, and continued to be informed by them into the 1930s, which was apparent in statements issued by the Congregational Union of South Australia such as the manifesto in response to the Depression.²² In the 1920s, compulsory military training for boys remained a significant focus for advocacy work in denominational and ecumenical contexts and also in the peace movement.²³

¹⁹ *ADB*, vol. 9, p. 596.

²⁰ Renate Howe, "A Movement of Influence: The Australian Student Christian Movement in the 1930s" in Brian Howe and Philip Hughes (eds.), *Spirit of Australia II: Religion in Citizenship and National Life* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2003), pp. 86-96.

²¹ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1929, p. 297;

²² *Ibid.*, 1 July 1924, p. 210; October 1928, p. 275; July 1931, p. 88; October 1931, pp. 200-1; See also, Judith Raftery, "Till Every Foe is Vanquished: Churches and Social Issues in South Australia, 1919-1939" (Ph.D thesis, Flinders University of South Australia, July 1988), pp. 26-7, 72-3.

²³ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1928, p. 274; February 1929, p. 393; July 1929, pp. 130-32. See also SA Council of Churches Minutes, Methodist Church of Australasia Archives SRG 4/1/27, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide; *Peacewards*, 1 December 1928; 1 November 1929, p. 3.

Australian Congregationalists were optimistic that international Christianity could assist the League of Nations through promoting the exercise of moral sanctions.²⁴ Many leaders within Congregationalism preached against war, particularly when the Adelaide Peace Society, a local branch of the organisation started in London in 1816, requested anti-war sermons.²⁵ These debates were often developed against the charge that critics of the First World War were not patriots. Dr G H Wright, Minister at Stow Memorial Church, Adelaide, argued that: “If we love our country, then we will fight to stay the sinister influence and the class privileges that too often have led nations into war.”²⁶ Wright supported the League of Nations and believed that Christianity would provide the “spirit of brotherhood” necessary for the League to achieve its aims.²⁷ Principal E S Kiek, of Parkin College, argued that fighting for peace was a matter of Christian obedience in the context of eternal judgement and urged the churches to make the League a matter of “deep interest, keen study and earnest prayer.”²⁸ He was confident that vested interests would submit to the churches on the issue of armaments and war, just as they had on the issue of prohibition in America. He supported the liberal ideal of respect for other nations and considered nationalism and internationalism as spiritual concepts that should be fostered by the press, the pulpit, and “above all”, by the school. “Here is the task of the Christian parent and teacher. Here is the way to a happier future, when:”

Nation with nation, land with land,
 Unarmed shall live as comrades free,
 In every heart and brain shall throb,
 The pulse of one fraternity.²⁹

²⁴ *SA Congregationalist*, January 1923, p. 414; October 1923, p. 274; October 1928, p. 273; February 1929, p. 394; March 1931, p. 400; July 1933 p. 89-90; April 1934, p. 13; November 1935, pp. 222-3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, August 1928, p. 168.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, December 1923, p. 333.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, May 1923, p. 106.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, January 1923, pp. 418-20.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, December 1923, pp. 326-28.

Congregational women responded to the interest of their denomination in international relations through their traditional role as wives and mothers and, in particular, through their role as consumers and educators. They were also influenced by the interest of the international and regional women's movements in pacifism.³⁰ Locally, the Australian female peace movement reflected international trends in feminism in which women's organisations increasingly employed strategies of education and political lobbying to achieve their aims.³¹ The development of organised Australian feminism occurred as part of a response to the First World War. In 1921, Jessie Street and Bessie Rischbieth founded the Australian Federation of Women Voters partly as a female alternative to the League of Nations Union.³² Feminists and peace activists noted that of the different Christian denominations, Congregational women were particularly concerned about the issue of peace. One contemporary, Eleanor M Moore from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, noted in her survey of peace activists that the Victorian Congregational Women's Association was unusual among Christian women's organisations as it had "made world peace one of its habitual concerns."³³

Historians Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp have shown how leaders in the international women's movement could exert normative pressure on members to believe that the

³⁰ Mrinalini Sinha, Donna J. Guy, and Angela Woollacott, "Introduction: Why Feminisms and Internationalism?", *Gender and History*, vol. 10, no. 3, November 1998, pp. 345-357; Angela Woollacott, "Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women's Internationalist Activism in the 1920s-30s", *Gender and History*, vol. 10, no. 3, November 1998, pp. 425-448.

³¹ Rasmussen, *The Lesser Evil?*, p. 27; Eleanor M. Moore, *The Quest For Peace as I Have Known it in Australia* (Melbourne: Wilkie and Co, c.1948); Malcolm Saunders, *Quiet Dissenter: the Life and Thought of An Australian Pacifist: Eleanor May Moore, 1875-1949* (Canberra: Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, 1993); Malcolm Saunders, "Women Fighting for Peace: Charles Strong and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom", *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol. 64, no. 1, April 1993, pp. 4-27; Pat Gowland, "The Women's Peace Army" in Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed), *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia, 1788-1978* (Melbourne: Fontana/Collins, 1980), pp. 216-234.

³² Rasmussen, *A Lesser Evil?*, pp. 12-15.

³³ Moore, *The Quest for Peace as I Have Known it in Australia*, p. 154.

biological capacity of women to bear children made them “inherently pacifistic”.³⁴ Australian Congregational women supported such a view and drew on the work of individuals such as novelist Olive Schreiner, who had argued for a place for women in politics because women were more at risk of death than were men on a battlefield.³⁵ Congregational women also drew on the thought of Jane Addams who had called for women across the world to unite in opposition to war. She claimed that due to their cultural responsibilities women might more readily transcend nationality, in a common fear of the destruction of their children in war, than could men.³⁶ Peace was an issue that united Congregational women in spite of their other political differences. In 1935, for example, Constance McRitchie, President of the CCWS in South Australia, declared to the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand that despite differences of opinion among women in relation to social questions, they “would, she was sure, all vote against war.”³⁷

Congregational women expressed their commitment to pacifism in a variety of ways. A very small number of Congregational women learned Esperanto and also became involved in direct political lobbying. Much larger numbers of women, as members of the guilds, heard occasional lectures that supported a feminist perspective on war and

³⁴ Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, “Forging Feminist Identity in an International Movement: A Collective Identity Approach to Twentieth Century Feminism”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1999, pp. 363-386, p. 377.

³⁵ Olive Schreiner, *Woman and Labor* (New York: F A Stokes, 1911) quoted in Eleanor M. Wood Papers ML MSS 2077/6/1/7, Mitchell Library, Sydney; See also *Australian Christian World*, 13 March 1925, p. 5.

³⁶ Linda K. Schott, *Reconstructing Women's Thoughts: The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Before World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 38-54; John C. Farrell, *Beloved Lady: A History of Jane Addams' Ideas on Reform and Peace* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press: 1967), p. 150; See also Jo Vellacott, “A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory: The Early Work of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom”, *Women's History Review*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1993, pp. 23-56; See, for example, *Australian Christian World*, 13 March 1925, p. 8; 20 March 1925, pp. 6-7.

³⁷ *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand*, Hobart, 1935, p. 31.

peace. In South Australia, for example, Mrs E Carlyle McDonnell, an Anglican who eventually became a substitute delegate to the League of Nations Assembly in 1928, argued that women, as the chief sufferers of war, should work for peace among children.³⁸ Female members of Congregational women's guilds could readily identify themselves with campaigns such as economic boycotts that reflected their traditional role as consumers. In particular, Congregational women encouraged their members to boycott German goods, war toys, and books that would "awaken the war spirit". As an alternative to these products, they encouraged mothers to give their children a liberal education through constructive toys such as meccano sets and also by reading stories to them about nature, countries other than Australia, and heroic acts of peace. Congregational women boldly called their members to "Disarm the nursery!" They believed adamantly that: "AS YOU SHAPE THE YOUNG, SO YOU SHAPE THE FUTURE!"³⁹

Social Welfare

As Congregational women developed an interest in international affairs, they also became concerned about the development of Australian welfare policy.⁴⁰ Jill Roe has argued that contrary to the assumptions of T H Marshall, an influential theorist of political citizenship, access to it contained no guarantee that other forms of citizenship would follow. Roe contends that the movement from charitable allowances to the

³⁸ Hudson, *Australia and the League of Nations*, p. 195; *SA Congregationalist*, September 1923, pp. 234-5; 1 January 1924, pp. 38-9.

³⁹ *Congregationalist*, 10 April 1925, pp. 4-5. Capitals in Original.

⁴⁰ For the national context see Thomas H. Kewley, *Social Security in Australia: 1900-1972* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1973); Kewley, *Australian Social Security Today: Major Developments for 1900-1978* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1980); Rob Watts, *Foundations of the National Welfare State* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987); Richard Kennedy (ed), *Australian Welfare History: Critical Essays* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1982); Kennedy, *Australian Welfare: Historical Sociology* (South Melbourne: Macmillan Australia, 1989); Brian Dickey, *No Charity There: A Short History of Social Welfare in Australia* (West Melbourne: Nelson, 1980).

conferral by the state of statutory benefits was a response by Australian governments to political pressure from claimant groups. Government intervention in the creation of the welfare state served to alleviate the disadvantage of women in the labour market and their assumed reliance on private support. The introduction, over the twentieth century, of a range of measures designed to assist women such as widow's pensions, supporting parent benefits, family allowances, childcare centres, and women's refuges represented a partial improvement in the position of women. But in the absence of changes to employment, wage structures, and an adequate provision of childcare services, these new measures effectively transferred the dependency of women from reliance on the male breadwinner to reliance on the state. The extension of welfare services was achieved, therefore, on the basis of established principles, rather than a systematic critique of them.⁴¹

By the interwar period, successive Federal Governments had directed a number of industrial and welfare reforms to the male labourer such as age and invalid pensions (1908), and a basic or family wage in the Harvester Judgement (1907). Women became concerned with support for motherhood. The universal maternity allowance (1912), an isolated medical benefit, was designed to support women through childbirth, but was intended for the welfare of children rather than the welfare of women. After the war, the state also created a segregated system of welfare based on the distinction of war service. It introduced war widow's pensions in 1914 on a non-contributory the basis as it had done with aged and invalid pensions. The *Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act*, the cornerstone of new forms of inequality in the welfare state created after the war, was

⁴¹ Jill Roe, "The End is Where We Start From: Women and Welfare since 1901" in Cora Baldock and Bettina Cass (eds), *Women, Social Welfare and the State in Australia* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), pp. 1-19. See also Jill Roe (ed), *Social Policy in Australia: Some Perspectives, 1901-1975* (Stanmore, NSW: Cassell Australia, 1976).

established in 1920. Widow's pensions that did not require a husband's military service were not introduced until the 1940s and were lower than the three existing pensions.⁴²

The introduction of the system of war welfare slowed the development of collective health care, which became a priority for Australian social policy makers in the 1920s as the researches of women doctors had revealed the extent of latent venereal disease in women. Healthcare remained a matter of individual responsibility, and access to medical and hospital services remained dependent upon charitable institutions that employed women who were often poorly remunerated. The medical profession resisted collective responsibility for healthcare, valuing economic independence from the state through charitable service provision. The introduction of benefits outlined above had failed to address the high rates of maternal and infant mortality, which, in Australia, was not reduced to international standards until the 1940s. In the 1920s, maternal mortality was responsible for one-sixth of married women's deaths in early to mid-adult life. Infant mortality in the first week of birth was higher than average, although general rates of infant mortality dropped in the interwar period. Child endowment was introduced in New South Wales in 1926. Improvement in women's health after 1918 came from voluntary efforts, located between policy reform and service provision.⁴³

Marilyn Lake has built on Roe's research with the argument that women tried to achieve economic independence by invoking the concept of the citizen mother who was as deserving of assistance from the state as the citizen soldier.⁴⁴ Lake has neither

⁴² Roe, "The End is Where We Start From".

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Marilyn Lake, "Mission Impossible: How Men Gave Birth to the Australian Nation – Nationalism, Gender and Other Seminal Acts", *Gender and History*, vol. 4, no. 3, Autumn 1992, pp. 305-322; Marilyn Lake, "The Independence of Women and the Brotherhood of Man: Debates in the Labour Movement over Equal Pay and Motherhood Endowment in the 1920s", *Labour History*, vol. 63, November 1992, pp. 1-24.

explored the religious basis of this identity, nor commented on the fact that maternal citizenship was an inadequate basis for identity as it sought to extend to women the privileged status of the soldier-citizen. A more significant and widespread response to war than that outlined by Lake was the way Christian women sought to make their lives a living memorial of service for the sake of those who had died in battle, in order that such destruction might never occur again. I will return to discussion of this argument towards the end of the chapter.

The available source material does not reveal whether either Australian Congregationalism or Congregational women developed a clear view on welfare policy as it related to women and children. There were, however, precedents for progressive views from within the denomination from the earlier period of social reform in the 1890s. Congregationalists were among the churches in South Australia, for example, who were successful in raising the age of consent to 16, increasing state responsibility for child protection, and providing endowment for unmarried mothers (1898) and family maintenance in cases of separation (1918).⁴⁵ They also fostered growth in traditional approaches to benevolence and mission work that sought to respond to the particular circumstances of the aftermath of the First World War. As discussed in Chapter 2, the expansion of community services during the 1920s in Congregationalism included a mission, two schools, and an orphanage, while members of the churches also supported interdenominational children's homes.

⁴⁵ Walter Phillips, "The Influence of Congregationalism in SA, 1837-1915" (BA Hons. thesis, University of Adelaide, 1957), p. 131.

The missions appealed to a Congregational understanding of the relationship between the individual and God and also to the traditional responsibilities of women as they sought to provide a Christian home for destitute children. The Rev Wilf J Magor who founded Whitefield's Institute in 1927 in the industrial suburb of Hindmarsh, South Australia, brought the Congregational understanding of ministerial rather than magisterial authority, that is pastoral rather than absolute authority, to his work with the poor.⁴⁶ He believed that dependence and unworthiness was the state of the Christian before God and that to provide "the Gospel of Reconciliation" to all was better than condemnation.⁴⁷ Magor appealed to Congregational women to spare their Wednesday afternoon to provide a creche for women with children so that they could attend a mothers' meeting.⁴⁸ The mothers' meeting sought to provide women with respite from child-rearing, a form of entertainment, and an informal environment to discuss the challenges of motherhood. Ministers in the denomination supported these meetings as a form of assistance that was preventive, rather than merely ameliorative. The Rev J E James, for example, believed that the mother's meeting was one way the Church would not be "merely the Red Cross following the fighters and picking up the wounded. It has to stop the battle."⁴⁹ Magor believed that the church should work with children as they were "citizens in the making," and that "this act of Christian charity cannot fail to leave its mark on their future."⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *SA Congregationalist*, August 1927, pp. 176-7; October 1928, p. 291. Allan Jack Barnes and John Cameron, *Since 1838: A History of the Hindmarsh Uniting (Congregational) Church, 1838-1982: Written to Commemorate the Centenary of the Present Building* (Hindmarsh, 1982). See also Don Sarre, *Whitefield's Institute 1927-1935*, Flinders University course essay, 1980, quoted in Dickey, *Rations, Residence, Resources*, p. 111.

⁴⁷ *SA Congregationalist*, September 1928, p. 221.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, September 1927, p. 206.

⁴⁹ *Congregationalist*, 1 February 1920, p. 3.

⁵⁰ *SA Congregationalist*, August 1929, p. 171.

Among Congregationalists there were also significant individuals who served in the state child welfare bureaucracy, such as Walter Hutley (1858-1931), who had been an artisan missionary in Africa for 19 years and had settled in Port Adelaide in 1884. By the time of his appointment as Chairman of the Congregational Union of South Australia in 1923, his interests included the Liberal Union, the Aborigines' Friends' Association and the Mental Defectives' Board. He had served for nine years on the State Children's Council and for much of that period had been President, playing a key role in reforms such as the appointment of female police in 1915.⁵¹ Hutley supported child endowment, particularly for single mothers. Unlike Victorian Presbyterianism and the WCTU, who believed that such entitlements would form a threat to the family, Hutley supported government welfare.⁵²

Support for motherhood

Congregational women reflected the concern of their denomination for community and government assistance to support motherhood. They sought to provide a spiritual perspective to a society that they believed had become preoccupied with the scientific aspects of mothering. They did so practically, through voluntary activities such as maternity assistance through the women's guild system, and by providing community services. They also sought to establish their own denominational institutions such as women's and children's hospitals, private girls' schools, and orphanages. Congregational women did not realise all of their aspirations, however, because the small size and decentralised structure of the denomination meant that it lacked resources

⁵¹ Gibbney and Smith, *A Biographical Register, 1788-1939: Notes from the name index of the ADB* vol I, A-K (1987) p. 355; Tim Prenzler, "Women in Australian Policing: An Historical Overview", *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 42, September 1994, pp. 78-88.

⁵² Congregational Union of South Australia, *Miscellaneous Newspaper Cuttings 1914-1924*, SRG 95/193, State Library of South Australia; Renate Howe and Shurlee Swain, "Saving the Child and Punishing the Mother: Single Mothers and the State, 1912-1942" in *Women and the State: Australian Perspectives* special issue of *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 37, 1993, pp. 31-46.

to establish major institutions. Some Congregational women, who held progressive political views, used their education, personal skills, and their advocacy work through the women's movement to expand the state bureaucracy in child welfare.

Social concern for the conditions of motherhood in South Australia, for example, had resulted in the growth of institutions such as the Queen's Home (1902) and the School for Mothers (1909) that eventually became the Mothers' and Babies' Health Association (1926).⁵³ Congregational women supported such institutions and also encouraged women to explore ways to raise their children in Christian citizenship. They were concerned that children could be "the means of bringing mothers nearer to God, but they certainly often keep them away from the Church." They therefore sought to provide friendship circles for mothers that would be a spiritual equivalent of the Mothers' and Babies' Health Association in order to "draw the mothers and their little ones near to Him who loved and called them."⁵⁴

Congregational women sought to support mothers raising children who would become social leaders through the establishment of institutions such as King's College, the first Congregational-Baptist school in the Commonwealth, established as a joint venture in 1924. They supported the school through fetes, sale of craftwork, and the production of the *Green and Gold Cookery Book*.⁵⁵ Congregational women also used the guild system and church institutions to focus their concern on women who were in need of practical assistance after the First World War, such as the wives of men who were unemployed or had addictions, Aboriginal women, immigrants from Britain, and the victims of war

⁵³ See, for example, Helen Jones, *In Her Own Name: A History of Women in South Australia from 1836* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2nd edn. 1994).

⁵⁴ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1926, p. 231; see also March 1922, pp. 64-5; August 1922, p. 231; December 1922, p. 393.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, November 1923, p. 319.

who lived overseas.⁵⁶ They imagined themselves as mothers in relation to these women and considered that their particular task, in relation to immigrant women, was “to mother girls, who are starting life afresh in a strange land.”⁵⁷

Congregational women developed coalitions of women to pursue these ventures. The efforts of Congregational women from Johnston Memorial Congregational Church, Fremantle, Western Australia, to build such a coalition, provides a good example of their work in the resettlement of migrant women. Congregational women directed their efforts through the Fremantle Branch of the Women’s Immigration Auxiliary (WIA), composed of representatives of the Christian churches and the Women’s Service Guild. They generously responded to the request from Beatrice East, the Secretary of the WIA, calling the churches to pledge bundles of baby clothes twice a year.⁵⁸

Through giving gifts such as maternity bags, Congregational women believed that they would play a material and also a psychological role in child rearing. Their involvement in the campaign coordinated by the Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom for relief of women in Europe illustrates this belief.⁵⁹ In 1922, in South Australia, Mrs Annie Wilton (who was married to Professor Wilton, Secretary of the South Australian Committee for the Relief of Stricken Europe) launched an appeal for garments for the maternity hospitals of central Europe. Wilton asked members of the Congregational Church Women’s Society to provide one old or new garment, and a

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, June 1929, p. 102.

⁵⁷ *Congregationalist*, 10 August 1925, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Minutes of Meetings of Church Members, Johnston Memorial Congregational Church MN257/ACC1565A/5, Batty Library, Perth; Johnston Memorial Church 73rd Annual Report, year ending 30 June 1926, MN257/ACC1565A/32, Batty Library; Congregational Union of Western Australia, Immigration Committee Half-Yearly Reports May 1926-7, MN257/2/ACC1807A/110, Batty Library; *Western Congregationalist*, 7 February 1924, p. 8; 17 April 1924, pp. 12-13; 5 June 1924, pp. 12-13; 11 September 1924, pp. 8-9; 9 October 1924, p. 14.

⁵⁹ Vellacott, “A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory”, p. 41.

cake of soap. She also asked them to encourage two other women to provide the same. The society provided over 1000 gifts for the hospitals and the following year, a further appeal received a similar response.⁶⁰ The *SA Congregationalist* observed approvingly:

These warm, well-made things will be the greatest comfort to some of these poor women...Only second in importance to the bodily comfort and relief of such a gift is its moral effect. To these suffering folk, the knowledge that people on the other side of the world are thinking of them, caring for them, trying to relieve their distress, will come as a cordial to those who were ready to sink under the burden of want and discouragement. The loving sympathy so practically shown will call forth blessing of them that were ready to perish.⁶¹

At the missions, Congregational women were involved in activities such as throwing parties for women and children and catering luncheons for the unemployed.⁶² Although it is difficult to determine how these efforts were received, a measure of reciprocity is present in Congregational sources. Soup kitchens and emergency assistance provided material relief. Some women who the missionaries believed were in need of assistance, sought to assist the mission in return with sewing and financial support.⁶³ But mothers' meetings, which could attract over 130 members during the Depression, did offer women who were likely to be socially isolated a period of respite from child rearing and adult education.⁶⁴ At a Christmas social, for example, Congregational women provided childcare, afternoon tea, and Christmas hampers that contained a plum pudding, a parcel, a dozen eggs, and icecream. Over 70 mothers created their own programme of singing and reciting, they "moved and carried a hearty vote of thanks to the workers", and "wended their way home with happy hearts".⁶⁵

⁶⁰ *SA Congregationalist*, December 1922, p. 393; August 1922, pp. 231-2; June 1923, p. 135.

⁶¹ *SA Congregationalist*, August 1922, p. 232.

⁶² See, for example, *Ibid.*, October 1928, p. 269; Whitefield's Hindmarsh Records SRG 95/136, State Library of South Australia.

⁶³ *SA Congregationalist*, July 1928, p. 158; November 1927, p. 327; December 1927, p. 358; October 1928, pp. 263-4; April 1929, p. 62; October 1932, pp. 202-3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, October 1932, p. 202.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, January 1929, pp. 386-7.

Political lobbying

These efforts at assisting women could lead Congregational women to moralism, but they also could lead women who held progressive views to argue that women's traditional voluntary activities should become publicly-supported social services. Congregational women sought to extend the metaphor of mothering, which they had used to conceptualise their own voluntary efforts, to the role of the state as a provider of community services. The career of Mrs Robina F Cowper illustrates this. Mrs Cowper was Convenor of the Public Questions Committee of the Congregational Union of Victoria and had served on national Congregational and ecumenical public questions committees. Born in 1866 at Sandridge, the eldest daughter of twelve children of Scottish Presbyterians, she became a Congregationalist upon her marriage to Charles William Cowper, a deacon and Sunday school teacher of Augustine Congregational Church, Hawthorn, in 1891. Four years later, her only child died young and she began to devote her life to public work. A talented musician and popular lay preacher before the First World War, she worked on *The Clarion*, a journal for the Women's Home Mission Committee of the Congregational Union of Victoria. After the war, in her role on Public Questions Committees, she argued for temperance, child protection, and the appointment of female police. She worked for the Woman's Christian Temperance Union briefly before moving to the Women's Department of the Anti-Liquor League. A magistrate of the Children's Court, Cowper believed that the state, as the child's "Deputy Mother", should protect its interests by adequate enforcement of law, particularly in relation to the social questions of gambling and alcohol.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ *Western Congregationalist*, 8 October 1925, pp. 8-11; *Proceedings of the Ninth Triennial Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand*, Hobart, 1925; Alison Head, "Searching for Mrs Cowper", *Proceedings of the Uniting Church Historical Society (Victoria)*, vol. 11, no. 1, June 2004, pp. 35-40; Congregational Union of Victoria, Minutes of the Public Questions Committee 1927-1929, MS 9239/5/1, La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

In South Australia, while the Congregational Church Women's Society was silent on the matter of child endowment, Congregational women of more liberal social conscience in the Women's Non-Party Association pursued political lobbying.⁶⁷ Miss Blanche Stephens, Secretary of the Association from 1921 to 1941 and a member of the Public Questions Committee of the Congregational Union, gave evidence to the 1928 Royal Commission on Child Endowment. She argued that child endowment should be paid to all regardless of wage regulation, that it should be funded by the government from a central fund and paid to the mother.⁶⁸

Some Congregational women gained positions of responsibility and contributed to the growth of the state bureaucracy in child welfare. Dr Ida Gertrude Halley (1867-1939), was an important leader in the field of child welfare. Daughter of the Rev Jacob John Halley, she was one of the first medical students at Melbourne University. Dr Halley was a founder of the Queen Victoria Hospital, Melbourne, and served as its Treasurer.⁶⁹ After a period of private practice, she started the school medical service in Tasmania in 1906 before proceeding to a similar appointment in Sydney in 1910. She was appointed the first Medical Inspector of Schools in South Australia in 1913, and became a member of Clayton Congregational Church. A system of school medical care had long existed in other states, but had not been developed in South Australia due to economic constraints within the Education Department. After systematic visits and examinations, Halley concluded her report, written in 1914, arguing that there was significant need in South Australia to treat preventable illnesses and in particular, to provide dental care and mental health care to children in the state education system. She believed in educating

⁶⁷ Vivienne Szekeres, "History of the League of Women Voters in South Australia, 1909-1976" (B.A. Hons. thesis, University of Adelaide, 1976), p. 40; Elaine Martin and Nancy Bates, "The South Australian League of Women Voters and the Post-War Women's Movement", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 24, 1996, pp. 5-27.

⁶⁸ *Non-Party News*, March 1928, p. 3.

parents to maintain their children's health and advocated: the introduction of intelligence tests into schools, separate teaching for the mentally-impaired, model playgrounds, and an expansion of school medical facilities. In 1921, a full-time dentist was appointed to the South Australian school medical department, and a qualified psychologist, Dr Constance Davey, was appointed in 1924. Halley was also a founder of mothers' clubs established initially in 1918 in Norwood, and an advocate for improved housing conditions. She was a member of a number of women's associations, including the Women's Non-Party Association, the League of Loyal Women, the National Council of Women, and the South Australian Medical Women's Association (SAMWA) founded in 1927 to establish a women's and children's hospital.⁷⁰

The relationship of white Congregational women to indigenous women

While Congregational women assumed that they would "mother" other white women until they could contribute to Congregationalism or to society as equals, this was not the case for their work with indigenous women. Their view of indigenous women was a product of the continued split between "church" and "mission" in the organisation of Christianity. As a consequence, they did not view indigenous women as either members of the church or the wider community. Their tentative attempts to address the conditions of indigenous women, which were evident from the inter-war period, reflected shifts in the broader feminist movement. In the early 1920s, white Congregational women did not seek to address the needs of indigenous women much beyond material assistance, especially after the government became responsible for the administration of the

⁶⁹ ADB, vol. 9, pp. 170-1.

⁷⁰ M. Hutton Neve, *This Mad Folly': the History of Australia's Pioneer Women Doctors* (Sydney: Library of Australian History, 1980), pp. 132, 148-9; Helen Jones, *In Her Own Name*, pp. 248, 250, 287; *Housewife*, November 1929, pp. 7-8; Emma Russell, *Bricks or Spirit? The Queen Victoria Hospital Melbourne* (Monash Medical Centre: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1997).

missions.⁷¹ By the late 1920s, however, their views began to change under the influence of leaders who were also members of the Women's Non-Party Association such as Constance McRitchie. By 1928, the position of Congregational women on indigenous issues had brought them into conflict with trade unions.⁷² But their advocacy of the economic and cultural needs of indigenous women did not translate into a sustained critique of the place of indigenous women within their church. White Congregational women did seek to incorporate indigenous women into the life of Congregationalism as equals in 1933 when they paid the expenses for two Aboriginal women delegates from Point McLeay to attend the meetings of the South Australian Congregational Union. But this was an isolated gesture and Aboriginal women did not become regular members of the meetings of the Congregational Union.⁷³ The position of indigenous people within the denomination would not be resolved until eight years after church union, with the creation of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress in 1985.

The prophetic role of white Congregational women in relation to indigenous women could also be viewed as conservative in relation to the standards set by women such as Constance Cooke, a member of the Women's Non-Party Association and Australian Federation of Women Voters. Cooke was the most significant Australian white female lobbyist for indigenous people in the interwar period. She sought to bring international opinion to bear on discussion of indigenous issues. Mrs C R Morris, by contrast, was exemplifies those Congregational women who believed that discussion of indigenous affairs should remain internal to Australian politics. As a consequence, she did not

⁷¹ See, for example, *SA Congregationalist*, 1 March 1926, p. 20.

⁷² *Ibid.*, October 1928, p. 269.

⁷³ *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand*, Sydney, 1933, p. 34.

support challenges to the Australian Government by women such as Cooke through international conventions such as the British Commonwealth League. Historian Fiona Paisley has shown how Morris used her position in the Liberal Party to alert the government to a particular meeting of the Australian Federation of Women Voters that had focused on indigenous policy and to influence the government's reaction to it.⁷⁴

Female missionaries had provided support for legislation that would lead to the separation of Aboriginal teenage girls from their parents for domestic training. In the 1913 Royal Commission into the conditions of indigenous people, Mrs Francis Garnett, a missionary at Point Pearce who had also worked at Point McLeay, advocated a compulsory system of removal of indigenous girls for training in domestic service. Revealingly, she argued that this was necessary due to perceived lack of voluntary commitment by indigenous girls to domestic service.⁷⁵ This recommendation eventually became law on 20 September 1923, but indigenous women from Point McLeay used their education in Christian rhetoric to protest against the bill. Russell McGregor has noted that the creation of organised aboriginal activism in the 1930s relied on a concept of civilisation rather than a concept of aboriginality.⁷⁶ In December 1921, three indigenous men, Willy Rankine, Leonard Campbell, and John Stanley sent a petition written by Eileen N Kropinyeri to the Governor of South Australia. Kropinyeri argued that the effect of the new law was to set indigenous and non-indigenous people in

⁷⁴ Fiona Paisley, "For a Brighter Day: Constance Ternent Cooke" in Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins, and Fiona Paisley (eds), *A Certain Degree of Rage: White Women and Aboriginal History* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, forthcoming 2005); See also Paisley, *Loving Protection: Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights, 1919-1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), pp. 6, 15-6, 21-2, 30, 45, 51, 55, 66-8, 85, 88, 91, 106.

⁷⁵ John Harris, *One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: a Story of Hope* (Sydney: Albatross Books, 1994), p. 592.

⁷⁶ Russell McGregor, "Protest and Progress: Aboriginal Activism in the 1930s", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 25, no. 101, October 1993, pp. 555-68. See also McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1939* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1997).

conflict with one another. The supporters of the bill, the forces of “intellect”, who represented “Right” faced “a very strange army, possessing no weapons of war, no intellectual power, no Parliamentary eloquence, not a grain of science in the whole body, that makes the army of motherhood. The only piece of artillery which that army possesses is the weapon called love.” Kropinyeri noted the irony that the parliament had also claimed to represent “Love”, but by its action had revealed its true motivation. She considered that the force of “Intellect...thunder(ed) forth” its “intellectual arguments again and again, propelled by the full force of scientific facts”. But ultimately, “intellect” lacked moral credibility in the face of the challenge from “Poor motherhood”. Kropinyeri concluded: “The question is asked, Who wins? The bar of eternal justice, truth and righteousness awaits your verdict! What say you?”⁷⁷

Depression and war

The prophetic role of white Congregational women remained largely untouched by such challenges from indigenous women. They did not begin to question their complicity in racial discourses until the late 1930s when large numbers of women in the Australian Federation of Women Voters, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, and the Housewives Association began to recognise the impact of the colonisation and dispossession of indigenous people. White Congregational women generally did not accommodate this critique as they sought to respond to the economic depression and the threat of war. Although the depression led some Congregationalists to a crisis of belief, for others it strengthened their resolve to express the Christian faith in advocacy and acts of service.⁷⁸ Through their increased involvement in philanthropic work – which

⁷⁷ *Register*, 21 December 1923, p. 9.

⁷⁸ Linda McLean, *Pumpkin Pie and Faded Sandshoes* (Sydney: Apcol, 1981), p. 131; Jean Parkin, *The Spire on the Parade: A Centenary History* (Adelaide East Parish of the Uniting Church in Australia, 1984), pp. 16-17.

could be a welcome diversion from concern for the welfare of one's own family – Congregationalists could point to a “new denominational consciousness”.⁷⁹ But resources for provision of services were stretched at the missions, for example, where kitchens were forced to close.⁸⁰ In their approach to employment relief, Congregational women's help could serve to reinforce the traditional sexual division of labour and the concentration of women in traditional occupations. In response to male unemployment, they supported the Gala Committee of Kuitpo Colony, run by Ida Forsyth, a Methodist minister's wife. Kuitpo Colony was an agricultural training scheme that became the most significant program to reduce unemployment among men in South Australia. Congregational women also referred girls they considered worth training as certified house assistants to the Young People's Employment Council.⁸¹

In South Australia, the introduction by the Butler Government of increased opportunities for betting prompted Congregationalists to pursue a more concerted advocacy role.⁸² During the 1930s, Congregational women became concerned about the implications of protracted unemployment for the young, particularly the connections between the lack of employment for young men and increased opportunities for gambling and drinking. They worked on this question through the CCWS and also contributed to the advocacy work of other societies such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Opposition to gambling had broad appeal among Congregational women, especially those on the conservative side of politics, such as Mrs C R Morris, who argued that legalising betting drew women into what had been an all-male

⁷⁹ *SA Congregationalist*, July 1930, p. 136; *Western Congregationalist*, 7 August 1931, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁰ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1932, p. 203.

⁸¹ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1932, p. 174; August 1933, p. 118; *Housewife*, 13 April 1932, pp. 31-2.

⁸² *SA Congregationalist*, October 1931, p. 199; March 1934, p. 350; March 1937, p. 415; Congregational Church Women's Society, SRG 95/34/1-2, Congregational Union of South Australia, *Yearbook and Handbooks*, 1920-1939 and also Public Questions Committee, SRG 95/36/1-2, State Library of South Australia.

environment.⁸³ On the basis of her experience as an organiser at Halifax Street Mission, Mrs Constance McRitchie represented the Congregational Church Women's Society to the 1939 Royal Commission on Betting Laws and Practice.⁸⁴ Margaret L Knauerhase provided the WCTU with a detailed eyewitness account of her experience as part of the generation that grew up in the 1930s, in the shadow of the First World War. Knauerhase explored the impact on her peers of unemployment, gambling, and alcohol according to class.⁸⁵ The WCTU used her evidence, their own charts of drinking and gambling behaviour patterns among men, as well as evidence of the increase in the number of cases before the Children's Court, to demonstrate the adverse impacts of gambling on the home in their submission to the inquiry.⁸⁶

During the 1930s, white Congregational women also shared the renewed concern of their church for world peace in response to the rise of fascism.⁸⁷ As the threat of war had deepened over the 1930s, the mood of Congregationalists had turned from hope to resignation. Ministers such as the Rev A J Moyle had been optimistic that the Disarmament Conference of 1932 would be "a bright star on a dark sky"⁸⁸ but by the mid-1930s, others such as the Rev Frank de Lisle had begun to ask: "Have the sacrifices of war been in vain? We were promised a world peace, security, stability, but to-day the whole fabric is tottering."⁸⁹ Church leaders became particularly anxious about whether they could rely ultimately on the support of their members to provide moral sanctions.⁹⁰

⁸³ Congregational Church Women's Society Minutes, 12 February 1934, SRG 95/34/2, State Library of South Australia; South Australian Parliamentary Papers 1938, 70, p. 160 and 1933, 60, pp. 3-72 quoted in Raftery, "Till Every Foe is Vanquished", p. 171.

⁸⁴ *SA Congregationalist*, March 1939, p. 326.

⁸⁵ *White Ribbon Signal*, 1 January 1938, pp. 16-7.

⁸⁶ Woman's Christian Temperance Union Records, Gambling Inquiry, SRG 186/95, State Library of South Australia.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Congregational Union of South Australia, *Yearbooks*, 1933-39; See also Public Questions Committee, SRG 95/36/1-2 and Congregational Church Women's Society, SRG 95/34/2.

⁸⁸ *SA Congregationalist*, January 1932, p. 288.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, December 1935, p. 263.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, November 1929, p. 317.

In 1935, the South Australian Congregational Union Meetings bitterly recalled the pledge that the ministers in English and Welsh Congregationalism had taken in 1926, to refuse to fight under any circumstances. They resolved, instead, that if another war broke out, they would seek to show that they had at least learned from the impact of the First World War and would work to prevent conscription and “jingoism”. South Australian Congregationalists vowed to continue to educate the public toward anti-conscription, which would help prevent the Federal Government declaring a state of emergency in which the Constitution could be over-ridden. “The pulpit could do much to foster this spirit”, they argued.⁹¹

Despite despondency about the possibility of war, Congregationalists increased their efforts in relation to education and advocacy. The organisation of trade unions and Christian churches in response to the International Peace Campaign, a movement of supporters of the LNU started in 1936, provided a focus for activity within Congregationalism and also a forum in which they could express their views to a wider audience.⁹² They sought to foster Christian citizenship against the threat of fascism, by encouraging new clubs for youth and particular activities such as the recitation of a creed in Australian schools at League of Nations celebrations, written by Professor Walter Murdoch.⁹³ The Christian Social Order Movement, an ecumenical association that sought to foster political reflection started by an Anglican parish of the Weston Maitland coalfields in 1936, attracted the interest of a small group of Congregational ministers in South Australia. Its central aim was church unity to prevent war.⁹⁴ The

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, June 1935, p. 83.

⁹² Rasmussen, *The Lesser Evil?*, pp. 70-95.

⁹³ *Congregationalist*, 7 January 1937, p. 11; *SA Congregationalist*, January 1937, pp. 347-349.

⁹⁴ *SA Congregationalist*, January 1937, pp. 339-349; Joan Mansfield, “The Christian Social Order Movement, 1943-1951”, *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 15, no. 1, June 1988, pp. 109-127; Mansfield, “The Social Gospel and the Church of England in New South Wales in the 1930s”, *Journal of Religious*

Rev W W F Pratt started a journal in which he promoted his opposition to war.⁹⁵ Activities in South Australia included united citizenship rallies that attracted large attendances in 1938.⁹⁶ In Melbourne, in May of that year, two former schoolboys of Melbourne's Wesley College, Alister Kershaw and Kenneth Rivett, a Quaker who was a grandson of the Rev Albert Rivett, started the Australian branch of the Peace Pledge Union.⁹⁷

Congregationalists maintained their opposition to the manufacture of armaments and joined the large group of Australians who supported the workers in the Port Kembla dispute in 1938.⁹⁸ Two years earlier, the Public Questions Committee of the South Australian Congregational Union suggested that the Federal Government was preparing for war by refusing to redistribute mandated territories in the Pacific. The *SA Congregationalist* argued:

Any attempt seriously to restrict the trade of a country like Japan must intensify the spirit of Imperialism and militarism, and lead the aggrieved country to fresh aggressions. If we are to avoid war we must consider the viewpoint and needs of nations with a limited area and an expanding population. These nations are entitled to economic outlets and opportunities, and must have them, either by our consent, or in our despite.⁹⁹

The result of this resolution was a "lively correspondence" with the Government.¹⁰⁰

The late 1930s saw Congregational women participate in the growth of a particularly female ecumenical culture within a wider ecumenical context, which sought to respond to the rise of fascism. Church union debates had reached a fruitful stage between

History, vol. 13, no. 4, 1985, pp. 413-5; Congregational Union of South Australia, Public Questions Committee, Minutes 17 October 1938, SRG 95/36/1.

⁹⁵ *Community*, April 1935-July 1939.

⁹⁶ *SA Congregationalist*, February 1938, p. 380.

⁹⁷ Rasmussen, *The Lesser Evil?*, p. 104.

⁹⁸ *SA Congregationalist*, July 1938, p. 94.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, August 1936, p. 157.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, December 1936, p. 294.

Methodists and Congregationalists such that by the mid-1930s, church union seemed to be imminent. State authorities also requested the Christian churches to unite in order to represent Christianity effectively in public events. In 1936 in South Australia, Christian women formed a Women's United Church Association and by 1939, women in Sydney had formed a similar organisation. During the pageant to celebrate the state centenary of South Australia, the government requested women from the nonconformist churches unite to form Float 233. This was the beginning of a network of women that also included Catholic and Jewish women, thereby reflecting an informal type of ecumenical association that was more extensive in membership than the formal Councils of Churches that existed at that time. The network sought "to unite the women of various denominations in community service and express our common faith against the aggression of materialism".¹⁰¹ In this forum, Congregational women developed a heightened awareness of both their similarity to and difference from other Christian women and Congregational female ministers were often expected to show significant leadership in these organisations by virtue of their access to the ministry in their own church.

The pageant was one of three events to mark the state centenary of South Australia in which this female ecumenical consciousness was developed. The second event was an ecumenical service held on Armistice Day, in Flinders Street Baptist Church that featured a mass choir and an address by the Rev Winifred Kiek, on the topic of "pioneer women".¹⁰² The third event was a united missionary exhibition that involved representatives from nine missionary societies and also from the YMCA and the

¹⁰¹ Ruby Peake (ed), *A History of Australian Church Women (SA Unit), Formerly Women's United Church Association, Women's Interchurch Council, Commemorating the Diamond Jubilee, 1936-1996* (Beverley: Print Media, 1996), p. 6.

¹⁰² W. Kiek, "Women Pioneers" Address, Centenary United Women's Service, Flinders Street Baptist Church, 11 November 1936, Kiek Papers, PRG 225/14.

YWCA in the Centennial Hall, Wayville, during the month of October. Eventually, the United Church Women's Association (UCWA) would become an important source of female identity among Christian women as the givers-of-life, with a duty to preserve it, which would be reinforced after the Second World War and in response to the development of atomic energy. The UCWA could also serve to reinforce existing notions of spiritual and racial superiority, however, among women who had previously seen themselves as among the "selfless helping the helpless".¹⁰³ The missionary exhibition, for example, was designed to show what the "South Australian churches have done for the people of India, China, Africa, Papua, the South Sea Islands and the Australian aborigines".¹⁰⁴

In these ecumenical contexts, Congregational women continued to develop their feminist perspective on peace. Key women involved in the peace movement included Margaret Holmes in Victoria, General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement, Annie Deans in Queensland, Dr Sibyl C Bevan in New South Wales who started the Congregational Women's Peace Fellowship in 1938, and Winifred Kiek, in South Australia, who was President of the Women's Committee of the International Peace Campaign.¹⁰⁵ These women did not seek peace at any price, however. For example, Kiek opposed Chamberlain's policy of appeasement and supported the views of Anthony Eden.¹⁰⁶ They continued to be engaged in political lobbying through membership of secular women's organisations and to extend their ideas to a wider group of women through these organisations. Mrs Jane Kerr from Victoria and Winifred

¹⁰³ *SA Congregationalist*, September 1936, pp. 186-8; October 1936, pp. 224, 232; December 1936, p. 293.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, September 1936, p. 188.

¹⁰⁵ Rasmussen, *The Lesser Evil?*, pp. 70-122; *Congregationalist*, 5 November 1936, p. 11; 3 July 1937, p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ Margaret Knauerhase, *Winifred: the Story of Winifred Kiek, the First Woman to be Ordained to the Christian Ministry in Australia, 1884-1975* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1978), p. 51.

Kiek were particularly active in the Australian Federation of Women Voters.¹⁰⁷ Kiek was especially concerned about the position of women in fascist states who were reduced to the role solely of child-bearers, in contrast to women in democratic societies who were regarded not simply as mothers, but as valuable citizens.¹⁰⁸

Eleanor Madeline Wood provides a clear case of a gendered perspective on war among Congregational women. Wood was one of the first graduates of the University of Sydney in History who later married George Arnold Wood, Professor of History at the University of Sydney. After she had raised her children, Wood worked as a teacher at Asham School, was active in the peace movement and represented the Congregational Women's Association of New South Wales on the National Council of Women, where she became Convener of the Peace and Arbitration Committee. She had been influenced by international conferences such as the Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship (1924) and the peace conference held in Brussels in 1936 that had started the International Peace Campaign. During that year she gave approximately twenty addresses and broadcasts in support of the campaign.¹⁰⁹ Wood was aware of the work of Christian intellectuals such as Norman Angell, Philip Gibbs, Ernest Raymond, Sir Richard Ackland, and William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury. She supported the general view of these writers that the role of Christian citizens was to influence public opinion to create moral sanctions such that a nation would not dare defy the League of Nations. As a Congregationalist, she was particularly concerned about the preparation of democratic states for war and the expectation that their citizens would

¹⁰⁷ Australian Federation of Women Voters Fifth Triennial Conference 1936, Women's Non-Party Association of South Australia Records SRG 116/23/1, State Library of South Australia.

¹⁰⁸ *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia*, Brisbane, 1939, pp. 36-7. See also W. Kiek, "Woman and Democracy" n.d. in Kiek Papers PRG 225/14.

¹⁰⁹ *League of Nations Bulletin*, April 1936, pp. 6-7, in Peace Committee vol. II, United Associations of Women Papers ML MSS 2160/142/1971, Box Y792/38, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

suspend the dictates of conscience in favour of it.¹¹⁰ She also helped realise the challenge that leaders in Australian Congregationalism (such as Principal Kiek) had given to church members to teach children internationalism. In celebrating Anzac Day, for example, Wood suggested that citizens might respond to the day by dedicating themselves to work toward peace. She believed that teachers had a particular role to play. In this task, they could provide “a great national service” if they imparted to their students the idea of the “International Mind in Daily Life”, that “God has given them the brains with which to settle every problem peacefully”. She suggested to parents that:

in solemnly celebrating Anzac Day, and in calling to mind those who gave their lives or wrecked their health and their careers for us, let us remind our children of the soldiers still suffering in our military hospitals and convalescent homes, and of those who are bravely carrying on their work under the burden of some physical or mental disability due to the war. Let us make our children realise that there are brave men in all nations similarly maimed and enfeebled, and that unless future wars are averted, millions of other men must suffer in the same way...with the young, rising generation, may grow a feeling of international understanding and good fellowship which may banish war forever from the face of the earth.¹¹¹

Wood’s ideas were also informed by the thought of the international women’s movement. She reflected its critique that war should not be considered simply as a debate between just war theory, or containment through international instruments such as the League of Nations. The women’s movement had shifted the focus of discussion on the justification of war to the impact of modern war on civilians, arguing that because civilian casualties were now so great, war could never be justified. A common expression of this view was a critique of the glorification of war. Wood argued: “What chivalry can there be in bombing defenceless towns? What bravery in poisoning a countryside one hundred miles away by simply pressing a button?”¹¹² For Wood, a woman should take an interest in politics because her life’s work in raising children was

¹¹⁰ The First World Peace Congress, Brussels, 3-6 September 1936, written 10 March 1937, E. M. Wood Papers, ML MSS 2077/6/3. See also *Australian Christian World*, 20 March 1925, p. 7.

¹¹¹ E. Madeline Wood, *The Training of Children in Peace Principles* (pamphlet n.d. circa 1920s), in Mitchell Library, Sydney.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

undermined by every step of the process of preparation for war, from spending on arms, to military training, and to war propaganda backed by business interests:

Men build bridges and dams, but it is women who build human lives. They risk their lives when children are born, and they wear themselves out in body and soul to perfect their work. It may take a man five or six years, working 8 hours a day, to build a bridge. It takes a woman twenty-one years of work, thought and care to build up a strong clean manhood or womanhood, and there is no eight-hour day in motherhood! Surely men did not realise this when they asserted that women should have no voice in the making of wars, since they did not risk their lives in the fighting line. Have not women throughout the ages produced and nurtured the munitions of war – the fighting men?¹¹³

Wood called for a range of strategies by which women might seek to influence the political process, from helping women to enter parliament to strengthening international non-government organisations, such as the World Student Christian Federation, the Young Men's Christian Association, the International Council of Women, the International Labour League, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She also called for the nationalisation of arms manufacture to prevent shareholders gaining profit at the expense of mothers. She called women to support the League of Nations as an institution that reflected values with which women, as wives and mothers, could identify readily: "The League of Nations is doing for Europe what every woman is doing for her own home – trying to keep order and peace by reason and persuasion and by setting a standard of conduct for those around her."¹¹⁴ But like others of her generation, Wood's perspective on the role of white women in international relations replicated traditional views of the moral responsibility of white women to speak on behalf of women of other nations. She believed that white Western women were needed in international politics, to speak on behalf of their inarticulate sisters. She argued that:

We women here who have liberty to speak must voice the opinion of inarticulate women in less fortunate countries, in denouncing war as utterly foolish, futile and wicked.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Women's Work for Peace, Wood Papers, ML MSS 2077/6/2/4.

¹¹⁴ The League of Nations, Wood Papers, ML MSS 2077/6/2/2.

¹¹⁵ The World Peace Congress, Broadcast 2FC, Friday 31 July 1936, Wood Papers, ML MSS 2077/6/4/15.

Conclusion

The views of Wood and other Congregational women did not inform the prophetic role of their own church for a number of reasons. The energies of Congregational women were dissipated over a wide range of issues and they did not develop a set of common issues and sub-sets of issues upon which they could develop a feminist perspective that could then be pursued strategically. Secondly, their messages were developed on the basis of female experience, which was generally directed to female audiences and even when audiences were mixed, their rhetoric could assume a female audience or responsibility for social problems. There is little evidence of a sustained attempt to require men who were developing the view of the churches on social issues to accommodate a feminist perspective within their rhetoric. As members of public questions committees, Congregational women's ideas could be dissipated within the operation of those committees and not developed into strategic campaigns, reflecting, in turn, the interest of their church in community education rather than public advocacy. Furthermore, from the viewpoint of today, there were difficulties with the conception of the rhetoric of Congregational women, who used maternalist ideas to legitimate activities that stood in contrast to the masculinism of social and political life. As a political strategy, maternalism could reinforce rather than challenge divisions within society, particularly the assumption that white women should speak for other women such as indigenous women and women of other, non-white nations.¹¹⁶ Indigenous women developed their own prophetic role, however, in defiance of the attempts of white women to speak on their behalf. Unfortunately, the structure and rhetoric of white

¹¹⁶ Lisa Brush, "Love, Toil and Trouble: Motherhood and Feminist Politics", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 21, no. 2, Winter 1996, pp. 429-454; Eileen Yeo, "Protestant Feminists and Catholic Saints in Victorian Britain" in Eileen Yeo (ed.), *Radical Femininity: Women's Self-Representation in the Public Sphere* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press: 1998), p. 144.

Congregational women's organisations was not influenced by this prophetic role. They concentrated their policy work on combating the effects on women and children of economic depression, gambling and war, reflecting, in their choice of subjects, the policy interests of their own church. Congregational women hoped that by gaining access to the priestly role within their church that they could influence their churches' prophetic role with a feminist perspective more successfully, a process that forms the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Priestly Roles Between the Wars, 1919-1939

In the interwar period, Congregational women increasingly gained access to the priestly role. This role was defined in Chapter 3 as the life of service of a church member, and the administration of the word and sacrament by a Christian minister. So defined, the priestly role could involve a large range of voluntary activities, and also paid employment in both secular and church contexts, including the ordained Christian ministry. Congregational women were among Protestants who believed that access to the priestly role was a means to give expression to the Reformation concept of the priesthood of all believers. It was also a way to extend the prophetic role, to inform the work of their church and society more generally, with a feminist perspective.

Congregational women who sought to enter paid employment in church or secular institutions had a number of choices. In work in the church, they were more likely to be employed in the foreign and local missions than in the ordained ministry, and they were only encouraged to enter the latter field if they were particularly able. In addition to overseas or local missionary service, Congregational women could join the growing numbers of women in medical and health-related fields, or work as a bureaucrat in a non-government or para-church organisation such as the YWCA or the SCM. They could also pursue a career in education in a government, church, or independent school.¹

¹ Alison Mackinnon, *The New Women: Adelaide's Early Women Graduates* (Netley, SA: Wakefield Press, 1986).

In the interwar period, foreign missionary work held the strongest appeal for an ambitious Congregational female laywoman. Anne O'Brien has argued that the number of Australian women missionaries peaked between the wars, which was later than in other Western countries.² After the First World War, approximately thirty Australian women offered as candidates for service as single women or missionary wives in the London Missionary Society (LMS), which brought the numbers to approximately fifty women in the field by 1933.³ Missionary careers enabled Congregational women to achieve a presence in education and politics that was greater than they might have achieved had they stayed in Australia and entered other fields.

An important feature of the work of women in such priestly roles was to foster internationalism. Particularly as educators, Congregational women such as Eleanor Rivett, eldest daughter of the large and talented family of the Rev Albert Rivett, sought to foster internationalism.⁴ Rivett was Principal of the United Missionary Girl's High School in Calcutta from 1916 to 1938. She believed that her school, with its religious and ethnic diversity, was a microcosm of the League of Nations. Rivett hoped to generate in her pupils the desire to work toward world peace.⁵ Equally, through

² Anne O'Brien, "Spirituality and Work: Sydney Women, 1920-1960", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 33, no. 120, October 2002, p. 374; Patricia Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985).

³ Norman Goodall, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1895-1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), appendix; Bernard Thorogood (ed.), *Gales of Change: Responding to a Shifting Missionary Context: The Story of the London Missionary Society, 1945-1977* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), Appendix A: pp. 258-302; *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand*, Sydney, 1933, pp. 34-5.

⁴ Albert Rivett (1855-1934), *ADB*, vol. 11, pp. 398-401; see also that entry for Sir Albert Cherbury David (1885-1961), a Rhodes Scholar and Professor of Chemistry at the University of Melbourne, Amy Christine (1891-1962), a medical doctor, Edward William (1894-1962), Elsie Grace (1887-1964), a welfare worker and founder of the children's library movement, Doris Mary (1896-1969), a psychologist, Olive Murray (1889-1981), who married a Methodist missionary; See also Judith Godden, "Eleanor Rivett" in Brian Dickey (ed.), *Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (Sydney: Evangelical History Association, 1994), p. 323.

⁵ Eleanor Rivett, *Memory Plays a Tune: Being Recollections of India, 1907-1938* (n.p., n.d.), pp. 15-18; See also Rivett Papers, India Correspondence 1941-50 IN/5, CWM Archives, SOAS, London.

para-church institutions in Australia such as the Australian Student Christian Movement, Margaret Holmes, who was secretary from 1923 to 1948, fostered internationalism among university students, through encouraging participation in the missionary movement and the World Student Christian Federation, of which Holmes became Vice-Chairman from 1931 to 1941. Holmes also promoted international institutions among the student body such as International Student Service, World Student Relief, and World University Service.⁶

Congregational women expressed their understanding of the priestly role as a vocation through the metaphors of the cloister and also of maternity. Clear examples of this consciousness may be found among the Congregational women who were employed in local and foreign missions.⁷ Dr Edna Gault, who became a Methodist missionary in India in 1937, had grown up and was married in Killara Congregational Church, New South Wales. She worked in the Department of Dermatology at a medical college in Vellore. She often referred to her students as “her children”, and they responded by calling her “Mother Gault”.⁸ Equally, local mission sisters viewed their work as an act of mothering. Mission sisters continued to be drawn from the families of Congregational ministers or prominent laymen and were generally paid about two-fifths to half of a minister’s stipend. Sister Edith Gertrude Blackwell, for example, who worked at Whitefield’s Institute during 1928, was the granddaughter of the Rev George

⁶ Rosalie McCutcheon, “Margaret Holmes: Larger than the Roles She Played” in Sabine Willis (ed.), *Women Faith and Fetes: Essays in the History of Women and the Church in Australia* (Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1977), pp. 94-115.

⁷ *Proceedings of the Tenth Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand*, Adelaide, 1927, p. 37.

⁸ Bette McLaughlin, *A Very Amazing Life: The Biography of Dr Edna I. Gault* (Warrandyte, Vic.: John Gault and Louise Joy, 1993), pp. 19, 20, 33, 118, 119.

Taplin, the first missionary at Point McLeay, and was paid £100 per annum.⁹ Stow Church appointed Miss Ethel C Milne, the youngest daughter of the Rev David Milne from Bordertown, to do mission work and visiting at Halifax Street Mission from 1930 to 1936. Though the mission employed Milne half time, she “soon found that there is no half time in the Lord’s work”,¹⁰ she worked for at least three-quarters of a standard working week and considered her work with the poor as a family that became “her first thought and last.”¹¹

Ordination

The following chapter will concentrate on the experience of Congregational women who entered the ordained ministry, particularly the connection between missionary experience and candidacy. The role of women in the local and foreign missionary movement prepared Congregationalism for the ordination of women. There were also direct links between the experience of women in missionary fields and women’s ordination. The chapter will consider, in turn, the access of women to ordination according to Congregational church structures, their personal motivation to enter the ministry, and their particular experience of theological education and of Congregational ministry. It will attempt to assess why so few women entered the ordained ministry in contrast to other occupations. Finally, the chapter will assess the extent to which Congregational women ministers expressed the prophetic role through the ordained ministry and thereby influenced the prophetic role of their church and the women’s movement.

⁹ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1927, p. 295; November 1927, p. 306; October 1928, p. 243; Congregational Union of South Australia, Whitefield’s Institute, SRG 95/136/39, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

¹⁰ *SA Congregationalist*, December 1930, p. 309.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, September 1930, p. 216.

The access of Congregational women to ordination was related to the decentralised structure of the denomination. On the one hand, Congregational leaders supported the principle of gender equality, but they also saw women's ordination as a means to achieve other, institutional ends. In Chapter 3, I introduced Chaves' theory of organisational factors that explains the ordination of women in Protestant denominations. It is generally useful for my argument here, but requires some modification for the Australian context.¹² The theory argues that decentralisation, lack of sacerdotalism, the presence of an autonomous women's movement, and strong male support were the most important factors that led a given denomination to ordain women at an early date. However, the schema cannot account for other organisational factors that were particular to denominations such as Congregationalism. Neither can it account for the particular historical circumstances of women's ordination.

In addition to Chaves' theory, three factors provide an explanation of the ordination of women in Australian Congregationalism: the particular circumstances of a clergy-shortage in a decentralised denomination; the access of lay people to the lay pastorate or lay ministerial responsibility for a congregation, particularly during theological education; and thirdly, the relationship of the experience of women in the missionary movement to the ordained ministry.

Australian Congregationalists supported women's ordination for a number of reasons. Male leaders supported formal gender equality as an expression of a liberal reading of the New Testament. They also supported women's ordination as a means of alleviating the significant shortage of clergy in the denomination. The access of the laity to the lay

¹² Mark Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organisations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 182-3.

pastorate, particularly as theological students, also provided women with opportunities to demonstrate their capacity for ministry in a congregation and to develop support. Eventually, the experience of such ministry led congregations to argue for the ordination of women. Proponents of women's ordination even began to exploit it as a means to address the clergy shortage. A shortage of clergy was the reason for Winifred Kiek's appointment to the lay pastorate at Colonel Light Gardens and her subsequent ordination. Upon her ordination in 1927, the Congregational churches in Western Australia, for example, saw the ordination of women ministers as one solution to their lack of candidates.¹³ The discussion in the London Missionary Society of the ordination of women missionaries already placed in the mission field was also motivated, in part, by lack of male candidates. Missionary bureaucrats argued that ordained women missionaries could perform a greater range of functions: administer the sacraments and provide pastoral oversight to church leaders legitimately.¹⁴ The inability of Australian Congregationalism to address its own internal clergy shortage throughout the twentieth century meant that leaders such as Principal E S Kiek, of Parkin College, used the shortage of ministers as part of an argument to encourage Congregational women to enter the ministry into the 1950s.¹⁵

The missionary movement had an important influence on the movement for the ordination of women in Australian Congregationalism. The idealised view of the foreign missionary movement meant that women viewed local ministry, not only defined as deaconess ministry in local missions, but also the ordained ministry in local congregations, as less attractive forms of service than foreign mission. Some

¹³ *Western Congregationalist*, 9 July 1927, p. 4.

¹⁴ Ovenden to Hawkins 8 May 1920, Fukien China CH/13; See also Hutley to Hawkins, 31 March 1931, Fukien China CH/16, CWM Archives.

¹⁵ Kiek to Calder 18 August 1950, CMS/4, CWM Archives.

Congregational women sought to be ordained for missionary service, while others failed to gain access to missionary service and, as a consequence, sought ordination in the church at home. Of the six Congregational women who entered the ministry in the interwar period in Australia, only two entered it from a position of first choice: Winifred Kiek from South Australia, who was ordained in 1927, and Isabelle Merry from Victoria, who was ordained in 1937. Two women sought to enter the ministry after failing as candidates for missionary service and a further two sought to be ordained to undertake missionary service.

Moreover, the particular historical circumstances of the interwar period should be considered in detail. As we have noted in Chapter 4, Congregational women sought to shape religious institutions after the First World War because the war had created a heightened sense of the importance of religion in shaping morality in the wider community. Congregational women were among women who viewed reform of religious institutions as a priority, which carried symbolic as well as utilitarian value. Jacqueline de Vries has challenged the work of David Mitchell and Martin Pugh who dismissed the religious activism of British women's suffragists after the First World War as "a less potent form of radicalism than secular political and legal change".¹⁶ De Vries argued that leadership in the churches opened a realm of service to women who sought equality with men and reform of the public sphere. Such activism formed a "direct extension" and even "advancement" of pre-war feminism, rather than a "repudiation".¹⁷ As ordained ministers, women could speak from a pulpit, which was more socially acceptable than the suffrage soapbox and could critique the theological

¹⁶ Jacqueline R. DeVries, "Transforming the Pulpit: Preaching and Prophecy in the British Women's Suffrage Movement" in Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (eds.), *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 319.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

sources of their subordination as a sex. They hoped to transform theology so that it would incorporate a particularly gendered interpretation of Scripture and vision of political and social reform.¹⁸

It is also important not to underestimate the social importance of ordination in the 1920s, in contrast to the meaning accorded to it today. From the viewpoint of most Australians today, the campaign for access for women to religious institutions may not appear particularly worthwhile, nor as the most direct means of achieving social transformation. Australian Congregationalists as well as many women in the Australian women's movement, however, viewed the movement for women's ordination positively, believing that the ordained ministry carried potential for personal and social influence. Women often viewed the access to the ordained ministry as part of the general movement for gender equality, which, when realised, would have implications for the management of national and international affairs. Thus magazines of the Australian feminist movement such as the *Dawn: the monthly organ of the Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia*, not only followed debates about women's ordination, but also published material in support of it.¹⁹ The following quote from the Rev Isabelle Merry appeared in the journal in 1940: "No Christian can deny that this forward movement (the entry of women into theological training and the ordained ministry) is of God. Jesus came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly." She then quoted Canon Charles Raven of the Church of England:

If women can take their place in public life without sacrificing their distinctive quality, and can learn neither to imitate men nor to conflict with them, we shall see an era of government, human and humane, high-principled, and sensitive, such as the world has not known. We shall have the life of the best kind of family.²⁰

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 319-20.

¹⁹ *Dawn*, 15 March 1926, p. 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 16 October 1940, p. 3.

The first ordination

Winifred Kiek was ordained in Colonel Light Gardens Congregational Church, South Australia, in 1927. She was one of the most educated ministers in Australian Congregationalism and was to become a significant leader, both in her denomination, and also within the ecumenical and women's movements. Born into a Quaker family in Manchester, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Victoria University, Manchester in 1907 and worked as a schoolteacher in England. She married Edward Sidney Kiek who convinced her that Congregationalism, of all the Christian denominations, was the most closely related to Quakerism and upon marriage, she converted to Congregationalism. After the family migrated to Adelaide, Winifred Kiek studied theology and graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity from the Melbourne College of Divinity in 1923 and with a Masters of Arts from the University of Adelaide. She became active in the women's movement through her membership of the National Council of Women and the Women's Non-Party Association (WNPA). Upon her appointment as a lay pastor at Colonel Light Gardens Congregational Church in 1926, the journal of the WNPA, the *Non-Party News*, declared the event: "one of importance in the history of the women of this country." The paper argued further, that the ministry of a church "presented a specially wide field for the exercise of womanly powers and qualities."²¹

After acting in the lay pastorate at Colonel Light Gardens for twelve months, the congregation sought to ordain Winifred Kiek. She delayed "pressing calls" for her ordination, however, to wait for the "whole denomination" to declare "its responsibility

²¹ *Non-Party News*, June 1926, p. 3, 5; see also *Dawn*, 14 July 1926, p. 6.

for my fitness as a minister.”²² The reference committee of the Congregational Union of South Australia recommended to the Executive of the Union that Winifred Kiek be ordained.²³ On the evening of Monday 13 June 1927, Winifred Kiek was ordained in the Colonel Light Gardens Congregational Church. The official representatives of the Congregational Union were present and the church was full, mostly with women. The speakers drew attention to the discipleship of women in the bible and Kiek’s particular qualifications for ministry as a woman and as a mother. Dr G H Wright, minister of Stow Memorial Church, Flinders Street, spoke of the leadership of the women in the gospels, such as Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, the women at the tomb, and also of Priscilla, a leader in the early church. He pointed to precedents for Kiek’s ordination in English and Welsh Congregationalism and, in particular, the ministry of Maude Royden, the Anglican lay preacher. Wright argued for women’s ordination on the basis of the irrelevance of gender: the “gospel resting on the intrinsic worth of human personality could not be limited by sex.”²⁴

Another speaker stressed Kiek’s unique experience as a woman as evidence of her greater suitability for ministry than men. Through her background as a Quaker, her education and travel, her role as the wife of Principal of Parkin College, and her “additional qualification” of motherhood, Kiek had “touched more sides of human life than is given to many of her own, or for that matter, of either sex.”²⁵ For Dr Wright also, ordination provided Kiek with an extension of her traditional role as mother of a growing family, allowing her to proclaim Christianity to a sphere wider than her own children:

²² Winifred Kiek to Mr Bedome, 11 March 1927, Kiek Papers, PRG 225/2, State Library of South Australia.

²³ *Australian Christian World*, 24 June 1927 p. 11.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

In the home she stood among the nameless women of the centuries and to-day, who best taught the truths of religion to their own children, and now they recognised as a church that she stood as one who proclaimed their faith to others than their own family.²⁶

Kiek's own call to ministry had been shaped by her childhood in the Society of Friends. She had grown up with the expectation that "the call may come to you" and had found some of her "deepest spiritual experiences" in Quaker study circles:

I had always felt that the vocal ministry was for others, and had not realised that it might be for me, though I had marvelled sometimes at the unuttered prayers I was able to compose during the silences. My heart thumped like a steam engine and I went hot and cold all over when I felt a message come to me, insistently demanding deliverance and I fear sometimes I shirked it, but a year or two later I received a letter from one of the Elders of the Meeting telling me that they considered my ministry helpful, and desired to encourage me. That letter is one of my most treasured possessions.²⁷

There was considerable support for Winifred Kiek's ordination among the secular press, the women's movement, and the women of the denomination. Women in Australian Congregationalism viewed Winifred Kiek's ordination as part of a movement of women into positions of equality with men in the church such as the diaconate, local preaching, and the missionary movement.²⁸ The press and the women's movement also supported her ordination. *The Register*, for example, viewed the admission of women to the ordained ministry as a way to "strengthen the influence of the pulpit, especially over the young people."²⁹ The paper referred to the similarity between the ministry of Kiek and Catherine Helen Spence, the nineteenth century Unitarian preacher. It noted, moreover, that Kiek had the "additional advantage" of motherhood and experience of public work in relation to women and children.³⁰ The *Non-Party News* argued, triumphantly, that her ordination was a "landmark for Australian women...All who know her must feel glad that the way has been opened for her to enter the noble vocation which she feels to be

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ordination Statement, Kiek Papers, PRG 225/1.

²⁸ *SA Congregationalist*, June 1927, p. 108; *Congregationalist*, 10 June 1927, p. 10.

²⁹ *Register*, 11 June 1927, pp. 10-11.

³⁰ Ibid.

her own.”³¹ Kiek eventually went on to serve at Colonel Light Gardens until 1933 and also at Knoxville from 1939 to 1946, before retiring because of ill health and devoting herself to voluntary work in the ecumenical movement and the women’s movement. She became known particularly for her ministry with young people and with women of her own age, through a number of puppet troupes that she started at Knoxville Church.³²

The second woman who was ordained to the Christian ministry with a view to service in Australia was Isabelle Merry, who was ordained in Victoria in 1937. Merry had been head prefect at the University High School, had worked in the State Savings Bank and had been educated at the Victorian Congregational College and Melbourne University. She started in the East Preston pastorate as a student and was called to the pastorate of Croydon and Croydon North. The conditions for ministry in Victoria meant that Merry had greater difficulty than Kiek in gaining access to pastorates, and eventually entered chaplaincy after the Second World War. As has been shown in Chapter 2, the churches in Victoria were aided to a more significant degree than the churches were in other states. The source of aid to congregations, the Crouch Fund, could not be granted to churches that sought to employ a woman. Nevertheless, those who were responsible for Isabelle Merry’s first appointment ignored the requirements of the fund and soon redefined the pastorate to include both Croydon and Croydon North Congregational Churches, thereby eliminating the need to apply for a grant from the Congregational Union.³³

³¹ *Non-Party News*, July 1927, p. 7.

³² *ADB*, vol. 9, pp. 587-8; Margaret L. Knauerhase, *Winifred: The Story of Winifred Kiek, the First Woman to be Ordained to the Christian Ministry in Australia, 1884-1975* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1978), pp. 40-1, 132.

³³ Bernadette Clohesy, *Dame Phyllis Frost: Nothing Like a Dame* (South Melbourne: Lothian Books, 2003), pp. 31-2.

Two female candidates for ordination from New South Wales, Joan Hore, who was ordained in 1931, and Lillian Livingstone, who was ordained in 1943, were unsuccessful candidates for missionary service and pursued ordination in Australia as an alternative to it. (For biographical details of Hore and Livingstone, see Appendix 4). Joan Hore BA was born in Africa into a missionary family. She trained as a teacher and when her widowed mother died in 1922, she applied to the LMS to serve as a missionary in India. She worked for the Madras Christian College, but returned home after less than a year in 1924.³⁴ Similarly, Lillian Livingstone BA set her sights on a missionary placement in India or China after becoming inspired to be a missionary at an LMS Girl's Camp. She entered Camden College as a missionary candidate, but during her fourth year the LMS advised her that placements were only offered in the South Seas. Livingstone wasn't interested in working with "primitive people", but wanted to go to a field steeped in "civilisation". Unimpressed with the opportunities for missionary service, she turned to the ordained ministry instead.³⁵

Two women, one from South Australia and another who would make her home in South Australia, were ordained to service in the LMS. Originally from England, Kate Keen was appointed to missionary service among women and girls in China in 1913 (see appendix 4). But when Communists occupied Tingchow in 1929, she evacuated to Australia. She married Walter Hutley, a former missionary who had served in Central Africa, but he died in February 1931, less than two years after their marriage, so she sought further study to prepare for ordination. She was ordained in November 1932 in Port Adelaide Congregational Church, returned to China in 1934, and remained there

³⁴ Australia Correspondence Incoming Letters 1916-23, Box 25/2, FM 7 Slide no. 343, and also 1923-27, Box 27/2, FBN 8 Slide nos. 356, 357, 369, CWM Archives.

³⁵ Interview with Lillian Ethel Hayman, 23 July 1999, transcript in possession of the author.

until 1950.³⁶ A second candidate who studied theology for the mission field, Alice Ferris, was ordained at Brougham Place Congregational Church and served in South India from 1937 to 1940, before she retired from missionary service due to ill health.³⁷

Why were so few Congregational women ordained in this period?

The experience of Congregational women in theological education and in the ministry will be explored directly. It is important to note first, that the small number of women who did not proceed to ordination are as suggestive of the position of women within Congregationalism, as are those who were ordained. Not all the women who had the ability to enter the ministry, or who were encouraged to do so, proceeded to ordination, including women who had studied theology. These included Miss Emilie Brice, a member of Clayton Congregational Church who was the first woman in Australia to complete the Licentiate in Theology at Parkin College in 1927.³⁸ Margaret Knauerhase has recalled how her father, Principal Kiek, became “mildly exasperated” when female students did not proceed to ordination, largely because they married their fellow students and became ministers wives.³⁹ Some Congregational women entered the ministry after they had returned from missionary service such as Gwen Hewett (for biographical details see appendix 4) and Kate Hutley. In their training for missionary service and ordination in the late 1920s, Hutley and Hewett found Principal Kiek very encouraging, including providing a series of special lectures on China.⁴⁰ But many other

³⁶ Hutley to Hawkins, 31 March 1931 and 28 August 1931, Fukien China CH/16, CWM Archives.

³⁷ Candidates Papers 1900-1950, 13/10, CWM Archives. By September 1944, she had moved to Melbourne, married Stanley Jeavons, and had left the ministry, see *SA Congregationalist*, July 1943, p. 73; March 1944, p. 208; September 1944, p. 80.

³⁸ See *SA Congregationalist*, October 1927, p. 247 and December 1929, p. 349. See also Miss E. M. Jones, February 1933, p. 310 and Miss Audrey Prime, March 1937, p. 401.

³⁹ Margaret L. Knauerhase, *Straight On Till Morning: A Brief Biography of Edward Sidney Kiek* (Adelaide: E S Wigg and Son, 1963), pp. 23-4.

⁴⁰ Hutley to Hawkins, 27 April 1931 and Hewett to Hawkins, 1 January 1931, Fukien China, CH/16, CWM Archives.

female missionaries who were encouraged to enter the ministry, such as Rosalie McCutcheon, did not.⁴¹

The reasons for this lack of female candidates for ordination are related to the expectations of the ordained ministry, its conditions in Congregationalism and traditional opposition to women's ordination. The wages and working conditions in the ministry could be precarious enough for men. Women ministers were paid lower stipends than their male colleagues were paid.⁴² There was also significant opposition to the ministry of women – probably greater discrimination than women faced as they tried to gain access to other professions.⁴³ The popular and engaging speaker, Mrs Robina Cowper, did not enter the ministry due to traditional opposition to women ministers.⁴⁴ For those who did proceed to ordination, access to the ministry was simply a first step: Congregational women then had to sustain a career. Chaves' research has shown that equality in access to the ministry did not correspond to gender equity once ordained. Even within "liberal" denominations, he argues, equal treatment of men and women clergy has been exceptional.⁴⁵ A report for the Congregational Union of England and Wales suggested that women had difficulty securing settlements because of opposition from women members, who reinforced the traditional assumption that the ministry was an exclusively male activity.⁴⁶ The culture of the church, which could provide an atmosphere of intimate community, might also foster destructive rumour.

⁴¹ I am indebted to the Rev Dr Coralie Jenkin for this information, phone conversation 11 September 2003.

⁴² Winifred Kiek to Mr Tapp, 16 April 1926, Kiek Papers PRG 225/2.

⁴³ See, for example, Maggie Kirkman and Norma Grieve, "Women, Power and Ordination: a Psychological Interpretation of Objections to the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood", *Women's International Studies Forum*, vol. 7, no. 6, 1984, pp. 487-494.

⁴⁴ Alison Head, "Searching for Mrs Cowper", *Proceedings of the Uniting Church Historical Society (Victoria)*, vol. 11, no. 1, June 2004, p. 40.

⁴⁵ Chaves, *Ordaining Women*, pp. 26-32.

⁴⁶ *Congregationalist*, 4 March 1937, p. 10.

Joan Hore, for example, was subject to the suspicion from within Australian Congregationalism that she planned to leave the ministry.⁴⁷ Discrimination from members of other denominations could also be difficult to bear.⁴⁸ Perhaps the most debilitating experiences for Congregational women ministers were the expressions of the views of fundamentalists from within their own denomination, who tried to discredit their ministry. When Winifred Kiek accompanied her husband to a Summer School in Perth, for example, one supportive student described the organisation of “fundamentalists” that had opposed her ministry:

She is a very attractive preacher – slight, erect, restrained, without a hat, wearing a simple black gown, she wins sympathy and confidence before she speaks. And that gains as she speaks, in clear resonant tones, and with perfect enunciation...The sermon was perfectly ordered, sympathetically argued, profusely illustrated. It seems pretty fatuous indeed, perhaps a little wicked, that a body of ‘Fundamentalists’ should get together to try to make out, as they are trying to do, that there is anything in the utterances or attitude of this lady that is disloyal to the Faith.⁴⁹

In the face of these difficulties, ordination was not an attractive proposition for Congregational women. Although women argued that the pulpit would allow them to extend their female ministry beyond the home, ministry in the local congregation may not have provided as many opportunities for service as other occupations such as education and missionary service. This was particularly apparent during periods of economic uncertainty. While the possible avenues for service increased and bound Congregationalists together during the Depression to some extent, the resources at their disposal contracted and, as a consequence, opportunities for the exercise of priestly roles were diminished.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 September 1936, p. 12.

⁴⁸ Knauerhase, *Winifred*, p. 37.

⁴⁹ *Western Congregationalist*, 6 September 1923, p. 9.

There is no evidence as to why, for example, Congregational women such as Mrs Constance McRitchie, a woman who possessed significant ability and support, did not become ordained. Originally a member of Port Adelaide Congregational Church, Constance was married to George McRitchie, a pharmacist and General Secretary of the WEA and she shared her husband's interest in the organisation.⁵⁰ The couple could not have children, and were members of Stow Memorial Church for most of their lives.⁵¹ Constance McRitchie was a foundation member of the Congregational Church Women's Society, its Treasurer in 1917, Secretary from 1918 to 1930, and President from 1933 to 1936.⁵² She was also Treasurer of the Ladies Auxiliary for Home Missions, a member of the Women's Non-Party Association, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Her management of the mother's meeting at Halifax Street mission was reported to have invoked "genuine smiles of gladness" from the mothers.⁵³ She was a member of the Executive of the South Australian Congregational Union. During her husband's appointment as Chairman of the Congregational Union for 1930-1931, support for her ordination was made explicit. The responsibility for the Chairmanship had become a shared partnership between George McRitchie and his wife Constance. She shared her husband's preaching responsibilities and provided special meetings for women and girls in the churches in which they had visited. In 1930, she opened the Annual Meeting of the South Australian Congregational Union with the encouragement to the members to "look up, not down" meaning that she hoped members would, despite harsh economic conditions, find hope in the promises of Christianity.⁵⁴ In appreciation, the *SA Congregationalist* declared:

⁵⁰ John Truran, "Liberal Education for the Workers?: The Workers' Education Association of South Australia, 1917-1927", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 22, 1994, pp. 62-81.

⁵¹ Knauerhase, *Winifred*, pp. 25-6.

⁵² For obituary, see *SA Congregationalist*, October 1952, p. 130.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, May 1931, p. 34.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, November 1930, p. 270; January 1931, p. 332.

Never, we think, has a Chairman's wife given such distinguished help to her husband, more especially in the pulpit, as has Mrs McRitchie. We hear appreciation on all sides...Is there any reason why she should not be ordained in the church of her pet affections, Halifax Street, as the Rev. Mrs. McRitchie?⁵⁵

The reasons for the lack of female candidates for the ministry remain obscure ultimately. We turn now to the experience of women who did proceed to ordination and consider their experience of theological education and the ministry.

Theological Education

Research conducted for Britain and the United States has shown that women candidates generally excelled in their university study. It has also shown that women were not called to larger, more influential churches and that they were paid at rates that were less than men were paid.⁵⁶ The place of women in Australian theological education has been neglected in the only full-length college history that has been written – that of Camden College. Nor has there been adequate recognition of the particular experience of women as students, which made their academic success still more remarkable. The requirements for women were the same as for men, a degree in Arts and Theology. Congregational women often entered theological college after completing their primary degree in Arts, and combined academic work in theology with field training in a lay pastorate during their vacations. They also combined study with managing domestic responsibilities for children and ageing parents.

In the 1920s, a number of female students entered the Congregational theological colleges in South Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria to study theology for missionary service and the ordained ministry. The LMS had begun to formalise training

⁵⁵ Ibid., July 1931, p. 88.

⁵⁶ Jackson W. Carroll, Barbara Hargrove and Adair T. Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for the Churches* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), pp. 95-6; Elaine Kaye et al, *Daughters of Dissent* (London: United Reformed Church, 2004), chapter 4.

for women candidates. The Principals of the Colleges, Kiek in South Australia, Griffith in Victoria, and Thatcher in New South Wales, commented frequently upon the ability of their female students. On one occasion, Principal Kiek suggested that women had a particular ability due to their supposed greater interest in religion, declaring that the “fair sex appears to have a natural ‘turn’ for theology!”⁵⁷ Certainly, women students were often successful academically. Rosalie Joyce, for example, a minister’s daughter and a teacher, entered Parkin College to train to be a missionary and won the prize for most successful student in 1931.⁵⁸ Equally, Isabelle Merry won the Victorian Congregational College “Job prize”.⁵⁹ This academic success was often achieved while Congregational women maintained greater domestic and family responsibilities than did their male colleagues. Winifred Kiek combined study, care of the college as wife of the Principal, and raising her children.⁶⁰ Similarly, in 1928, Gwen Hewett, who enrolled at Parkin College as the first woman to study theology for missionary service as an extra-mural student, combined study with work in her father’s drapery business. Principal Kiek argued that her exam results were “as good as those attained by full time students.”⁶¹

Congregational women did not gain the informal education of their male contemporaries however, as they were often not permitted to live in the colleges or were not supported financially. The residential wing of Camden College was opened in 1915,

⁵⁷ *SA Congregationalist*, December 1929, p. 350 and April 1934, p. 10.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, April 1930, p. 54; June 1931 pp. 61-2; May 1934 p. 45; Rosalie McCutcheon Papers 9380/3/4, National Library of Australia.

⁵⁹ Phyllis Gorfine, “Doors that Opened”, *Proceedings of the Uniting Church Historical Society (Victoria)*, vol. 11, no. 1, June 2004, p. 70.

⁶⁰ *Woman’s World*, 1 August 1923, p. 418, in Kiek Papers PRG 225/32.

⁶¹ *SA Congregationalist*, August 1931, p. 116; Reference from E. S. Kiek 26 April 1930 in Gwen Hewett’s application to the LMS 1 May 1930, Candidates Papers 18/13, CWM 27 Microfilm, Box 18, no. 1262 CWM Archives.

which catered for male students only.⁶² The Rev A P Campbell expressed the Congregational understanding of college life as not simply as a formal education, but also as an experience of “community”, in which shared religious exercises, informality, and “the sharing in a residential College”, were “an invaluable part of the training. Whatever the student may learn from his tutors,” he said, “it is by the intercourse of College life that a man comes to know himself.”⁶³ Though the history of Camden College did not mention the extra-mural education of the first female minister in New South Wales, the Rev Joan Hore, it did recognise the academic success of the second, Lillian Livingstone, who “outshone most of the men at the United Faculty in her academic work.”⁶⁴ She herself regretted, however, that she was not able to experience college life by living in with the men.⁶⁵ Similarly, Isabelle Merry experienced discrimination in theological training, as she did not receive the economic assistance to which men were entitled. While her local congregation, Collins Street, supported her application to enter the ministry and the Professional Board reported in 1934, that the college had benefited from her “influence” as “one of uplift”, she was not awarded a bursary for study as the men were. She also remarked that she was expected to perform as well as the men in her examinations, if not better than they did.⁶⁶ It is not surprising then, that in circumstances where Congregational women had female peers, such as Parkin College in South Australia in the late 1920s and early 1930s where Gwen Hewett, Kate Hutley, and Rosalie Joyce were all in training together, that they drew on one another for support.⁶⁷ Progress to provide equality for women in theological

⁶² John Garrett and L. W. Farr, *Camden College: A Centenary History* (Sydney: Camden College, 1964), p. 35.

⁶³ Rev A. P. Campbell, *Camden College, Sydney: Address Given at the Annual Commemoration Service held in Pitt Street Congregational Church* (Sydney, 1954), p. 13.

⁶⁴ Garrett and Farr, *Camden College*, p. 50.

⁶⁵ Interview with Lillian Ethel Hayman, 23 July 1999, transcript in possession of the author.

⁶⁶ Gorfine, “Doors that Opened”, pp. 70-1.

⁶⁷ Hewett to Hawkins, 1 January 1931, Fukien China, CH/16, CWM Archives.

training remained slow, however, with the new residential wing of Parkin College, opened in 1930, catering only for male students.⁶⁸

Field education was designed to provide students with experience in ministry and served also as a temporary means to alleviate the shortage of ministers in the denomination. It provided female students with the opportunity to disarm latent suspicion among lay people about women in ministry, and to develop sources of support. The success of this practice for Congregational women is supported by the fact that at least five of the fifteen women ordained from 1927 to 1977 worked in pastorates as lay students and were ordained to the same pastorate.

The appointment of a woman minister to serve in a congregation could also provide it with a source of cheap labour. A report for the Congregational Union of England and Wales suggested that there was general unwillingness to consider a woman as a candidate in a vacancy. There had been several cases of congregations that had been in financial difficulty and had issued calls to women because the church could not offer a salary to a man.⁶⁹ Equally, there was widespread opposition to the ordination of women in Australia and Congregational women ministers were generally paid less than were their male colleagues.⁷⁰

Congregational women tried to respond to unequal pay as best as they could, given the working conditions within the denomination of individual contracts for appointment of ministers. Winifred Kiek became known for her advocacy of women's entry into paid

⁶⁸ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1930, p. 228.

⁶⁹ See report quoted in the *Congregationalist*, 4 March 1937, p. 10.

⁷⁰ Questionnaire for WCC Dept. from Australia (1947), p. 2, Kiek Papers, PRG 225/7.

work from the mid-1920s and equal pay. She argued that “(p)ossibly it is unrefined to want anything so common as daily bread, but few would care to keep that kind of refinement at the cost of starvation.” She argued that women could work, maintain their “refinement”, and they could “refine the workshop”.⁷¹ When she was appointed to Colonel Light Gardens Congregational Church, Kiek nominated her minimum pay. She argued that she would be prepared to accept the terms of the congregation, but for the sake of the congregation as much as for herself, she encouraged it to pay her the equivalent of a stipend for a man. Kiek was afraid that lay people would become despondent in their giving if she was not paid the equivalent of a stipend of a male minister. She believed that they should be encouraged to support such a salary, especially as it was highly likely that their next minister would be a man. Although her salary was greater than she expected, it was about two fifths of the minimum stipend and actually declined as the depression deepened. In 1933, her stipend was two thirds of the amount that the church was able to pay their next minister the Rev J E Cresswell, when he was appointed in 1937.⁷² Ultimately, Congregational women ministers such as Kiek hoped that the question of equal pay would be resolved by a change in attitudes and employment practices in society, rather than by women pursuing the issue in local contexts. Kiek saw the advocacy work of women’s groups such as the Australian Federation of Women Voters as playing an important role in achieving equality for women in employment practices.⁷³

⁷¹ *SA Congregationalist*, June 1922, pp. 155-6.

⁷² Winifred Kiek to Mr Tapp, 16 April 1926, Kiek Papers PRG 225/2; Colonel Light Gardens Congregational Church Financial Statements from 1926 to 1937 SRG 95/127/4/1, State Library of South Australia; For Joan Hore see Islington Congregational Church Financial Records C2/3/I1 Box 1, Uniting Church Historical Society Archives, North Parramatta; For Isabelle Merry see Grant-in-aid Application to the Congregational Union of Victoria, 8 November 1937, Croydon Congregational Church Letters, MS 9239/27/3, State Library of Victoria.

⁷³ For her views on equal pay in the context of the age pension debate see Kiek to Rischbieth 27/11/1938 in Rischbieth Papers MS 2004/12/1550, National Library of Australia.

The relationship of ordained women to the church

Women ministers could be as fluent in the pulpit as their male colleagues were. They could also be as recognised as were men for service to the community, particularly during the Depression.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Congregational women sought access to the priestly role in order to extend the prophetic role that had been developed in the women's guilds to a wider audience. The theological liberalism of the colleges, particularly their emphasis on the Incarnation of God through the life and ministry of Christ, encouraged Congregational women to challenge the received understanding of the inferiority of women and also to extend domestic metaphors in ways that few men had contemplated doing.⁷⁵ Congregational women supported the modern biblical criticism that they had learned in theological college. Winifred Kiek, for example, viewed revelation as progressive and evolutionary.⁷⁶ Similarly, one contemporary described the Rev Joan Hore as an "ultra-modernist" and her candidature papers for the London Missionary Society were considered sufficiently independent in thought for the board of directors to ask for clarification of her theology.⁷⁷

The first impression of a female minister was her dress, which was often distinctively puritan and feminine. Winifred Kiek and Isabelle Merry wore the black cassock and stole and preaching bands worn by male ministers in the pulpit. Winifred Kiek dressed simply and refused to wear make-up although she argued that she would not bow to

⁷⁴ For Hore, see *Congregationalist*, 6 September 1934, p. 13; 1 September 1936, p. 12. For Kiek see Knauerhase, *Winifred*, p. 39.

⁷⁵ Tucker, *Prophetic Sisterhood*, pp. 2-4, 64.

⁷⁶ See sermons in Kiek Papers PRG 225/10.

⁷⁷ Rev David Davies, *My Story, My Work and People I Have Met*, FM4/2661, Mitchell Library; G. H. Wright to the Directors, 17 November 1922, Candidates Papers 18/13, CWM Archives.

stereotypes about how she should dress.⁷⁸ Joan Hore wore a navy blue dress, a navy hat, and a fish brooch.⁷⁹

Kiek, in particular, has left records that show that she explored the challenge to gender relations in the Christian tradition that other female religious leaders such as Maude Royden and Josephine Butler had considered before her. In a sermon that she used frequently, Kiek suggested that the curse of the sin of Eve that had “dishonoured” all women was abolished in the motherhood of Mary and that the ministry of Christ to women had removed the “curse” of inferiority.⁸⁰ As “all women...had been dishonoured by Eve’s sin, so all women were highly honoured by Mary’s motherhood.”⁸¹ She noted how the vision of women in the Hebrew Scriptures, and particularly in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, represented them as responsible for sin and exhibiting the traits of “deceit”, “cunning”, “chattering”, and “scolding”.⁸² According to Jewish law, women were unworthy to enter the temple inner courts. It was therefore shocking to Jewish religious authorities that Jesus, during his ministry, challenged a whole culture of attitudes and practices toward women simply by speaking to them. This, Kiek argued, brought with it a revolution in attitudes toward motherhood. “Since that day the blessed mother...has crowned us with an honour women never knew before.”⁸³ She argued that until her own time, church leaders had adopted the view of church fathers such as Tertullian, Augustine, and Jerome, who had seen women as the “source of man’s temptation and the cause of his falling into sin”.⁸⁴ Reflecting the

⁷⁸ Knauerhase, *Winifred*, p. 38.

⁷⁹ A Special History Committee of the West Epping Church, *Building a Vision: A History of Christian Worship at West Epping* (Erskineville, NSW: West Epping Uniting Church Parish Council, 1995), p. 7.

⁸⁰ Winifred Kiek, “No More Curse” Sermon in Kiek Papers PRG 225/10, See also *Christian World Pulpit*, 29 September 1949, pp. 100-102 in PRG 225/15.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

thought of Josephine Butler and Frances Willard that had been filtered through Maude Royden, Kiek argued that though women's civil and legal position had improved in modern times, there remained a: "lingering reluctance to allow woman equal rights with man in the church. She is still considered unfit and unworthy for positions of leadership and especially disqualified from the more sacred offices of pulpit and altar."⁸⁵ Despite the fact that women were the majority of the membership in Protestantism, Kiek argued, they were not admitted to management or to boards of finance in the church. She argued that this position should not be the lot of women in future, because Jesus Christ had abolished the curse that had kept women bound by tradition. His ministry to women had acknowledged them as equal with men as disciples.

He declared God made them male and female; He talked with a woman, he protected a woman from being stoned, He healed women and was followed by a band of ministering women, who even came to the Cross, and to the tomb. The first to be entrusted with the Good News or gospel (was a woman).⁸⁶

After providing this model of gender equality in Jesus' ministry, Kiek employed a quote from Tennyson's poem "The Princess" that was often used in the women's movement to present a vision of gender equality in all aspects of contemporary Australian life. She argued that "well might they rejoice to find Him risen, for He is bringing life and emancipation and the hope that one day there will be":

Everywhere 2 heads in council 2 beside the hearth
2 in the tangled business of the world,
2 in the liberal offices of life,
2 plummet dropt to sound the abyss
of Science, and the secrets of the mind;
Musician, painter, sculptor, critic, more;
And everywhere the red and bounteous earth
Shall bear a double growth of those rare souls,
Poets, whose thoughts enrich the blood of the world.⁸⁷

Congregational women ministers supported their appeal to gender equality by a reading of the role of women in the bible. In accounts of "women in the lifetime of Jesus", the

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.; see also *Non-Party News*, February 1928, p. 7.

Rev Joan Hore described the contexts in which Jesus' ministry to women had been conducted.⁸⁸ These included "simple homes" such as those of the Holy Family, Lazarus, and Jacob's Well, where Jesus had talked with the woman of Samaria.⁸⁹ In 1933, Hore gave the sermon for the Women's Day to mark the centenary of Congregationalism in New South Wales. Mrs Walter Dickson of Epping Church, reinforced ideas of the particular pastoral ministry of female ministers to women when she noted in her report that it was appropriate that the service, which included communion, should be conducted by:

our woman minister, the Rev Joan Hore, a woman speaking to women, meeting the thought, voicing the need, sensitive to the inner longings and aspirations (of women). The clear-toned voice, the quiet reverence of demeanour, the unhurried ease lifted us at once clear of material things, and our hearts were open to receive the message, bidding us to go on into the second century.⁹⁰

At similar meeting two years earlier, Hore had focused not only on well-known examples from the bible such as Mary and Martha, but also on stories that had been neglected, such as the two women who were both employed in the "useful task of grinding corn, yet one was taken and her companion left."⁹¹ She continued this style of searching the bible for unusual stories of women to present to the Congregational Women's Association into the 1940s.⁹² At times she used creativity and imagination to present bible stories from the perspectives of women and children. In 1949, for example, she produced a rhyming play for Easter that used children as the central characters, who had heard the story of the resurrection of Jesus presented by women.⁹³

⁸⁸ For Joan Hore, see *Congregationalist*, 8 November 1931, p. 6; 8 June 1933 p. 13; 9 November 1933, p. 14. See also Islington Women's Guild Minutes, 7 February 1935, C2/3/11, Uniting Church Records and Historical Society Archives, North Parramatta.

⁸⁹ *Congregationalist*, 8 June 1933, p. 13.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9 November 1933, p. 14.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 8 November 1931, p. 6.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 1 November 1940, p. 8.

⁹³ *Australian Christian World*, 15 April 1949, pp. 15-16.

Congregational women ministers also called into question the assumption that God should be described using the male gender. Winifred Kiek has left material that suggests that she used female images to describe both the church and God. In a sermon for Mother's Day, Kiek argued that the church was like a mother: "The glory and the honour due to our own physical mother is but enhanced by the thought that the name is a fitting one for the Church of God, who is the mother of us all."⁹⁴ She argued that: "The Church, in seeking to keep alive the divine seed, to nourish it, to protect it, and by the warmth of her loving care to bring it to birth, plays the part of mother to the soul of man."⁹⁵ The Ministry of the Word and Sacraments were the means by which souls were fed. Evidence from the cover sheet of the sermon suggests that Kiek, during the services in which she used it, chose hymns that addressed domestic themes, such as "O Happy Home". She also used bible readings that focused on maternal images for God, such as Deuteronomy 32:11: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young spreadeth abroad her wings taketh them, beareth them upon her wings, so I bear you on eagle's wings." In addition, she used a verse from Jesus' Lament over Jerusalem found in Luke 13:34b: "How often would I have gathered my children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings."⁹⁶

As Kiek used female imagery for God, she also used the metaphor of motherhood to describe the church. She argued that as the mother inspired her children to carry a family tradition into service, the church "sends us out to serve humanity".⁹⁷ She also expected her children to return to the church as they would return to the family for further nourishment and to contribute to it.

⁹⁴ W. Kiek, "The Church – Our Mother", p. 13, Sermon in Kiek Papers, PRG 225/10.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, cover page.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

The difficulty of the metaphor of motherhood as a means of justifying the prophetic role was explored in the two previous chapters. The critiques that women themselves used of the metaphor have not yet been explored. Kick warned that the metaphor of motherhood could be limited, because some women were poor mothers. But her use of racial stereotypes, however, to convey the limitations of her view of the church as mother, could reinforce existing problems with the prophetic role. In her view, the church sometimes “sought...to make her children conform to stiff standards. Like the foolish mother of eastern lands the church has...sought...to place swaddling bands upon her sons, to tie down the developing life and prevent its natural and normal growth.”⁹⁸ This metaphor served to reinforce the received justification for the place of white women in the modern missionary movement, as listeners were likely to have been aware that the missions had been responsible for the decline of foot binding in Asia. The implication was that as the modern female missionary had been crucial to the reform of Asian foot binding practices, so women ministers would be crucial liberators of Australian Christianity, which had been dominated by men.

Congregational women ministers sought to use their ministry to provide a feminist perspective on social issues such as the impact of alcohol and modern war on the lives of women and children. They sought to use their authority as ministers to reform the drinking behaviour of men at the local level. When Joan Hore occupied the pastorate at Speer’s Point, New South Wales, for example, she held services in the open air and became aware of a woman in the district who had become a victim of violence from her drunken husband. Hore, a large and imposing woman, resolved to stand at the gate of the house in the evening when the man was due to come home with the warning that she

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

would wait there every night until the abuse stopped. Apparently, she kept the watch and the man changed his ways.⁹⁹ Congregational women also argued against war on the basis of its impact on women and children. In her lay pastorate at Salisbury in 1934, Rosalie Joyce suggested that as women and children had been the greatest victims of the First World War, the war had not been an expression of the principles of the teaching and ministry of Christ. “Can you possibly imagine Jesus dropping poison gas on babies?” she asked.¹⁰⁰

The themes of preserving the home from domestic and international violence were most fully articulated by Winifred Kiek, who, of all Congregational women ministers, was most successful in publishing her ideas. As Christine Krueger has demonstrated for Methodist women preachers in Britain, that publishing, rather than public speaking, marked the “entry” of women preachers “into male dominated social discourses”.¹⁰¹ Women used the moral authority accorded to them by Evangelicalism and its assumption that there was no division between public and private morality to justify their writing and their focus on the political implications of female experience. Prior to her ordination, Winifred Kiek published a series of lectures that she delivered at Parkin College to raise funds for the Adelaide Kindergarten Union. Entitled *Child Nature, Child Nurture*, the lectures explored the child’s world of toys, sex, and religion.¹⁰² Influenced by the resolutions of the Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship (1924) and aware of contemporary psychological theories, the book was an advice

⁹⁹ Correspondence from Ken Blackwell to the author 5 November 2001.

¹⁰⁰ War and the Way of Jesus, Sermon preached at Salisbury in 1934, Rosalie McCutcheon Papers MS 9380/8/2, National Library of Australia; See also James L. Potter, *Be Still: A History of the Congregational Church and the Ferguson Memorial – United and Uniting Church in Salisbury SA* (Salisbury: Salisbury and District Historical Society, 1996), pp. 56, 104, 108, 110.

¹⁰¹ Christine L. Krueger, *The Reader’s Repentance: Woman Preachers, Woman Writers, and Nineteenth Century Social Discourse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 69.

¹⁰² Winifred Kiek, *Child Nature and Child Nurture* (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d.).

manual for raising children that drew on her own experience as well as the work of secular and religious writers on child education.¹⁰³ By this time Kiek had started work as a probation officer at the Norwood District Council, which she continued until 1946, advocating for women justices and improvements to the Children's Court.¹⁰⁴ In *Child Nature, Child Nurture*, Kiek encouraged parents to teach children liberal principles of internationalism supported by religious practices. She advocated the teaching of a fair account of international relations that would encourage "a spirit of brotherhood" that, in turn, would provide support for the League of Nations.¹⁰⁵ In particular, she encouraged parents to play games with their children in which they learned manual construction and the principles of law and justice, rather than games that relied on the notion of chance, such as ludo. She supported frank discussion of sexual relations between men and women, which, according to a review by Dr G H Wright, helped to break the "the conspiracy of silence on sex education."¹⁰⁶ But in her advocacy of domestic science for girls, she also reinforced traditional gender assumptions that men should be breadwinners and women should be homemakers. Kiek argued that parents should introduce religion to their children as a basis for morality for two reasons. First, she believed that secular education would be insufficient to prevent the immoral use of knowledge in international affairs. Second, she believed that children should be expected to respond to an appeal to self-denial, as much as an appeal to reward.¹⁰⁷

By 1939, Winifred Kiek had also developed a perspective on war that she gave at the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand in Brisbane and

¹⁰³ Kiek relied on writers such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Cry of the Children*, E. Nesbit, *Wings and the Child*, Professor Stanley G. Hall, *Adolescence*, Principal Garvie, *The Old Testament in the Sunday School* and Edith Howe, *The Sun's Babies* and *The Cradle Ship*.

¹⁰⁴ Kiek Papers PRG 225/18.

¹⁰⁵ Kiek, *Child Nature and Child Nurture*, pp. 87-8.

¹⁰⁶ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1927, p. 232.

¹⁰⁷ Kiek, *Child Nature and Child Nurture*, p. 94.

was published in the conference proceedings. She argued that the politics of war should be the concern of all citizens as modern warfare had obliterated the category of “civilian” as an entity that could be protected: “there are no civilians in modern warfare”, she said. The conditions of modern war, she argued, had challenged the value central to just war theory, that the citizen should not be harmed in combat. Moreover, she argued that modern warfare served vested interests to the detriment of the needs of families, and diverted the attention of governments from unjust working conditions and spending on infrastructure to spending on arms. Moreover, the preparation of states for war was an insidious problem reflecting a fundamental lack of respect for women. The separation of men from women during war training and service led to sexual immorality, which affected families in general, but of which women were the chief victims. As they risked their lives in childbirth, women recognised the value of life and rather than prepare for war, they sought to provide care and protection for the weak. A “woman’s whole existence is a protest” against the overarching assumption of war – that might is right. She argued, therefore, for the defence of the family against war:

The maintenance of family life in strength and purity is the great demand woman must always make of social organisation and of the state....If no nation can rise above the level of its womanhood, no militarised nation can rise very high. The fear of war and the lust for it are the greatest enemies to the progress of woman. More babies yield bigger battalions is no slogan to inspire woman (to support the state through childbearing).¹⁰⁸

Kiek saw the remedy to this situation as other male colleagues did, in the conversion of individuals to Christianity and the equality of women and men in government.

While publishing provided a vehicle for public recognition of the alternative feminist perspective of Congregational women ministers such as Kiek, their perspective did not inform the public pronouncements of Australian Congregationalism. When the Second

¹⁰⁸ *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand*, Brisbane, 1939, pp. 36-7; See also *Australian Christian World*, 28 July 1939, p. 6; Kiek Papers PRG 225/15.

World War was declared and the Congregational Unions issued their respective statements, none of the statements of either the state or the national Unions were informed by such a perspective. Winifred Kiek had been appointed to the Public Questions Committee of the South Australian Congregational Union in 1936 but resigned almost immediately, probably due to the pressures of her existing commitments in the Women's Non-Party Association and the Women's State Centenary Committee. Although Congregational women had gained access to the ministry as a way to extend the prophetic role, it remained largely limited to their own local audiences, and while it was of interest to the denomination it was not informative of its work. Congregational women had greater success extending the prophetic role in the women's movement, a process to which we now turn.

The relationship of Congregational women ministers to the women's movement

Most Congregational women ministers saw their role as encouraging lay people in community service and did not seek to become heavily involved in other activity, such as the women's movement. The Rev Winifred Kiek was an exception who sought to contribute a spiritual perspective to the women's movement. She held offices in the Women's Non-Party Association (which, from 1939, was called the League of Women Voters), the Australian Federation of Women Voters, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. She was also convener of committees in women's organisations such as the National Council of Women, Equal Moral Standards Committee from 1927 to 1931, and the Committee for Peace and Arbitration from 1938 to 1950. In these contexts, Kiek was involved in ceremonial activities as a female minister ministering to women. For example, she presented the address at a service to commemorate the centenary of the death of Josephine Butler in 1928, on behalf of the Women's

Non-Party Association.¹⁰⁹ She also represented the Australian Federation of Women Voters at a conference of the British Commonwealth League in 1931, where she spoke on the topic of “Women in the Ministry” and passed a resolution on the need to open all professions to women.¹¹⁰ When she left Adelaide for her trip overseas, the editor of the *South Australian Congregationalist* referred to her proudly as “Adelaide’s Maude Royden.”¹¹¹

In the late 1930s, Winifred Kiek found in the wider women’s movement a sphere conducive to the expression of the traditional concerns of Congregational women, particularly their interest in pacifism. Among the campaigns conducted during Kiek’s Presidency of the Woman’s Non-Party Association of South Australia from 1935 to 1938, the WNPA became involved in an extensive and sustained program of lobbying of retailers and governments to boycott war toys. The executive of the WNPA interviewed the heads of retailing firms in Adelaide with the request that they substitute peace toys for military ones, and forwarded a letter to the Departmental Stores Association. The WNPA then forwarded a letter of reply from the Association to each store.¹¹² Without success, the WNPA turned to community education and the following year the organisation worked with the Kindergarten Union to encourage mothers to choose peace toys for Christmas presents. The WNPA also lobbied the Federal Government against the private manufacture of armaments.¹¹³ Kiek organised a Peace Week in Adelaide from 6-13 November 1938, in which children built a peaceful city

¹⁰⁹ WNPASA, *Annual Report*, 1928, p. 31.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1932, p. 11; See also the London, *Vote: the Organ of the Women’s Freedom League Non-Party*, 3 July 1931, pp. 213, 215; *Non-Party News*, November 1931, p. 3.

¹¹¹ *SA Congregationalist*, April 1931, p. 6.

¹¹² WNPASA, *Annual Report*, 1937, p. 4 and Minutes of Meetings SRG 116/1/3 and of the Executive SRG 116/2/3, State Library of South Australia.

¹¹³ WNPASA, *Annual Report*, 1938, pp. 3, 10-11.

from household objects.¹¹⁴ Thus Congregational women ministers such as Kiek could find that leadership in the women's movement strengthened their capacity for political campaigns, as the women's movement provided a far greater base of like-minded members that could be mobilised in a given cause than could the church, which was splintered into denominations.

Critique of the way Congregational women gained access to the priestly role

The women's movement often called upon Congregational women ministers to argue for the movement for the ordination of women. Cynthia Grant Tucker has shown that women ministers of the Unitarian and Universalist churches in the United States legitimised their role as public ministers by "re-casting" it within the "familiar, non-threatening structure of domesticity".¹¹⁵ Though this conception of their work could provide access to the profession, it could also constrain their role within it. Their arguments could be self-defeating: Jenny Dagers has shown that the notion of a superior form of spirituality was ultimately not compatible with the exercise of "an independent ministry in cooperation with men".¹¹⁶ Their advocacy of the argument that women could provide a special contribution to the ministry on the basis of gender helped to create expectations within the church that later generations of women would come to resent.¹¹⁷ Congregational women gained access to the ministry with the argument that they could combine the special qualities of mother and professional minister. But by doing so, they became complicit in the expectation that they would be prepared to accept a double burden of labour. They also supported the expectation that

¹¹⁴ "Magic City From Bits and Pieces", cutting, Kiek Papers PRG 225/19.

¹¹⁵ Tucker, *Prophetic Sisterhood*, p. 64.

¹¹⁶ Jenny Dagers, "The Victorian Female Civilising Mission and Women's Aspirations Towards the Priesthood in the Church of England", *Women's History Review*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2001, p. 665.

¹¹⁷ Jennifer S. Byrnes, "A Descriptive and Hermeneutical Consideration of the Experiences of Ordained Women in Parish Ministry" (Master of Sociology thesis, La Trobe University, 1992), pp. 235-41.

women should be judged by a standard that was higher than that applied to men. Winifred Kiek, for example, writing for the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in 1933, reinforced the assumption that women ministers would "need not merely to reach the average level of men to justify our claim, but we are expected to excel. A lower standard may be accepted from a man just because he is a man and is not on trial. We must give of our very best."¹¹⁸

Congregational ministers noted that the admission of women to the ministry came at some cost to themselves. While Isabelle Merry had argued in 1940 that the public ministry of women might help to establish a new era of government that would reflect the ideal family, by 1966 she argued that the admission of women to the ministry had created a new burden for women. In her experience, a woman pastor had been expected to be both a "minister" and also a "minister's wife". Merry did not critically assess the gendered definitions of these roles and she did not question the assumption that a woman minister should be expected to perform both of them simultaneously. She simply limited her critique to the argument that it was easier for women who were employed in professions that were better paid than the Christian ministry, to perform both of these roles across her lifetime.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

During the interwar period, Congregational women had increased their access to priestly roles including ordination, but the extent to which they used the priestly role to extend the prophetic role was limited. Winifred Kiek is the only female minister who has left sufficient evidence that shows a sustained attempt to provide such an extension

¹¹⁸ *White Ribbon Signal*, May 1933, pp. 92-3.

¹¹⁹ *Congregationalist*, October 1966, p. 7.

of the prophetic role through access to the priestly role. During the 1930s, Winifred Kiek's leadership in the women's movement, where she found greater compatibility of ideas, helped to achieve this aim to a certain extent. But the public statements of her own church remained largely uninfluenced by her feminist perspective. A significant role for Congregational women ministers in the women's movement therefore became advocacy for the admission of women to the ministry itself. While their arguments were designed to disarm prejudice among opponents, as such they could also serve to create a new burden for women. Later generations of women, such as those who were ordained in the Uniting Church, would come to resent the general expectation in the church that women should contribute a perspective based on gender to it. But Congregational women could not have predicted such a reaction to their ideas and in September 1939, their attention was focused on their response to another war.

CHAPTER 6

Responses to the Second World War

The response of Congregational women to the Second World War was mainly influenced by the response to war of their denomination, the growing ecumenical movement, and the women's movement. As they had during the First World War, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, Congregationalists reluctantly defended Australia's involvement in the war as an attempt to preserve a democratic polity that would allow for the expression of religion independent of the state. In addition, they sought to remain critical toward the state in general and Australia's involvement in the war in particular, and to promote reflection on postwar reconstruction. The Second World War provided Congregational women with new opportunities to extend both prophetic and priestly roles to a wider sphere. They renewed their efforts to influence the response of their denomination to the war by articulating their concern about the impact of war on women and children as civilians. Congregational women generally remained slower than their male co-religionists to discard their support for pacifism in favour of pacifism. They also sought access to new priestly roles that had become open to women as a result of the war. Even after the declaration of total war in 1942 in which the state compelled women into war service, they legitimated access to new roles by appealing to traditional understandings of the religious responsibilities of women.

The response of Australian Congregationalism to war

Katharine Massam and John Smith have explored religious beliefs and practices among Christians during the Second World War, particularly the phenomenon of civil religion in Australia. They argue that more Australians were involved in what they have defined as "the spiritual war effort", which included praying for peace for a just resolution to the

conflict, than were engaged in active combat.¹ Relying on Robert Bellah's concept of civil religion and Australian studies of the significance of ANZAC, Massam and Smith have used prayerbooks, hymns, and pamphlets to argue that during the war years, Australian public life relied on concepts and a sense of transcendence derived from Christianity. The concept of civil religion cannot accommodate protest.² Nor can it accommodate differences in experience across and within denominations, which, in Protestantism, was often determined by the interaction between the official response to war of the nation, the response of a particular denomination within it, and the response of congregations and individuals to the war. In their first article published on Western Australia, Massam and Smith analysed the range of experience that could be incorporated in spiritual combat, but did not consider criticism of the war until the end of the chapter, almost as a footnote to their analysis. More work is required on the response to war of individual denominations before a general survey of the interaction between religion and the response of Australians to the Second World War can be attempted.

The response to war of Protestants such as Congregationalists was marked by reluctant sacrifice of their allegiance to God for their allegiance to Caesar. Hence their prayers for peace were conducted under conditions about which there was great anguish and ambivalence. The *Western Congregationalist* consoled readers with the words: "our pain of heart and mind is a small part of the agony of God."³ Most church members became concerned that especially in the spiritual war effort and, in this particular war,

¹ Katharine Massam and John H. Smith, "There Was Another Weapon: The Churches on the Homefront" in Jenny Gregory (ed), *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War Two* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1996), pp. 149-61.

² See also, Katharine Massam and John Smith, "Images of God: Civil Religion and Australia at War, 1939-45", *Australian Religion Studies Review*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1998, pp. 57-71.

³ *Western Congregationalist*, 3 November 1939, p. 6.

their allegiance to God, on the one hand, and their allegiance to the state, on the other, could not be separated in any meaningful way. Australian Congregationalism remained divided in its response to war, which was reflected in vague Assembly resolutions and anxious editorials that sought to preserve unity between pacifists and pacifacists.⁴ While a split in the denomination was avoided, the practice within Congregationalism of encouraging rebellion against state authority had become almost impossible. During a meeting of the Public Questions Committee of the South Australian Union, the Rev E J Stacy remarked that the church had become so divided that “we should shortly cut a very sorry figure...so many have not the courage to draw up a resolution that would be of value.”⁵ The denomination included a significant minority of pacifists, which had declined in the late 1930s but nevertheless remained greater in numbers than had been the case immediately after the First World War.⁶ In 1939, the Congregational Union of Victoria encouraged support for the Christian Pacifist Movement and the Christian Commonwealth Movement, an ecumenical association started by the Rev J D Northey, minister of Canterbury Congregational Church, in 1938 in response to enthusiasm generated by the World Christian Endeavour Convention.⁷ In New South Wales, there were enough pacifists to start a Congregational Pacifist Group within the state branch of the Australian Peace Pledge Union.⁸

⁴ Minutes of the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, Brisbane 1939, Minute Book, 1935-1958 C1/1, Uniting Church Records and Historical Society Archives, North Parramatta; See also, *SA Congregationalist*, July 1939, p. 101; August 1939, p. 124 and *Queensland Congregationalist*, 23 September 1939, pp. 3, 10.

⁵ Minutes of the Public Questions Committee of the Congregational Union of South Australia, 13 December 1938, SRG 95/36/1, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

⁶ See, for example, *Queensland Congregationalist*, 23 September 1939, p. 5; Report of the Pacifist Conference, Sydney, November 1940, p. 8 in Kenneth Rivett Papers, 4/8, University of Melbourne Archives.

⁷ *Victorian Independent*, 1 May 1939 p. 87, 99, 109; 1 October 1939, p. 189; For the Christian Commonwealth Movement see Frank Engel, *Times of Change* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1993), p. 105.

⁸ *Congregationalist*, 1 October 1939, p. 16.

The majority of Congregational leaders regarded the pacifist position as inadequate and supported just-war arguments.⁹ The Congregational Union of South Australia presented a resolution to their May meetings in 1939 that reflected the broad scholarship of Principal Kiek. The resolution critiqued the political context of the preparation for war. It called Australians to acts of sacrificial service, to support the rule of law and it called Christians, specifically, to respect differences of conscience among themselves.¹⁰ Reflecting their response to World War I, Congregationalists argued that Australian Christians should defend the state for the sake of a polity that allowed for the development of religious values and independent thought.¹¹ They joined ecumenical statements such as that of an unusually broad coalition of churches and other groups in South Australia who viewed the war as the “fruit of policies” which states had devised and for which all citizens were responsible. The statement argued that these citizens should seek to refrain from bitterness.¹²

As the war drew on, respect for differences of opinion within the churches may have become strained. Reflections composed in 1940, such ^{as} a pamphlet written by Dr G H Wright of Trinity Congregational Church, Perth, entitled *Faith and Force*, misrepresented the pacifist position, with the argument that “modern society is so constituted that the Christian cannot contract out of it.”¹³ The Rev Ernest Hope Hume refused to accept this line of argument. He had signed a manifesto of Protestant Ministers in World War I and had been forced out of his pastorate at Deepdene Congregational Church in 1916, and in 1940, served as President of the Christian

⁹ *Congregationalist*, 1 September 1939, p. 5; 8 November 1939, p. 5; *Western Congregationalist*, 3 November 1939, p. 6.

¹⁰ Minutes of the Public Questions Committee of the Congregational Union of South Australia, 29 March 1939, SRG 95/36/1.

¹¹ *SA Congregationalist*, September 1939, p. 143.

¹² *Ibid.*, November 1939, p. 199; see also *Congregationalist*, 8 November, p. 9.

¹³ G. H. Wright, *Faith and Force: The Christian and the War* (Perth: Sands and McDougall, 1940), p. 6.

Pacifist Movement in Brisbane.¹⁴ He argued, conversely, that refusal to pay taxes would be “a foolish disassociation of ourselves from our community. In a war economy mere living must assist the war.”¹⁵

Nevertheless, the resolve to respect differing views between Christians led Congregationalists to show concern for conscientious objectors from the start of the war, to lobby politicians on their behalf, and to support their cases with legal advice.¹⁶ Conscientious objectors included Congregationalists such as Ted Hartley, an accountant from New South Wales, John Garrett, Rawson Deans, and E G O Scott, Director of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, but they were not as numerous as Christadelphians and Jehovah’s Witnesses.¹⁷ Practical support for them was often delivered by ministers such as the Rev James Harold King, who had become a pacifist after World War I and, by 1940, had become President of the Australian Peace Pledge Union in New South Wales.¹⁸ The efforts of Congregationalists at political lobbying on the issue of conscientious objection reflected a renewed ecumenical consciousness brought by the war that was often expressed in joint advocacy work, that could be relatively successful at times.¹⁹ After a strong protest to close betting shops in South

¹⁴ See, for example, *Queensland Congregationalist*, 27 November 1939, p. 3; Robert D. Linder, *The Long Tragedy: Australian Evangelical Christians and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Adelaide: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, Open Book Publishers, 2000), p. 97.

¹⁵ Report of the Pacifist Conference, Sydney, November 1940, p. 7 in Rivett Papers, University of Melbourne Archives, 4/8.

¹⁶ *SA Congregationalist*, January 1940, p. 262; November 1939, p. 201 and *Queensland Congregationalist*, 23 October 1939, p. 8.

¹⁷ See Bobbie Oliver, *Peacemongers: Conscientious Objectors to Military Service in Australia, 1911-1945* (Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1997), pp. 127-8, 135; Joanna Penglase and David Horner, *When the War Came to Australia: Memories of the Second World War* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1992), pp. 14, 163; Report of the Pacifist Conference, Sydney, November 1940 in Rivett Papers, 4/8.

¹⁸ *ADB*, vol. 9, p. 596.

¹⁹ *Queensland Congregationalist*, 22 January 1940, p. 5.

Australia, in February 1942, Tom Playford, the then Premier, made such an announcement to close the shops that preceded the commencement of total war.²⁰

Congregationalists supported a coalition of churches based in South Australia that included the Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Society of Friends, and the Christadelphians who lobbied the Federal Government successfully in 1941 in relation to laws governing the treatment of conscientious objectors. On the basis of a pamphlet prepared and distributed by Kenneth Rivett, one of the founders of the Australian Peace Pledge Union in Melbourne, the coalition argued that Australian law should reflect British law. Changes to the law would allow not only for exemptions from military service conditional on objectors undertaking non-combatant military work, but also exemptions from non-military work carried out under civilian control. The churches also opposed the obligation that citizens undertake any work provided as an alternative to military service.²¹

A further argument Congregationalists used to support the war was the aspiration to create a New World Order, which, they believed, should be founded on a spiritual basis in order to maintain a just peace.²² They hoped to contribute a spiritual dimension to the political debates occurring in wider Australian society about such a new order.²³

Congregationalists shared the belief that only through Christian “principles”, expressed

²⁰ Minutes of the Public Questions Committee of the Congregational Union of South Australia, 26 February 1942, SRG 95/36/2.

²¹ Kenneth Rivett, *Conscience and Compulsory Service* (Australian Peace Pledge Union, 1941), Rivett Papers, 2/4; See also Rivett to Coaldrake, 9 May 1941, Rivett Papers, 2/3 and J. S. Chittleborough to Rivett, 7 August 1941, Rivett Papers, 4/8.

²² *SA Congregationalist*, July 1939, p. 101; September 1941, p. 111; The Victorian Congregational Union also passed a Statement on World Reconstruction at its May meetings in 1942, see July 1942, pp. 76-7.

²³ L. C. Parkin, *Four Enemies of the New World Order: Nations Without God, Politics Without Religion, Business for Profit, A Church without a Heart* (Memorial Church, Hobart, n.d.); For the London Missionary Society, see Cecil Northcott, *Towards a New Order* (London: Livingstone Press, 1941); *Congregationalist*, 1 September 1942, p. 1.

through Christian unity, would nations create the goodwill that was required to maintain peace. They expressed this vague platform with slogans designed to appeal to the Congregational heritage: “there can be no brotherhood of man without the Fatherhood of God”²⁴ and “The Holy City can only come through Holy Citizens.”²⁵

The impact of the war on congregations

The Second World War did not provoke the disillusionment with organised Christianity that had been the product of the First World War.²⁶ Congregationalists shared in the concern that in practice, members of religious institutions would defend the state at the expense of their religious values and culture. Hence, they argued that support of Christianity, as the supposed cradle of democracy, was the most important sphere of the war effort. They even used military imagery to support this view. The Directors of the London Missionary Society, fearing that the war effort would divert resources from its work argued that missionary movement was “the greatest service...the Christian church can render.”²⁷ The Directors called both the missionaries in the field and the churches at home, to “an even greater effort to preach the gospel to every creature”.²⁸ H L Hurst, the Australasian Secretary, argued that like “the soldiers of National armies,...we are matched with a great hour.”²⁹ Support for the LMS and the wider Christian church was of greater importance than “all the battles and folly of Europe”. He challenged missionaries in Papua to adopt the “fortitude and courage...of the soldier”.³⁰ Equally,

²⁴ *SA Congregationalist*, August 1939, p. 124.

²⁵ *Western Congregationalist*, 6 May 1945, p. 1.

²⁶ Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity: 1920-1990* (London: SCM Press, 1991), p. 383; Collins Street Independent Church Melbourne, *Manual 1941: with Reports for 1940* (Melbourne: Norman Brothers, 1941), p. 11.

²⁷ *Congregationalist*, 8 December 1939, p. 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 October 1939, p. 5.

³⁰ H. L. Hurst, circular letter to all missionaries in Papua 4 September 1939, CWM South Seas Reports, 1914-1939, Box 36, Slide 478, CWM Archives, SOAS, London.

the Rev A Penry Evans of Collins Street Independent Church, Melbourne, argued that the maintenance of Christianity was the most important form of national service and was superior to war work.³¹

By September 1939, Congregationalists had become much more sensitive than previously to the way exhortations from the pulpit would be received in the pew. The denomination refused to issue a call to arms, as the bitter memory of the use of pulpits for recruiting in the First World War had not diminished.³² In South Australia, Principal Kiek became concerned about the use of the pulpit, especially extempore preaching, for the expression of pacifist views, and appealed to preachers, particularly the younger ones, to exercise restraint.³³ As the war deepened, Kiek also called Congregationalists to refrain from prayers for victory believing that Christians should not engage in the “superstition” of regarding God as an ally of the British Empire.³⁴

The war did not cause significant disruption to church life until after the declaration by the Federal Government of total war in 1942. Meetings of young people had become depleted, Easter Camps and annual church picnics were cancelled, and services were reduced or evening services were cancelled because of blackouts or brought forward to the afternoon.³⁵ The war created significant loss of local lay leadership as Congregationalists went to fight for God, King, and Country. They were often farewelled with gifts, such as pocket volumes of the New Testament or collections of

³¹ Collins Street Independent Church Melbourne, *Manual 1941: with Reports for 1940* (Melbourne: Norman Brothers, 1941), p. 11; See also *Victorian Independent*, 1 October 1939, p. 183.

³² *Queensland Congregationalist*, 27 November 1939, p. 3.

³³ *SA Congregationalist*, August 1940, pp. 118-9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, February 1942, p. 212.

³⁵ See, for example, *Queensland Congregationalist*, 25 May 1942, p. 7, 10; January - February 1944, p. 6; *Western Congregationalist*, 3 May 1942, p. 8; 6 May 1943, p. 8 and *Congregationalist*, 1 May 1942, p. 8.

daily readings.³⁶ The servicemen and women who entered church life in this period, particularly with the presence of United States forces in Australian cities from 1942, enriched the awareness of Congregationalists of their place in an international fellowship. Historians have considered the presence of United States forces in Australia as a cause of sexual excitement among women and of conflict among men and the new Australian identification with American culture, although recent research has argued that the extent of conflict between Australians and Americans should not be exaggerated.³⁷ Congregationalists from the United States serving as Chaplains and service personnel were concentrated in Western Australia and Queensland. They filled vacancies in areas of congregational life such as leadership of worship services including musical solos, as speakers at youth meetings, and also as teachers of Sunday school lessons.³⁸ In Rockhampton, for example, the Chaplains in the United States Forces gave “generous assistance” to fill the vacancy of the local minister and the local congregation had “good times of fellowship with the boys, with a cup of tea and community singing after the Sunday evening services”.³⁹ Amberley Congregational Church added another service time to accommodate US Air Force personnel for worship.⁴⁰ One Queensland congregation, for example, was delighted to welcome Frank E Standish from Michigan, a descendant of Miles Standish, a Pilgrim who had sailed to America on the Mayflower.⁴¹

³⁶ See, for example, *Western Congregationalist*, 6 December 1942, p. 8.

³⁷ See, for example, E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Yanks Down Under, 1941-45: The American Impact on Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985); Anthony J. Barker and Lisa Jackson, *Fleeting Attraction: A Social History of American Servicemen in Western Australia During the Second World War*, (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1996); Michael Sturma, “Loving the Alien: the Underside of Relations Between American Servicemen and Australian Women in Queensland, 1942-45”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 24, May 1989, pp. 3-17.

³⁸ See, for example, *Queensland Congregationalist*, 28 October 1942, p. 9; *Western Congregationalist*, 5 December 1943, p. 8.

³⁹ *Queensland Congregationalist*, March - April 1944, p. 11.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 25 May 1942, p. 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

The international conflict also led to further expressions of Christian unity such as joint local services and citizenship rallies or “demonstrations”.⁴² New forms of private devotion created a heightened sense of the international Christian community among participants. Congregationalists supported the League of Prayer and Service formed by the Rev W H Elliot, vicar of the Church of St Michael, London, in 1937, which was an international prayer fellowship in which members pledged to pause at twelve o’clock each day to pray for peace.⁴³ Prayerbooks such as Kenneth T Henderson’s *Prayers of Citizenship* were widely read.⁴⁴ Certain secular appeals such as the Prisoner Of War Appeal became characteristic of the response to war of Congregationalism.⁴⁵ The response of churches in London to the victims of air raids became symbols of movements toward closer unity. After the bombing of the City Temple, London, the Vicar of St Sepulchre’s Church of England wrote to the minister of the City Temple, the Rev Leslie Weatherhead and offered him the use of the church without restrictions.⁴⁶

The most significant change to church life was an increased civic role through direct assistance to the government in war preparations. In May 1939, in South Australia, for example, the Premier Thomas Playford called a meeting of the Heads of Christian Churches to determine, in the event of war, the “extent and scope of the help from the churches, upon which he could rely.” The churches assured him of a “spontaneous” response and their “forgone conclusion that, as citizens, any necessary work would be carried out...irrespective of their adherence to any religious body.”⁴⁷ Denominations

⁴² *Ibid.*, 24 April 1939, p. 4; *SA Congregationalist*, February 1940, p. 284; November 1940, p. 216; February 1941, p. 290; May 1941, p. 33; June 1942, pp. 58-9; April 1945, p. 6.

⁴³ *Western Congregationalist*, 4 August 1939, p. 3 and 1 September 1939, p. 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5 July 1940, p. 10; see also *Congregationalist*, 1 August 1940, p. 2 and 1 January 1943, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Avenues of service also included the Red Cross, the Australian Comforts Fund, Red Shield Huts Fund, Patriotic Fund and the YWCA Lady Gowrie Huts Appeal.

⁴⁶ See *SA Congregationalist*, September 1941, p. 109; *Western Congregationalist*, 5 April 1942, p. 5; *Congregationalist*, 1 February 1942, p. 4.

⁴⁷ *SA Congregationalist*, June 1939, p. 67.

sought to avoid duplication in provision of community services with other non-government organisations. They resolved that the YMCA, for example, would be responsible for military camps, while local bodies would be responsible for emergency relief. The churches also noted that most men and women had been gathered into organisations such as the Voluntary Service Detachments.

From 1942, church halls were adapted for use by civil defence authorities as emergency air raid shelters, and military parades were organised in church grounds. Attendances for special civic services were large, such as the services of the National Day of Prayer and Mother's Day.⁴⁸ The National Call to Prayer leaflets argued that Christians had no right to expect supernatural intervention when the war situation "called for human courage and initiative."⁴⁹ While Carmel Shute has explored the voluntary work of women, she has neglected the large numbers of women who supported the war effort in local churches.⁵⁰ Congregational women in Queensland, for example, in churches at Salisbury, Milton, Cracknell Road, City, Bowen Hills, and Broadway prepared their church halls as emergency hostels for the Department of Defence in case of air raids. Congregational women participated in camouflage net making at Chermside, Toowoomba, and Cracknell Road Congregational Churches. At Cracknell Road, the upper hall was used as an emergency hostel and the lower hall was used for camouflage net making, which consumed the hours of 10am-4pm, Monday to Friday, such that 135

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the national days of prayer, see Arnold D. Hunt, *This Side of Heaven: A History of Methodism in Australia* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1985), p. 350. Florence Nightingale Commemoration Service, Trinity Congregational Church, Perth, 18 May 1941, Rev G. H. Wright to Norman Goodall, *Trinity Monthly Chronicle*, 31 May 1941, CWM Australia Correspondence 1936-1941, Box 37, FBN 10, Slide 491, CWM Archives.

⁴⁹ *South Australia, State Service of Intercession in Response to the Call to Prayer of His Majesty the King for the Empire, its Allies, and the Cause in which they are United on Sunday 8 September 1940*, Kiek Papers PRG 225/16, State Library of South Australia.

⁵⁰ For a similar discussion on war work, see Carmel Shute, "From Balaclavas to Bayonets: Women's Voluntary War Work, 1939-1941" in Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed), *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia, 1788-1978* (Melbourne: Fontana Collins, 1980), pp. 353-87.

large nets were completed in six months. Though made by amateur labour, no nets were returned defective. But the women at Chermside hoped their efforts would prove unnecessary: "Having made all the arrangements our most fervent prayer is that they will never be needed in this particular way."⁵¹ In addition, women from Broadway Congregational Church unpicked discarded uniforms and remade them into children's garments for the "little people" of Europe.⁵²

Congregational women supported war projects particular to Congregationalism, such as appeals for relief for victims of bombing of Congregational Churches in Britain.⁵³ In Queensland between 1940-1, Congregational women collected over 1 400 items of clothing and sent them to Doris Feeney, Secretary of the Federation of Congregational Women in London, for distribution. The Victorian Congregational Women's Association assisted refugees through the League of Nations and through the networks of English Congregationalism.⁵⁴ They also supported chaplains with portable communion sets, consignments of hymnbooks, and fortnightly parcels of cakes, books, and games.⁵⁵

Congregational women became particularly involved in denominational and inter-church hospitality projects. Kay Saunders has demonstrated the growth of canteens during the war in Brisbane and has argued that such service by women reinforced their traditional role as guardian of the family and its extension into the

⁵¹ *Queensland Congregationalist*, 24 June 1942, p. 8. See also Dulwich Hill Congregational Church, New South Wales which started a netting circle in 1942, *Congregationalist*, 1 June 1943, p. 8.

⁵² *Queensland Congregationalist*, March-April 1943, p. 11.

⁵³ *SA Congregationalist*, February 1945, p. 161; The South Australian Congregational Churches had raised over £400 by October 1945, see p. 109.

⁵⁴ Gladys Barker, Jubilee Report Victorian Congregational Women's Fellowship 1972, p. 4A, Uniting Church Archives, Victoria.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

public sphere.⁵⁶ The religious frameworks that encouraged hospitality and the religious contexts in which this service was conducted need also to be recognised. Encouraged by church leaders, guild women offered hospitality to soldiers after church services, individuals catered for servicemen in their homes, and they raised funds by producing “Victory” Recipe Books, and holding “Victory-For-Liberty” morning teas.⁵⁷ Similarly, women such as Mrs Annie Deans, who organised a register of homes for accommodation for single girls doing munition work argued that: “Readers are asked to cooperate in this truly Christian service for our country”.⁵⁸

Gendered response to the war

Such responses to war provided Congregational women with a religious justification to support the war effort. Kate Darian-Smith has summarised recently the current state of research on gender and war in Australia, which has focused on female activity. She has argued that this research should not be limited to “what women and men actually did, or the relations between the sexes.” It is also about the “social and ideological processes that shape and reflect the meanings of masculinity and femininity at that specific historical moment.”⁵⁹ In the chapter that follows, I hope to show the way the war allowed greater expression of traditional female roles.

Congregational women maintained their commitment to a prophetic role that focused on the welfare of women and children and sought to gain access to priestly roles that had arisen as a result of the war. Congregational women articulated their perspective on the

⁵⁶ Kay Saunders, “Women, Food and the War Effort in Brisbane” in Robert Dare (ed), *Food, Power and Community: Essays in the History of Food and Drink* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1999), pp. 91-8.

⁵⁷ *Congregationalist*, 1 December 1940, p. 2. *Queensland Congregationalist*, 29 November 1941, p. 7. *Western Congregationalist*, 11 January 1942, p. 9; 3 September 1944, p. 9.

⁵⁸ *Queensland Congregationalist*, 27 March 1942, p. 12.

⁵⁹ Kate Darian-Smith, “War and Australian Society” in Joan Beaumont (ed), *Australia's War, 1939-1945* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1996), p. 61.

war, as women pursued war service to the neglect of guild attendance. Their response to war involved some incorporation into the war effort, but Congregational women also remained critical of it. They argued that after the war, Christian women had a significant part to play in the creation of a new world order. After providing a survey of women in the bible, Mrs J A Lewis summarised the range of strategies that Congregational women should combine to express their Christianity in service. They should preserve religion in the home and church, abolish social evils on the home front, evangelise men, and reflect intelligently on how the new order would be built after the war.⁶⁰

In their response to war, Congregational women also remained influenced by the broader feminist movement. Marilyn Lake, in her history of Australian feminism, has argued that during the Second World War, women were concerned with the pursuit of equality. But she has neglected the response of Australian feminists to the war. The overarching concern of Australian feminism during this period, quite obviously, was to work toward a return to peace.⁶¹ The *Dawn* viewed the outbreak of war as having “dissolved” over twenty-five years of work towards “greater understanding and friendship” among nations.⁶² Certainly, the circumstances of the war pushed the debate toward equality further as women assumed roles that had not been open to them previously. But Congregational women were among a larger group of Christian women who remained concerned with the restoration of peace as their first priority. They continued to view their social roles through religious frameworks and, as a consequence, they appealed to religious responsibilities to challenge gender hierarchies,

⁶⁰ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1941, p. 126.

⁶¹ Compare the *Dawn*, September 1939 to 1945, with the account in Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: A History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1999), pp. 167-190.

⁶² *Dawn*, 20 September 1939, p. 2.

even after the declaration of total war. These frameworks provided the overarching rationale for campaigns such as equal pay for equal work. If women such as Blanche Stephens in South Australia, in her position as Secretary of the League of Women Voters, began to take up the question of equal pay for women, it was so that women could work side by side with men to achieve broad aims such as world peace.⁶³

The Prophetic role: Continuities with pre-war concerns

Congregational women leaders, observing how women were pursuing war work at the expense of guild attendance, stressed the particular role of Congregational women in the creation of a New World Order. At the outbreak of war in September 1939, Winifred Kiek encouraged Congregational women to pray for peace – even to “arm” themselves with “the resources of the spirit”.⁶⁴ This, Kiek argued, should be the first concern of Congregational women, preceding their response to calls from women’s organisations such as the National Council of Women to members to qualify themselves for St John Ambulance Certificates.⁶⁵ It was Kiek’s daughter, Margaret L Kiek BA, a teacher, poet, and playwright, who, by age 24, had already earned a reputation for her creativity, who best summarised the moral dilemma for Congregational women on the eve of war. Through a poem about the Spanish Civil War, she expressed the powerlessness of women against military force and recognised that not even the strongest prayers, educational resources or moral sanctions could protect the vulnerable from attack:

The Innocents, Margaret L. Kiek

It's hard to tell the wrong and right
When full grown men go forth to fight,
But when I hear of chubby limbs
Shattered by senseless shots and shell,
And small, uncertain feet that go

⁶³ Blanche Stephens, “First Annual Report of the State Committee of the League of Women Voters on Equal Pay 1942” in Bessie Mountford Papers, League of Women Voters SRG 116/28, State Library of South Australia.

⁶⁴ *SA Congregationalist*, March 1939, p. 314.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, February 1939, p. 293.

Toddlng the gun-swept roads of hell...

When I am told of bright, dark eyes,
The laughing eyes of little Spain,
And how the joy within them dies,
And hunger dims the baby brain,
And how he seeks long hours in vain
For every babe's most mighty strength –
His mother's hand - among the slain,
And tired, lies down with them at length...

Or when I hear of souls so free
They know not hatred or despair,
Of solemn almond eyes that see
Things hideous falling from the air,
And with unchildlike wisdom stare,
And crouch against the shaking earth,
And do not know that life is fair
And babyhood a time for mirth...

I think on Mary's trembling flight,
Bearing her Baby through the night –
The chosen Baby of the Lord –
To foil King Herod's jealous sword;
But then the woman's heart in me
Cries out in fear and agony,
For this new Herod comes with guns...
How shall we save our little ones?⁶⁶

Congregational women leaders such as Miss G A (Gertrude) Roseby (1872-1971), accepted the view of her denomination that “there can be no City of God after the present conflict” unless the churches worked to create a New World Order founded on “spiritual truth”. The eldest daughter of the Rev Thomas Roseby, she was Principal of Redlands School in New South Wales from 1911 to 1945, which she had founded with her sister Mabel (1878-1957). At Redlands, Gertrude Roseby taught English, Latin, History, and Scripture, reflecting her father's liberal theological views, and she ran the school according to an honour system that reflected the culture of Congregationalism, with its emphases on individual responsibility and conscience. During the 1930s, she had been a strong supporter of the League of Nations, the WILPF, and the Congregational Women's Peace Fellowship. In the twilight of her career, she was President of the Congregational Women's Association of New South Wales from 1942

⁶⁶ Ibid., August 1938, p. 113.

to 1946. She encouraged Congregational women to liken the guild “to the home fires of the Church”.⁶⁷ Equally, Margaret L Knauerhase (née Kiek), Secretary of the South Australian Congregational Church Women’s Society, noted that:

The executive feels that, owing to numerous war-time activities in which Congregational women are engaged, some women may be tempted to desert their guild meetings. It cannot be sufficiently stressed that in these days Christian fellowship is more important than ever, for it not only strengthens the individual for service, but strengthens the Church itself, the very centre of all the highest ideals for which we are at war.⁶⁸

Following the thought of Frances Willard, Miss G A Roseby argued that Congregational women had a responsibility as Christian citizens to think of the world as a “home” in which all citizens should be cared for, particularly the weakest members. In her New Year’s Message as President of the Congregational Women’s Association of New South Wales in 1943, she argued that women, as voters, had as much responsibility for politics as did men. As such, they should seek to direct state resources toward the protection of the weakest members of society, particularly children. She reflected the earlier concern of Congregational women with non-party political action, which stood in contrast to the party rivalries of formal politics:

It is now popularly supposed that though we women now have a vote, State affairs, for the most part, are the business of men, especially of the few men who “go in for” politics. But we forget sometimes that our country is before all else the *home* of everybody who lives in it. It is *our* home, and its care and management are therefore the concern of us all. It is our God-given responsibility to see that every arrangement contributes in some way to the well-being, physical, mental, and spiritual, of the people, and that nothing inspired by motives of greed or pride be allowed to interfere with that.⁶⁹

She argued, further, that Australia should invest in its young, in order that it could become an example to the world of a well-managed nation:

The prime purpose of all these arrangements should be to give opportunity, even to the weakest member of the largest family, to be, or to become, the best possible edition of himself by surrounding him, especially in his childhood and youth, with a wholesome and helpful environment....The best service we as a people could render to the world after the war would be to show it, by way of example, one country that was the ideally well managed home of all its people.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ *Congregationalist*, 8 November 1939, p. 12; *ADB*, vol. 16, pp. 127-8; See also *Queensland Congregationalist*, 27 April 1942, p. 12.

⁶⁸ *SA Congregationalist*, April 1941, p. 8.

⁶⁹ *Congregationalist*, 1 January 1943, p. 4. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

The Congregational presses reinforced such ideas by publishing, for example, a statement on peace and home religion passed by the National Free Church Women's Council of England in April 1940. The statement reflected the assumption of the particular role of women as the givers and guardians of life:

Realising that God has entrusted to women the giving and guarding of life and feeling deeply that the prolongation and extension of the conflicts which distress the world must involve not only bitter suffering to countless men, women and children, but also tragic hindrances to the life and activities of the Church Universal, we call upon one another and upon all women who seek to follow the Way of Love shown to us by our Saviour and Lord, to be constant in prayer, that in an atmosphere of Christian courage and goodwill it may become possible to discover God's way to righteousness and enduring peace.⁷¹

The statement also argued for the maintenance of home religion and family worship as a means of maintaining national life, with the responsibility for such maintenance falling to women:

Concerned, as are many of our fellow Christians, at the evident increase of materialism and indifference to Christian fellowship and association observable in our national life, we call upon all our members to do whatever is in their power to maintain and strengthen home religion, and the wholesome customs of daily prayer and bible reading, family worship - even if this can be only on special occasions - and church attendance. Realising that Christian homes are the surest safeguard of the spiritual welfare of the nation, we declare our conviction that if wives and mothers seek after God there will be a revival and deepening of those sacred springs of Christian home-life, without which the nation that we love must lose its soul. The Christian Church in all its branches must redouble its efforts to transform the family life of the people, by witness to the Gospel of Christ.⁷²

Prophetic and Priestly roles: Incorporation into the war effort

Congregational women encouraged their members to support the war effort through prayer, self-discipline, frugality, and voluntary labour located in church contexts. Mrs Annie Deans considered the most basic tasks should be undertaken in a spirit of cheerfulness as good foot-soldiers in Christ's army.⁷³ "Only through disciplined prayer and rightly directed service can we help our anxious and troubled world", she said.⁷⁴

Mrs H C (Gertrude) Hunt, a minister's wife, also issued the following demanding

⁷¹ *SA Congregationalist*, September 1940, p. 149; *Victorian Independent*, 1 August 1940, p. 149; *Western Congregationalist*, 6 December 1940, p. 4.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Queensland Congregationalist*, 22 December 1941, p. 13; *Western Congregationalist*, 4 October 1940, p. 4.

⁷⁴ *Queensland Congregationalist*, 23 March 1939, p. 4.

exhortation to Congregational women: "We are going to ask you to give until it hurts and then keep on giving until it does not hurt any longer. – We know what women on the other side of the world are bearing and we must give of ourselves to help them."⁷⁵ This discipline was reflected in reminiscences such as that of Hazel Masterson (later Hawke), who remembered her life as a school-girl during the war when she knitted for the war effort, and made blouses and underwear for herself from reject parachute silk. "The frugality which had been normal family practice became, in wartime, an art form."⁷⁶

Congregational women considered prayer as their most basic weapon in the war effort, which was designed to preserve the home front and to support men in battle. This view was reiterated by Doris Feeney from England in her regular letters, which were eventually published as a pamphlet and other publications such as *Women in Wartime: Twenty-Two Heart to Heart Talks*.⁷⁷ The Manifesto of Belief, a united declaration of faith issued in October 1940 by the leaders of the Anglican Mother's Union, the Catholic Women's League and the Free Church Women's Council, argued that women's prayer at home would provide courage to men at the front. The statement called Christian women to use "the spiritual weapon of constant prayer, thus acting as a strong line of defence behind our men."⁷⁸ Similarly, at the inauguration of the Federation of Congregational Women in 1940, Feeney suggested that "We Congregational Women of the British Empire now stand shoulder to shoulder on active service for the Church of Christ, even as our dear ones stand shoulder to

⁷⁵ Ibid., 30 September 1940, p. 14.

⁷⁶ Hazel Hawke, *My Own Life: An Autobiography* (Melbourne, The Text Publishing Company, 1992), p. 20.

⁷⁷ Doris Feeney, *Lest We Forget* (Congregational Women's Association of Australia and New Zealand, December 1945); Doris Feeney, *Women in Wartime: Twenty-Two Heart to Heart Talks* (London: Independent Press, 1940).

⁷⁸ *Western Congregationalist*, 2 March 1941, p. 4; *SA Congregationalist*, February 1941, pp. 284-5.

shoulder...fighting evil things.”⁷⁹ Two years earlier, Feeney had challenged Congregational women to join the Women’s Spiritual Campaign, an Empire circle of prayer, in which they could “link up with those in England who are interceding for peace, and for deliverance of the slaves of the Totalitarian States.”⁸⁰

Evidence from Australian Congregationalism suggests that increased devotion was a high priority of the guilds. As part of the prayer campaign started in England, the South Australian Congregational Church Women’s Society encouraged women to make world peace the centre of their daily prayer for at least three months.⁸¹ They also participated for a day and night in the Week of Prayer organised by the National Council of Women from 31 December 1939 to 6 January 1940. Other states followed South Australia with consecutive weeks of prayer for peace.⁸² In Victoria, Congregational women ministers and workers such as the Rev Isabelle Merry and Miss Kathleen Scott, Honorary Woman Secretary of the LMS in Australia and New Zealand from 1937 to 1946, helped lead these prayer vigils.⁸³ In New South Wales, prayer was the theme of the first all day Congregational women’s session after the declaration of war.⁸⁴ The Victorian Congregational Women’s Association distributed a booklet by Mrs Howden, *The Challenge of the Lord’s Prayer*, to their guilds and the Rev Isabelle Merry led a central devotional service.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ *Queensland Congregationalist*, 28 October 1940, p. 14.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 24 December 1938, p. 7.

⁸¹ *SA Congregationalist*, September 1939, p. 150.

⁸² *Ibid.*, January 1941, p. 261; April 1941, p. 8.

⁸³ *Victorian Independent*, 1 July 1940, p. 143.

⁸⁴ *Congregationalist*, 8 November 1939, p. 12.

⁸⁵ Gladys Barker, Victorian Congregational Women’s Fellowship Jubilee Report 1972, p. 3.

Hospitality projects

Congregational women were also involved in organised voluntary hospitality designed to provide women and men with a “Christian home” in a public environment. In New South Wales, for example, Congregational women explicitly considered hospitality as a work of maternal Christian citizenship. In July 1942, military authorities requested the Congregational Women’s Association to provide weekend hospitality for girls in training at Ingleburn. Congregational women set up a register of 50 hostesses prepared to entertain the girls. Edith Warlow Davies, Secretary of the Congregational Women’s Association, reported the success of the venture as an act of motherhood, which, she claimed, had satisfied the girls, the women, and the authorities. Congregational women had:

not only had the girls for week-ends, but made birthday cakes so that they might celebrate in camp, nursed them when they were ill, invited their men friends so that they might spend Sunday together, helped with their shopping, in short, mothered them. It is pleasing to know that a number of the girls, after going on to other states, have continued to write to the hostesses in an appreciative way. The Military authorities also expressed satisfaction as to the plan.⁸⁶

Congregational women who worked in canteens also sought to provide a “Christian home” in a public environment for women and men.⁸⁷ An example from Queensland is sufficient to demonstrate the ethos that informed the canteens. Queensland Congregational women were involved in two acts of organised hospitality: the Brisbane Hostel for the Men of the Fighting Forces, a hostel for men established by the Queensland Council of Churches and the Temperance League, and the provision of afternoon tea at the Erica Military Hostel. An article in the *Brisbane Courier Mail* appealed implicitly to a female consciousness to create the quiet atmosphere of a Christian home for the thousands of young men who were about to enter camps around

⁸⁶ *Congregationalist*, 1 September 1943, p. 3.

⁸⁷ *Western Congregationalist*, 9 May 1943, p. 8; 7 May 1944, p. 12; 6 May 1945, p. 18. Gladys Barker, *Victorian Congregational Women’s Fellowship Jubilee Report*, 1972 p. 4A.

Brisbane for three months militia training in 1940.⁸⁸ The Hostel, which was opened in January 1943, attracted Congregational women and girls who performed three-hour shifts on the roster from 6am.⁸⁹ Denominations were allocated days to take responsibility for the hostel. On Good Friday 1943, 300 men were served at breakfast and meals during the day.⁹⁰ The Rev Norman C Watt, then President of the Queensland Congregational Union, noted the service by the women as “a living expression of the Christian gospel”.⁹¹ While some men may have been indifferent to this hospitality, Congregational sources recorded appreciation. Mrs Gertrude Hunt, for example, remembered the affirmation from a young man from the Brisbane Hostel for Men of the Fighting Forces, who, putting his arm around her shoulder had said, “You’ve done a great job, Mum”.⁹² Younger women also adopted roles within war service hospitality that reflected the social expectations of sisters, wives, and sweethearts. Hazel Masterson described her experience of providing hospitality to servicemen in wartime in the following way:

As the war dragged on and on, Mum and Sis and I continued with the work that women did on the home front. We made beds in Perth hostels for servicemen on leave and waited on tables in their canteens. Remembering how easy it was to set tables incorrectly or forget orders, I’ve had respect for good table service ever since. But our favourite war effort was ballroom dancing. Dances for servicemen were held in a hall with a fine floor and a piano was played, with a great swing, by another home-front volunteer. Mum and Dad encouraged us to ask the lonely men to our house and Sis, being the older sister, took the initiative. We had many meals and singsongs at home with other girls from the church and English sailors and submariners, or Aussie soldiers from the eastern states on leave. Our freedom seemed without limit.⁹³

A further example of hospitality was that of Margaret Holmes, General Secretary of the Australian Student Christian Movement, who became involved in the resettlement of refugees. She organised educational assistance for Jewish refugees who had arrived on

⁸⁸ *Courier Mail* quoted in the *Queensland Congregationalist*, 20 December 1939, p. 13.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, September-October 1944, p. 13.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, May-June 1943, pp. 12-13.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, November-December 1946, p. 4.

⁹² *Ibid.*, January-February 1946, p. 14.

⁹³ Hawke, *My Own Life*, p. 21.

the *Dunera* and had been interned at Tatura in 1940. Many of the refugees sought opportunities to continue their study and Holmes, in concert with the students of the SCM, liaised with educational authorities to provide approximately half the refugees who had been interned with distance classes in matriculation and undergraduate courses. The SCM recorded some of the letters from the refugees that appreciated Holmes in the *Australian Intercollegian*.⁹⁴ These efforts were supported locally by women such as Margaret Knauerhase in South Australia, who promoted an appeal to help “unfortunate refugees and aliens (definitely not Nazis)” who had been interned in New South Wales with letters and parcels. “Lonely and destitute, they are suffering anew the hardships from which they fled”, she argued, forcefully.⁹⁵

Sexual morality

Through hospitality projects, Congregational women had many opportunities to meet men. The work of historians who have considered the role of women in war as sexual subjects has suggested that the war was a period of triumph for female sexual agency. Other scholars have argued that the structures of femininity particular to the war reinforced traditional social and moral codes.⁹⁶ The ethos of Congregationalism meant that the denomination was reluctant to make pronouncements on matters of private ethics, but assumed that Congregationalists would express their sexuality within the confines of marriage. The Congregational Union of New South Wales was the only

⁹⁴ Margaret Holmes, “Internee Education and the Efforts of the Australian Student Christian Movement” in Paul R. Bartrop and Gabrielle Eisen (eds), *The Dunera Affair: A Documentary Resource Book* (Melbourne: Schwartz and Wilkinson, Jewish Museum of Australia, 1990), pp. 320-5.

⁹⁵ *SA Congregationalist*, April 1941, p. 6.

⁹⁶ Marilyn Lake, “Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II” in Joy Damousi and Lake (eds), *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 60-80; Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989); Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939-43* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990); Kay Saunders and Helen Taylor, “‘To Combat the Plague’: The Construction of Moral Alarm and State Intervention in Queensland During World War II”, *Hecate*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1988, pp. 5-30; Gail Reekie, “War, Sexuality and Feminism: Perth Women’s Organisations, 1938-1945”, *Historical Studies*, vol. 21, no. 85, 1985, pp. 576-91.

union that, as part of a coalition of Protestant churches, issued a statement in 1944 prior to Mother's Day calling the churches to emphasise the highest standard of purity and motherhood.⁹⁷ Though the war provided some older women with the opportunity to critique the sexual activities of women, their views, like the views of younger women, were generally pragmatic. Congregational women were among other Christian women who publicised debates about sex education within their own society, promoted classes run by women doctors, and distributed literature.⁹⁸ Of those who made public comments, the Rev Winifred Kiek was particularly concerned about the adverse impact of war on the sexual health of women and their relationships with men. She urged the church to preserve the notion of marriage as a sacrament, to critique the "cult of romantic, sexual love" popularised in novels and the cinema, and to raise the sexual standards that had been lowered during the war.⁹⁹ Privately, however, younger women such as Rosalie McCutcheon refrained in letters to her younger sister Mary from issuing prescriptions about sex. She simply voiced her concern about whether the war would affect her judgement adversely. She questioned whether, during war conditions, she would "really love someone who in normal times would not have attracted or been attracted by you."¹⁰⁰ Similarly, after the war, Hazel Masterson reflected on her experience with relief that she had avoided the risks of sexual activity, given her and her sister's youth and naivété:

....I was sixteen when Japan's surrender meant the war was over...There's no doubt that wartime had its glamorous side, and stirred the juices of young womanhood. Despite the innocence of the times, and the even greater innocence of Sis and me, I wonder how we got through the war years without mishap.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ *Congregationalist*, 1 May 1944, p. 2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 September 1943, p. 3.

⁹⁹ W. Kiek to Congregational Women's Association of Australia and New Zealand, 22/3/1945. Kiek Papers, PRG 225/4, State Library of South Australia; Margaret Knauerhase, *Winifred: The Story of Winifred Kiek, the First Woman to be Ordained to the Christian Ministry in Australia, 1884-1975* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1978), p. 44.

¹⁰⁰ Rosalie to Mary 18 December 1941, Rosalie McCutcheon Papers MS 9380/1/2, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

¹⁰¹ Hawke, *My Own Life*, p. 24.

The response of Congregationalism to war allowed women to argue that service for the nation was service for God. The numbers of young women who, from 1942, joined the Australian Women's Auxiliary Services, the Women's Auxiliary Armed Forces, and the Voluntary Aid Detachments gained the support of older Congregational women, who argued that they formed "the influence of...Christian homes being carried into the 'Services' where so many of the girls and women from our churches are now working."¹⁰² The example of an English missionary who served with the London Missionary Society and was well known to Australian Congregationalists, Constance (Paul) Fairhall, Matron at Gemo Island Hospital for Incurables, Port Moresby, Papua, best demonstrates the way Congregational women justified war service. Fairhall offered for national service in 1941 against the advice of her friends, believing it was the will of God and "our turn now to help England" – even if the LMS might consider it "desertion, or forsaking the greater for the lesser". She inverted H L Hurst's argument outlined at the start of this chapter: "I think perhaps it is our now turn to help England, instead of vice versa. What happens to LMS work everywhere if England fails?"¹⁰³

Reflection on postwar reconstruction

Some Congregational women expressed concern that women pursued practical activities in support of the war effort to the neglect of making an intellectual contribution to postwar reconstruction. Congregational women, such as the Rev Winifred Kiek, sought to provide a particularly feminine contribution to the thought of the churches on postwar reconstruction. On 20 June 1941, in her opening message as President of the Congregational Women's Association of Australia and New Zealand,

¹⁰² *Queensland Congregationalist*, September-October 1943, pp. 12-3.

¹⁰³ Constance (Paul) Fairhall to Hurst 20 May 1941, Australia Correspondence 1937-41, Box 37, FBN 10, Slide no. 484, CWM Archives.

Kiek suggested that though war service claimed much time, the Church was “a greater society”, which “nourishes the spirit on which these other activities depend.” She warned that though service was the “essence” of Christianity, practical help was “not the only activity that women, especially Christian women” could offer society. She suggested that they were also “called to make a distinctive contribution” to Christian reflection on postwar reconstruction, which was:

as great a service to the Kingdom as knitting socks, and likely to have even more permanent value ... I am not suggesting that we should refrain from any immediate practical service we can give at this time of need, but rather that we should expand our idea of service to include mental and spiritual preparation for a world at peace.¹⁰⁴

Kiek encouraged the formation of study groups for women on post-war reconstruction, which were formed by the Congregational Women’s Associations in South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales.¹⁰⁵ Women who participated in discussion groups in the southern churches in Queensland, for example, argued for a spiritual perspective such that “we women need help to do our part in ridding the world of the causes that lead to conflicts; not between nations but between warmongers in all nations.”¹⁰⁶ These study groups supported the general directions of Australian Congregationalism in seeking to advocate for a system of world government. They read works such as W B Curry, *Federal Union*, and Clarence K Streit, *Union Now*, which argued for such a policy. They also supported their churches’ view that a world order would be dependent upon a spiritual basis with texts such as Gordon Powell, *The Christian Basis of Reconstruction*.¹⁰⁷ They also read the booklet by the Rev Susie Rankin, *By These*

¹⁰⁴ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1941, p. 126; *Queensland Congregationalist*, 30 October 1941, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ *Congregationalist*, 1 August 1940, p. 11. See also Madge Anderson, *A History of Congregational Women's Fellowship of Australia: Fifty Years, 1919-1969* (Melbourne, 1969), Kiek Papers PRG 225/4; Gladys Barker, Victorian Congregational Women’s Fellowship Jubilee Report 1972, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ *Queensland Congregationalist*, July-August 1944, p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ Victorian Congregational Women’s Association, Annual Reports 1942-3, MS 9239/126, La Trobe Library, Melbourne.

Things Men Live, a series of six meditations on bible passages, exploring the themes of faith, vision, endurance, love, and hope.¹⁰⁸

Congregational women believed that their contribution to the New World Order would occur through three levels: through the Church, the Home, and their “Challenge to Social Evils”.¹⁰⁹ Congregational women combined concern for the welfare of children with the welfare of the aged and renewed their hopes for a more effective League of Nations. During these years, Maude Royden published a book on the New World Order in which she argued that women should turn from preparation for mothering young children to “letting go” and to caring for people in old age.¹¹⁰ But Congregational women maintained their interest in the young. In an address to the women of Augustine Church, Hawthorn, Victoria, Mrs Aubrey Hurst discussed her motivation to work toward a New World Order. Men may have “scoffed at the idea of a League of Nations based on Christian principles”, she argued, but if Australians could train children in Christianity just as the Hitler youth had been trained in Nazism, the nation might help to realise a more effective League of Nations.¹¹¹

Congregational women hoped that the internal structure of their church would provide a model and sign of this new world order, particularly in terms of gender relations. But their reflections remained confined to female audiences, a structural problem that, by 1939, had begun to concern men, who noted their exclusion from the talks of women at Union meetings. In relation to the Rev Isabelle Merry’s critical treatment of the

¹⁰⁸ Rev Susie Rankin, *By These Things Men Live: A Series of Meditations* (Congregational Women’s Association of Australia and New Zealand, n.d.)

¹⁰⁹ *Queensland Congregationalist*, July-August 1945, p. 15.

¹¹⁰ For a review of Maude Royden, *Women Partnership in the New World* see *Western Congregationalist*, 1 March 1942, p. 5.

¹¹¹ *SA Congregationalist*, November 1942, p. 147.

Australian Aboriginal population, the editor commented that: “the men wished they had heard her address instead of being fed with scraps of it.”¹¹² Similarly, a reporter commenting on a talk by Mrs Annie Deans on “Our Right to Live: the Lighted Life” at the Queensland Congregational Union Meetings in 1941, speculated that by the year 2041, “Christians will probably have learned to abandon the primitive ideas which prevail in our churches with regard to sex distinctions.”¹¹³ The author argued that a hundred years hence, a female descendent of Mrs Deans would be an ordained minister and that women and men would share equally in the responsibilities of the denomination as a whole. Moreover, at the Congregational Union meetings, for example, male delegates would “share in the preparation of meals, and in the washing up”, and that there would be no separate men’s and women’s sessions because “the secret of spiritual sex equality in Christ will have been discovered.”¹¹⁴ As the case of Merry shows, however, simply access to the ministry did not address the separate spheres of male and female audiences in the church. The support for these separate spheres would not be completely extinguished until church union in 1977.

Ordination

The war also provided Congregational women with further opportunities to extend their access to ordination. The women who were ordained in the period starting from the Second World War were concerned that they not be confined to ministering to women as the earlier generation of women ministers had been. Contemporaries within Congregationalism and the women’s movement noted that the war had “revived”¹¹⁵ the question of women’s ordination in denominations within Australia and overseas,

¹¹² *Queensland Congregationalist*, 22 June 1939, pp. 3-4; and also 25 July 1939, p. 9.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 30 September 1941, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ See, for example, *Western Congregationalist*, 6 December 1942, p. 5.

particularly in the British Commonwealth League and the world YWCA.¹¹⁶ The *Dawn* continued to note developments in women's ordination such as that of Lei Tim Oi by the Bishop of Hong Kong.¹¹⁷ In 1944, the journal argued that as women had suffered the horrors of war equally with men, "returning servicewomen will not be willing to see their church among the places refusing to grant these rights of equal-citizenship in a post-war world."¹¹⁸

Increased access for Congregational women to the lay pastorate during the war led to more women being ordained.¹¹⁹ The shortage of male ministers in Australian Congregationalism left more pulpits empty, particularly in Western Australia.¹²⁰ Edith Warlow Davies, Secretary of the Congregational Women's Association of New South Wales, noted that "in order to meet the acute shortage of manpower", more women had been acting as deacons and preaching than previously.¹²¹ For Hilda Abba, who would migrate to Australia after the war and be ordained in Congregationalism, her first opportunity to preach was at the outbreak of the war, at Centenary Road Congregational Church, Sheffield, where her husband, the Rev Raymond Abba was minister. She remembered vividly that she preached on the text: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills."¹²²

¹¹⁶ The question of the ordination of women had been resolved in British Methodism by 1945, see World YWCA, *Nouvelles des Unions*, August-September 1944 quoted in *Congregationalist*, 8 April 1945; *Western Congregationalist*, 4 November 1945, p. 4; *Dawn*, 25 September 1944, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ *Dawn*, 21 February 1945, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 25 September 1944, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ Florence Noble at Thompson Memorial Church, Gilberton from November 1942 to 30 June 1943, see Thompson Memorial Church Gilberton, Deacons Minutes SRG 95/132/2, State Library of South Australia; *SA Congregationalist*, March 1943, p. 234; Noble "somewhere-at-sea" to Norman Goodall, 10 August 1943, South India Telegu Correspondence IN/7, CWM Archives.

¹²⁰ For ministerial shortage, preaching plan and fellowship to supply vacant pulpits containing men and women see, for example, *Western Congregationalist*, 7 May 1944, p. 7 and for lay preacher shortage see 1 March 1942, p. 4.

¹²¹ *Congregationalist*, 11 November 1944, p. 7. See, for example, Maitland Congregational Church in *SA Congregationalist*, November 1942, p. 159 and January 1943, p. 196.

¹²² Interview with Hilda Abba, 20 March 2000, transcript in possession of author.

Three Congregational women became ordained during the war: Lillian Livingstone, Gwen Hewett, and Lorna Stanfield (see Appendix 4 for details). Livingstone had been employed in a lay pastorate at Allawah, had endeared herself to the congregation and had accepted a call to minister there in 1943. She made congregational ministry to women and men her focus, as she did not want to be limited to ministering only to women.¹²³ Gwen Hewett resigned from missionary service in China on the death of her father in 1940. She returned to care for her mother as her siblings had family responsibilities of their own, and her brothers were of military age.¹²⁴ Her theological training, her experience on the mission field, and “her consecrated gifts” were important factors in her appointment as assistant minister to the Superintendent of Whitefield’s Mission in 1942.¹²⁵ Due to her mother’s illness in 1943, she enrolled as a distance student in further training for ordination and preached in congregations where there was a shortage of ministers, before she was ordained in June.¹²⁶ Lorna Stanfield, from Hobart Memorial Congregational Church, entered Parkin College with Hewett in 1942 and was ordained in 1946.¹²⁷

For women ministers who had been ordained before the war such as Isabelle Merry, the war brought new experiences including welfare work with munitions workers in Footscray.¹²⁸ Winifred Kiek sought to provide the denomination with a perspective that focused on the needs of war veterans and civilians as the victims of war. Kiek’s papers suggest the possibilities for ordained women to modify war liturgies. She changed the

¹²³ Interview with Lillian Ethel Hayman, 23 July 1999, transcript in possession of author.

¹²⁴ Resolution of the Directors 20 November 1940, Fukien China District Committee 1937-40 CH/28; G. E. Hewett to A. M. Chirgwin, 10 December 1940, South China Correspondence CH/23, CWM Archives; See also *SA Congregationalist*, November 1940, pp. 200, 211.

¹²⁵ *SA Congregationalist*, April 1942, pp. 11-12.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, July 1943, p. 73.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, November 1945, p. 124.

¹²⁸ Victorian Congregational Women’s Association, Annual Report 1942, MS 9239/1226, La Trobe Library.

order of worship of the National Day of Prayer including lengthening the prayers, and introducing an address for young people. She also included prayers for the widowed, orphaned, and desolate.¹²⁹ At a United Service of Intercession held in 1947, Kiek made explicit her concern for veterans and civilians:

we pray for those whose minds have become embittered by harsh experiences and whose consciences have been seared by living amid scenes of cruelty and wrong. Especially we pray for children and young people whose early years have thus been shadowed...commemorate...all who gave their lives in this service and pray that Thy rich comfort may abound to all widows and orphans. We pray also for those who are still suffering from the effects of war and ask Thee to bless to their relief and, if possible, to their recovery, the ministry of care and healing.¹³⁰

The Congregational women who adopted priestly roles were more likely to remain pacifist, or to hold to pacifism for longer, than their male co-religionists. While Principal Kiek was committed, albeit reluctantly, to just war, Winifred Kiek remained a pacifist.¹³¹ The Rev Joan Hore, the first woman ordained in New South Wales in 1931, was among eighteen ministers there who considered war as contrary to the mind of Christ. In their Appeal for Peace issued in 1940, they expressed their belief that total disarmament was the only safeguard to peace and that the state should determine immediately the terms upon which the conflict could be resolved.¹³² The West Epping Congregational Church, in which Joan Hore was minister, lost members due ^{to} conflict over their responses to war and while Hore eventually resigned in 1940, she did so because the church could not provide her with a manse, rather than because of her pacifist views.¹³³ Rosalie McCutcheon also maintained her pacifism. When G H Wright heard that she had been troubled by doubt about the appropriateness of her response to

¹²⁹ W. Kiek, National Day of Intercession circa 1940, Kiek Papers PRG 225/16.

¹³⁰ W. Kiek, United Service of Intercession, Sunday 6 July 1947, Kiek Papers PRG 225/16.

¹³¹ Knauerhase, *Winifred Kiek*, p. 9; Phone conversation with Margaret Knauerhase, 10 January 2005.

¹³² *Western Congregationalist*, 2 February 1940, p. 5.

¹³³ Contrast Special History Committee of the West Epping Uniting Church, *Building a Vision: A History of Christian Worship at West Epping* (West Epping Uniting Church Parish Council, 1995), p. 7; West Epping Records Members Roll Book Box 2, C2/3/E3 and Minutes of Deacons' Meeting held on 22 October 1940, C2/3/E2, Uniting Church Records and Historical Society Archives, North Parramatta.

the war, he sent her a copy of his leaflet *Faith and Force*. But it was probably a letter from Irene Pickard, a Quaker, who helped McCutcheon to realise that she was not alone. Many people had experienced doubt and tension about their response to war, she argued, suggesting that it was best to accept such troubles and to see them as “the world’s conflict in oneself”, rather than trying “to resolve it by reducing Christ to the level of the warring world.”¹³⁴

The war also provided experienced women ministers such as Winifred Kiek with significant opportunities for leadership in their denomination. Kiek held her second pastorate at Knoxville Congregational Church from 1938 to 1946, until she resigned because of ill health at the end of the war.¹³⁵ Kiek also became Acting Chairman of the Congregational Union for three months from December 1944 to February 1945 when the Rev C Denis Ryan became ill.¹³⁶ The advocacy of the League of Women Voters had helped to have her appointed as the first female Vice-Chairman of the Congregational Union.¹³⁷ Certainly, her role as Acting Chairman was appreciated in female ecumenical contexts, such as the Women’s World Day of Prayer at Mount Compass.¹³⁸ As Chairman, Kiek articulated the importance of prayer, education, and the maintenance of the Christian church in order to work toward a just and righteous peace, concerns that she had developed earlier in the guilds:¹³⁹

At this time we are all looking forward to joining in a great thanksgiving service to celebrate the coming of peace. Many of us are far from satisfied with the schemes adumbrated at Dumbarton Oaks; a good deal of study, thought, and prayer is demanded of us all if a righteous and enduring peace is to be formulated. Whatever it may be, we can all be preparing ourselves now to live a new life in the world we envisage. All the strength of the churches will be needed

¹³⁴ G. H. Wright to Rosalie McCutcheon, 13 November 1940 and “Notes from a letter written to me by Irene Pickard” n.d., Rosalie McCutcheon Papers, MS 9380/2/18.

¹³⁵ *SA Congregationalist*, March 1946, p. 184.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, December 1944, p. 126.

¹³⁷ Elaine Martin and Nancy Bates, “The South Australian League of Women Voters and the Post-War Women’s Movement”, *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 24, 1996, p. 9.

¹³⁸ *SA Congregationalist*, March 1945, p. 174.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, April 1945, p. 6.

to permeate the new order with spiritual power, without which it can only lead to fresh failure. Let us seek to build up our church life in readiness for the great tasks that like (sic) ahead.¹⁴⁰

As a result, in part, of their increased access to leadership roles in their own church during the war, Congregational women ministers increased their opportunities to show leadership in female ecumenical contexts as well. In South Australia, both Kiek and Hewett, for example, gave the address at the Armistice Day service of the United Church Women's Association during the war, Kiek in 1942 and Hewett in 1943, the year of her ordination.¹⁴¹ Kiek expressed her views on personal and social renewal, and the role women might play in postwar reconstruction. In her view, the mastery of the self was the "first home front" and she urged women to reject the "war spirit".¹⁴² She argued for a definition of patriotism which, in the spirit of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, did not seek to benefit one nation at the expense of another. Finally, she reiterated the view that she had expressed earlier as President of the Congregational Women's Association, that if women did not undertake an intellectual as well as a practical response to the war, they were neglecting their religious responsibilities. Kiek argued for a response from women to the war that involved them adopting the role of Mary as much as that of Martha:

So many women are ready to work; they will toil till they are tired; they will knit, organise meetings and social functions, give money, but they just don't realise that what God wants of them is the further effort of thinking, reading, studying and discussing.¹⁴³

The presence of Congregational women in ecumenical affairs provided them with opportunities to work for the access of women to fields that had emerged as a result of the war, such as the campaign for women to assist chaplains in the armed forces. By

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., March 1945, p. 174.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., December 1942, p. 171; December 1943, p. 161.

¹⁴² Winifred Kiek, "Victory Begins At Home" Armistice Day Service, Women's United Churches Association, Adelaide Unitarian Church, 11 November 1942, Kiek Papers PRG 225/4.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

1943, Australian Congregationalists had become aware through Doris Feeney that women had been appointed as assistants to chaplains in England, Scotland, and New Zealand.¹⁴⁴ The case for the appointment of women to assist chaplains in Australia was led by Janet Newman Barker BA Dip Ed, a Congregationalist from Victoria. Barker was a member of Collins Street Independent Church and had served with the LMS as Principal of Papauta Girls High School, Samoa from 1922 to 1930. When Barker returned to Australia, she became active in the LMS, and served as secretary of the Victorian Congregational Women's Association from 1936 to 1950 and the Congregational Women's Association of Australia and New Zealand from 1940 to 1956. She also represented these associations on many ecumenical, internationalist, and community organisations.¹⁴⁵ Barker was the model Christian female bureaucrat: she possessed an incisive mind, broad knowledge of international affairs, a "fearlessness in expressing an opinion on contentious matters" coupled with an "unfailing kindness" to people she met.¹⁴⁶ She was one of the best-equipped female strategists to negotiate the terrain of ecumenical affairs in Australia.

Australian sources do not reveal how Barker argued the case for the appointment of women as chaplain's assistants to the armed forces during the Second World War. From missionary records, the philosophy of education of her colleagues was to equip female students to become good wives and evangelists in their homes, and to serve in the community as nurses, minister's wives, and leaders of women in their villages.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ *Congregationalist*, 1 February 1943, p. 3; see also *SA Congregationalist*, January 1943, p. 192; August 1944, p. 65; Victorian Congregational Women's Association, Annual Report 1942-3, MS 9239/126, La Trobe Library, Victoria.

¹⁴⁵ Annual Report of the Victorian Congregational Women's Association to the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Victoria, May 1950, MS 9239/126, La Trobe Library.

¹⁴⁶ See obituary written to observe her death on 25 January 1970, Congregational Women's Fellowship of Victoria, Council Minutes, MS 9239/125, La Trobe Library.

¹⁴⁷ Hilda E. A. Small, Papauta Girls School Report 1922 and also Bessie G. Holder, Atauloma LMS Girls School Annual Report 1921, Box 8, Slide no. 1855, CWM Archives.

Similarly, Doris Feeney in England had argued that ministry to the women of the forces “was an evangelistic opportunity we neglect at our peril, for it is these women now in the services who will be building the future homes of this country, will they build Christian homes?”¹⁴⁸ Winifred Kiek supported the appointment of chaplains with requests from the Congregational Church Women’s Society to the Executive of the denomination to take up the matter, arguing that women had a particular pastoral responsibility based on their gender. Fearing that the male chaplains were “doing hardly any good”, according to one of her son’s reports from Sydney,¹⁴⁹ she argued that the women of the armed services might hesitate to approach a male Chaplain, but they might seek the counsel of a woman.¹⁵⁰

Barker used the precedent of the appointment of women chaplains in England, Scotland, and New Zealand to secure the appointment of women to assist chaplains in Australia. She particularly hoped to formalise the visits to hospitals and to a camp outside of Melbourne of the Welsh missionary, the Rev Susie Rankin, into a position of full-time chaplaincy.¹⁵¹ In late 1942, a committee was established to investigate the issue with representatives nominated from the Heads of Protestant Churches and from women’s organisations including the YWCA. The committee, which was reduced to representatives from the Victorian Baptist Women’s Association, the Churches of Christ Women’s Conference, the Victorian Congregational Women’s Association, and two representatives from the Salvation Army who were also Welfare Officers in the WAAAF, drafted a series of resolutions to put before the Board of Chaplains.

¹⁴⁸ *Queensland Congregationalist*, March-April 1943, p. 13.

¹⁴⁹ Winifred Kiek to J. N. Barker, 3 November 1942, Congregational Women’s Association of Australia and New Zealand 2055/1/8, Uniting Church Synod Archives, Victoria.

¹⁵⁰ *Congregationalist*, 1 February 1943, p. 3; *SA Congregationalist*, March 1943, p. 222 and March 1944, p. 217.

¹⁵¹ Victorian Congregational Women’s Association, Annual Report 1942-3, MS 9239/126, La Trobe Library; *Congregationalist*, 1 July 1943, p. 4.

Archbishop Booth called a conference of male chaplains to discuss the matter and Barker tried to have this committee include women. The Convenor of the United Board Women's Committee approached the Heads of Churches to appoint two women representatives to the committee and all complied except the Roman Catholic Church. The Chaplains General agreed to hold another conference on 30 January 1943 but decided to discuss the matter at a further date and to summon the women later. This promise was not fulfilled. However, the chaplains decided that the spiritual welfare of women in the forces was "covered by the present set up"¹⁵² or where it was not, it was "the fault of local circumstances."¹⁵³ Barker wrote to Kiek arguing that the opposition from the Anglican Church had been a significant factor.¹⁵⁴ She also learned that Alma Hartshorn, a Congregationalist and Senior Officer of the Women's Services had been appointed Liaison Officer between the Australian Army Chaplains Department and the Army Women's Services. She had opposed the appointment of women chaplains as unnecessary.¹⁵⁵ The views of these two co-religionists proved so divergent that the final obstacle to the campaign was not the disapproval of the bishops, but the disunity between the women.

Conclusion

The opportunities provided by war allowed Congregational women to extend their prophetic and priestly roles further. The prophetic role continued the concerns of the inter-war period in relation to the welfare of women and children as the chief victims of war, and again, Congregational women found that the best opportunities for the

¹⁵² Major A. W. P. Hodges DAAG to J. N. Barker 17 August 1943, 2055/1C, Uniting Church Synod Archives.

¹⁵³ Victorian Congregational Women's Association, Report to Half-Yearly Assembly October 1943, MS 9239/126, La Trobe Library.

¹⁵⁴ J. N. Barker to Winifred Kiek, 4 October 1943, Congregational Women's Association of Australia and New Zealand 2055/1/3, Uniting Church Synod Archives.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*; Interview with Alma Hartshorn, 8 April 2001, transcript in possession of the author.

expression of these ideas were in the female ecumenical movement. The extension of priestly roles into areas such as wartime chaplaincy could be thwarted by internal disunity among Congregational women as much as opposition from male leaders of other denominations. But the ordination of women continued to expand, and at the local level there was no shortage of ways women could become involved in various forms of devotion and service, including hospitality. In this, they performed the role of “mother” and imagined servicemen and women as sons and daughters, seeking to provide them with homelike environments.

Congregational women also continued to hold a critical stance in relation to the war and to work toward peace and the creation of a new world order. At the end of the war, Mrs Gertrude Hunt, a minister’s wife, President of the Queensland Congregational Women’s Association and representative to the National Council of Women, reflected on her experience of war wearily. Hunt had lost her only son Donald during the war, “missing-in-action”, and the pathos of her situation would not have been lost on her listeners. At the war’s end, she marked the impending transition from women’s service during the war to that of peacetime. She noted the tiredness of Congregational women after years of work and worry, but called them to service in spite of this fatigue, which she justified with the notion of the superiority of Christian citizenship. “For five years we have been engaged in war-work, work that has taken its toll on so many of our gallant women, but now we have our peace work, much more important, and if done in the spirit of Jesus Christ, of much more lasting value.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ *Queensland Congregationalist*, May-June 1945, p. 15; January-February 1946, p. 14.

The challenge for Congregational women after the war was to apply this gendered expression of Christian citizenship to postwar reconstruction. As Christian intellectuals had come to believe that the way to preserve peace was through ecumenism, this now became the major commitment of Congregational women in the post war period. They saw for themselves a special role in developing an ecumenical consciousness through shaping the values of the average woman. As Mrs Hunt said: "We Christian women must share the responsibility for the lack of peace in our world today. We must pray, and read, and think, and plan to fulfil our obligations in these difficult days. We each help to build up that vital factor in community life called 'Public Opinion'. May we keep in mind standards set by the Master – the Salt, the Leaven, the Light – and so be truly makers of peace."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., July-August 1946, p. 13.

CHAPTER 7

Responses to the Ecumenical Movement, 1945-1968

The “masculine mind dominates the ecumenical movement almost to death” declared Dr E H Burgmann, Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulbourn, at the annual meeting of the Australia Council of the World Council of Churches held in Gilburra, New South Wales in April 1951. The meeting affirmed this view with loud applause. In response, the Rev Winifred Kiek, in her position as a Liaison Officer for women in the Australian Section for the World Council of Churches, assured the gathering that Australian Christian women were ready to become involved in the ecumenical movement. “Our women’s groups now understand what the Christian unity movement is all about,” she said, “we are ready for action.”¹

In the post-war period, Congregational women focused their efforts on the ecumenical movement, as they saw it as a matter of Christian obedience as well as an effective way to extend their influence in national and international relations. Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations began to work towards church union in earnest. The Second World War had increased their sense of urgency about church union as the will of God, as the war had drawn their attention to the growing secularisation of Australian culture and also to the advent of nuclear technology in munitions manufacture. Congregational women became leaders in the ecumenical movement to a greater degree than did the women of other denominations, because they had gained access to prophetic and priestly roles within their own church. They

¹ “Key Church Jobs for Women Plea”, cutting, circa 21 April 1951, Kiek Papers PRG 225/8, State Library of South Australia. See also Janet Newman Barker, Report of the Congregational Women’s Fellowship of Australia and New Zealand to the Assembly 1954, 2055/1C/1/1, Uniting Church Synod Archives, Victoria.

combined interest in ecumenism with involvement in the women's movement, which had become increasingly concerned with human rights in the international sphere, rather than simply women's rights.² Their past experience in the women's movement meant that Congregational women also maintained a feminist perspective in ecumenical affairs, albeit one that had been modified to incorporate opposition to the threat of nuclear war. They pursued this perspective in ecumenical organisations separate from men, however, which only served to contain the influence of women to those organisations. In the late 1960s, a new generation of women would reject the assumptions on which this separate, feminine sphere was established. They would pursue what they believed was a radically new agenda – equality with men – while also replicating, ironically, the previous focus of women on their particular role as the bearers of children.

This supposedly new agenda of women's liberation would be historically blind as well as dependent for its emergence on the conditions of the post-war world. Greater numbers of women had experienced professional work during the Second World War than previously, and some women were dismayed at the new expectation that all married women would resume home duties after the war. Women also began to challenge traditional gender roles as a result of the changed international security context. Laurence S Wittner has argued recently that scholars who are "looking for the missing link between conventional gender norms of the immediate postwar decade and the emerging women's liberation movement of the late 1960s would do well to examine the impact of the bomb in the intervening years." He argued that one of the effects of the threat of nuclear war was a levelling of gender roles. The dawn of the atomic age

² Elaine Martin and Nancy Bates, "The South Australian League of Women Voters and the Post-War Women's Movement", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 24, 1996, pp. 5-27.

meant that more than ever before all people – not simply women in their roles as child-bearers and as civilians – had to be vigilant in the protection of life. The threat of the bomb helped to render redundant the traditional distinction, found among peace activists particularly but also among the wider community, of men as the takers of life and women as its givers and protectors.³

The ecumenical movement

The ecumenical movement was the most significant movement within Christianity in the 1950s and 1960s. Christians understood ecumenism, like the ordination of women discussed in Chapter 5, as both a symbolic and also a utilitarian contribution to the creation of a New World Order. After the war, advocates of ecumenism developed a comprehensive use of the Greek word *oikumene*, to mean the whole, inhabited world.⁴ General works of Australian history that have considered this period in detail have neglected ecumenism as a major social movement.⁵ By contrast, historians of religion, such as David Hilliard, have mapped the nature of religion in the 1950s, and, in particular, how popular attitudes to Christianity reflected a perceived connection between divine authority, institutional religion, stable family life, and moral standards.⁶

³ Laurence S. Wittner, "Gender Roles and Nuclear Disarmament Activism, 1954-1965", *Gender and History*, vol. 12, no. 1, April 2000, pp. 197-222.

⁴ Frank Engel, *Australian Christians in Conflict and Unity* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1984), p. 15; For a fuller discussion of the meaning of 'ecumenical', see Robert McAfee Brown, *The Ecumenical Revolution: An Interpretation of the Catholic-Protestant Dialogue* (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), pp. 12-19.

⁵ John Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000). See also review by David Hilliard, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 32, no. 116, April 2001, pp. 157-8.

⁶ David Hilliard, "Popular Religion in Australia in the 1950s: A Study of Adelaide and Brisbane", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 15, no. 2, December 1988, pp. 219-235; David Hilliard, "God in the Suburbs: The Religious Culture of Australian Cities in the 1950s", *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 97, October 1991, pp. 399-419; David Hilliard, "Church, Family and Sexuality in Australia in the 1950s" in the special issue by Judith Smart (ed), "The Forgotten Fifties", *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 109, October 1997, pp. 133-146.

Specific accounts of ecumenism by theologians and church historians have tried to document the extent of popular support for ecumenism and the development of formal dialogues between Christian churches. Ecumenism was an international social movement that emerged in Britain and America in the 1890s and reached a climax after the Second World War. In the 1960s, a period of moral and doctrinal uncertainty, church leaders “actively, almost aggressively, canvassed” ecumenism as a “cause” in which church members could believe.⁷ Hans Mol, a sociologist, has demonstrated the extent to which ecumenism in Australia was a popular movement, with 64 percent of respondents to a survey favouring a merger of their church with another.⁸ As a result of the war, the formal process of dialogue between the Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches became more intentional than previously and, with the aim of union these churches formed a Joint Commission on Church Union in 1957.⁹ The three uniting denominations, as they were eventually called, encouraged their church members to undertake extensive study of their respective traditions: of the various drafts of the *Basis of Union* of the new church; and, more generally, the challenge, as they saw it, of post-war society to Christianity.¹⁰ These churches increasingly viewed their existence as provisional. Margaret L Knauerhase, who produced a pageant to mark the Centenary of South Australian Congregationalism in 1950, regarded her denomination not as: “an end in itself, but as a milestone on the road to a united Church on a world scale.”¹¹

⁷ For the British context, see Bryan Wilson, *Religion in a Secular Society: A Sociological Comment* (London: C. A. Watts, 1966), p. 125.

⁸ Preliminary findings were published in J. J. Mol, “The Merger Attempts of the Australian Churches”, *Ecumenical Review*, vol. 21, January 1969, pp. 23-31; The full study was published as Hans Mol, *Religion in Australia: A Sociological Investigation* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1971), pp. 133-140.

⁹ Andrew Dutney, *Manifesto For Renewal: The Shaping of a New Church* (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 1986).

¹⁰ Report of the Church Union Committee, Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union of New South Wales, October 1957, Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/4, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

¹¹ *SA Congregationalist*, April 1950, p. 165.

Scholarship on Australian ecumenism shares the weakness noted by Peter Ludlow in relation to the history of ecumenism in Europe. In the hands of its “house” historians, he suggests, this history has become “not unlike the triumphant progress of the Olympic flame.” The “ecumenical ideal” has been “passed...along a preordained route” that had encompassed many world conferences “with scarcely a hint of failure or disharmony.”¹² Ludlow has argued further, that theologians and church historians have tended to neglect the wider context of the emergence of ecumenical ideas. Concern for ecumenism after the war was not simply a product of theological thought. It was also the result of “association with non-churchmen, political pressure from the secular press, and the human needs of non-Protestant refugees”.¹³

Andrew Dutney has considered the origins of the Uniting Church in Australia through a detailed study of the creation of its foundation document, the *Basis of Union*. The heightened sense of urgency about church union that emerged after the Second World War led to a discussion of a particular model of church, rather than what he has defined as the “comparative ecclesiology” of previous church union discussions. The churches decided that they would not progress towards union very quickly if they simply continued to analyse the similarities and differences of their respective traditions. They therefore adopted an approach that considered the kind of church that would be appropriate for a post-war world.¹⁴

¹² Peter W. Ludlow, “The International Protestant Community in the Second World War”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 29, no. 3, July 1978, p. 315. For an example of ‘house’ history see R. Rouse and S. C. Neill (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948* (London: Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, 1954).

¹³ Ludlow, “The International Protestant Community”, p. 316.

¹⁴ For the full study see, Andrew Dutney, “The Development of the Understanding of Ministry in the Australian Church Union Negotiations, 1957-1971” (Ph.D thesis in Theology, University of St Andrews, Scotland, 1985). See also C. Uidam, “Why the Church Union Movement Failed in Australia, 1901-1925”, *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 13, no. 4, December 1985, pp. 393-410.

Dutney considered particular examples of organised opposition to church union from within denominations such as Presbyterianism. But he largely assessed the opposition to ecumenism as an obstacle to the “preordained route”, rather than offering a sympathetic portrait of the reactions of the denominations to the various drafts of the *Basis of Union*. Scholars have yet to explore Australian exceptionalism in attitudes toward ecumenism. In Australia, the question of state aid to religion (insofar as it related to buildings for worship and the salaries of ministers) had been resolved by the late nineteenth century. In a nation that had so resolved the question of a state church, the presence of so many different Christian denominations, and competition between them for members, was a source of shame and regret for Australian Christian leaders, who sought to leave behind the divisions of the British Isles. During the Second World War, for example, the Rev A T Gurr, a Congregationalist then resident in Queensland addressed the Annual Meeting of the Queensland Congregational Union. In the context of an argument that if the Christian church might have been able to prevent war had it been united internationally, he lamented that: “We have in this country, which should be free from the prejudices engendered by the past, the sad spectacle of suspicion and competition between denominations.”¹⁵

Australian Congregationalism, like other denominations, supported the ecumenical movement locally and nationally, through providing leaders to the ecumenical movement such as John Garrett, the first full-time secretary of the Australia Council of the World Council of Churches, but especially through education and local experiences. The most significant of these local experiments in ecumenism was the creation of the

¹⁵ *Queensland Congregationalist*, 30 September 1941, p. 5.

United Church in North Australia, in 1947.¹⁶ Congregationalists also joined other Christians in co-ordinated efforts in evangelism, which they viewed as not only intrinsically desirable, but as a means of strengthening the contribution from the denominations to a union church, and also to influence the political process more effectively. Principal Kiek, for example, reflected a view that was held widely that Christians should, in order to preach with integrity, work toward closer visible unity. He had also remarked, wryly, that: "It is no good trying to apply Christianity to social problems unless we have some Christianity to apply."¹⁷ Evangelical campaigns such as the Billy Graham Crusade, held in 1959, increased membership in local churches marginally and, somewhat unexpectedly, the preparation for the crusade also fostered further unity between the denominations.¹⁸

Congregationalists reflected concern among ecumenists for church unity to strengthen pacifist commitment in an atomic age. Although figures for Australian Congregationalism are not available, a statistical survey for English and Welsh Congregationalism has shown that with the nuclear threat, pacifist commitment

¹⁶ William W. Emilsen, "The United Church in North Australia: Australia's Other Experiment in Ecumenism", *Uniting Church Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, August 2002, pp. 1-22; See also *SA Congregationalist*, October 1960, p. 6; Congregationalists supported debates, books and speakers on ecumenism see, especially, *SA Congregationalist*, June 1959-December 1961; For community support for ecumenism see, for example, Salmon Gums Country Women's Association, *Salmon Gums CWA: A History of 50 Years Service to the Community* (Esperance Printing Press, 1988), p. 12; Erna L. Forrester, *History of the Southern Cross Branch of the CWA, 1934-1971* (CWA, 1971), p. 9; The University of Western Australia Adult Education Board, *Can Christianity Survive in the Modern World? Theme Lectures From the Thirty-Sixth Annual Summer School*, January 1964; For John Garrett, see, *SA Congregationalist*, July 1948, p. 26; August 1953, p. 19; February 1961, p. 4.

¹⁷ *SA Congregationalist*, June 1948, p. 3.

¹⁸ David Hilliard, "Popular Religion in Australia in the 1950s", pp. 231-235. See also Judith Smart, "Evangelist as Star: The Billy Graham Crusade in Australia, 1959", *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 33, no. 1, Summer 1999, pp. 165-175. For official histories, see Charles T. Cook, *The Billy Graham Story: One Thing I Do* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1954); Congregationalists encouraged reading of the official study of Billy Graham by Curtis C. Mitchell, *God in the Garden: The Official Story of the New York Crusade* (Kingswood, Surrey: The World's Work, 1957) see, for example, *SA Congregationalist*, April 1959, p. 3; For increased church membership immediately after the crusade and ecumenism see, *SA Congregationalist*, January-August 1959; *Canning Congregational Chronicle*, no. 37, June 1959.

increased to approximately 40 percent of the ministers of the denomination by 1959. They promoted their ideas through the Congregational Pacifist Fellowship (previously the Crusade founded in 1926), and also through publications such as Dr C J Cadoux, *Christian Pacifism Re-examined* (1940), Leyton Richards, *Christian Pacifism after Two World Wars* (1946), and Dr G F Nuttall, *Christian Pacifism in History* (1948).¹⁹

One Australian Congregational minister, the Rev Bert R Wyllie, suggested that “The hydrogen bomb has altered the whole meaning of war. War is no longer a fight between men and nations, it is the murder of total populations.” He argued for strong connections between Christian evangelists and Christian pacifists: “a broken, burnt and blistered planet would be a poor background for the Hallelujah Chorus.”²⁰ Moreover, in relation to the opening of the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948, Principal Kiek argued that the conference was a sign of hope after the war in an international community divided by political ideologies. Christians should become the “channels” of the “resources of Almighty God”, he argued, which he believed were stronger than the most serious military weapon of the age, the atom bomb:

It is indeed wonderful that, after the most devastating war in history, with all the misery and bitterness arising therefrom, it should be possible for Christians to meet in this way. Some who come will bear on their bodies “the brands of Jesus”, since they have endured imprisonment and torture for His Name. Christ alone can exercise the ministry of reconciliation which the world so much needs and break down the enmities which tear asunder the body of humanity. Only as the body of humanity becomes the Body of Christ can there be a final reconciliation...we Christians believe that in Christ are all the infinite resources of Almighty God, mightier even than the atomic bomb. Our task is to become the channels of these resources...Only the glowing flame of a new Pentecost can melt away the iron curtains which divide peoples and even Christians from one another. Above all the clamour of sectarianism and sectionalism let us have our ears open to the clear trumpet-call of God to his Church and to His World.²¹

¹⁹ R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962), p. 420.

²⁰ *Australian Christian World*, 7 April 1950, p. 6.

²¹ *SA Congregationalist*, August 1948, p. 47.

While Congregationalists saw themselves as increasingly committed to the ecumenical movement, their responses to ecumenical experiences were not as “starry-eyed” as has been reflected in the literature on ecumenism. Frank Engel has demonstrated the growth of support for ecumenism through organisations such as the missionary societies and the Australian Student Christian Movement. He has shown how the ecumenical movement could produce a heady feeling for people who had grown up in a society sharply divided by denominational cultures. But his work has neglected the number of people who were not sustained by the wave of ecumenical enthusiasm that spread through Australia in the 1950s. The response of two young Congregationalists, the Rev Peter Mathews and Bob Hawke, for example, to a World Youth Conference held in Travancore, India, which they attended as representatives of the Congregational Youth Fellowship of Australia, carried significant implications for their future careers, and for the lives of their families. For Mathews, who had been appointed Youth Director of the Congregational Union of South Australia in 1947, this conference strengthened his resolve to inspire young people to acts of Christian citizenship. He conducted this ministry in a strong partnership with his wife Rita Carr, a theological student whom he had met while studying at Parkin College in 1945.²² By contrast, after this conference Bob Hawke, the son of a Congregational minister, President of the Congregational Youth Fellowship and Rhodes Scholar, left the church for politics. His decision affected his wife Hazel, who recalled that though she had valued Hawke’s honesty in his report to the church, she also remembered her “vague sense of foreboding” about the impact that this decision would have on their relationship, which, until this point, “had been so

²² Robert J. Brown (ed.), *Peter Mathews: A Memoir* (Adelaide: Geoffrey Weston Pope, 2001), p. 33.

church centred".²³ By the mid-1960s, they had both stopped attending church. In 1953, immediately after the conference, one contemporary observed soberly that:

The two men (both of whom are thoughtful and observant) do not agree in their interpretation of the teachings of Conference leaders nor in the relevance of those teachings to the present world situation. They do agree that their visit to India and their contact with Youth and Youth Leaders have opened their eyes to the critical and (for Australia) dangerous state of Asia. Most delegates who come home from such conferences are starry-eyed with wonder and bubbling over with adjectives such as "wonderful and thrilling." Peter and Bob, on the contrary are restrained and guarded. They have seen the world situation as it actually is, and the sight is not pleasant; they have observed the deep gulfs in thought and practice that separate various branches of the Christian Church from one another, and they do not indulge in sweeping eulogies of the Ecumenical movement. But both of them, being realists, recognise that frank interchange of views between Christian bodies whose histories and traditions have been diverse does not obscure a deeper unity in Christ, and must lay the foundations for effective ministry to a stricken world [sic].²⁴

Congregationalists probably became most conscious of the distinctive features of their denomination just prior to its dissolution, through their study of the reports of the Joint Commission on Church Union and the drafts of the Basis of Union.²⁵ On the one hand, the Rev Frank Whyte argued that church union discussions had revealed "the great woolliness of understanding and casualness of practice" among Congregationalists in relation to the creeds, the confessions, and the sacraments.²⁶ On the other hand, for the Rev Henry Wells, President of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand and a member of the Joint Commission on Church Union, the inevitable comparative dimension to church union discussions had increased understanding among Congregationalists of their distinctive polity.²⁷ In providing feedback to the Joint Commission on Church Union, congregations sought to influence discussions about

²³ Hazel Hawke, *My Own Life: An Autobiography* (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 39, 83.

²⁴ *SA Congregationalist*, February 1953, p. 165.

²⁵ Congregational Union of England and Wales (Life and Work Department), *Congregationalism and the Ecumenical Movement* (London: Independent Press, 1952); Glynmor John, *Congregationalism in an Ecumenical Era* (London: Independent Press, 1967).

²⁶ Rev F. W. Whyte, "Pains, Probes and Progress Down Under, 1968", Joint Commission on Church Union Archives ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1034/MLK 01079/4.

²⁷ *Congregationalist*, January 1963, p. 1 in ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/4.

church union in order to preserve aspects of their ethos in the new church, in particular, their understanding of ministry and their liberty in confession and also in polity.²⁸

Congregationalists feared that in uniting with Methodists and Presbyterians, they would lose cherished ideals, such as the catholicity of each congregation, and that they would be forced to conform to a set confession. Their first concern was that all church members should be included in the life and ministry of the church and that membership should be on the basis of confessional liberty rather than conformity to a creed. Congregationalists expected that the polity of the new church would reflect the polity of Congregationalism in which the bible was the source, but not the final arbiter of authority, and the gospel was safeguarded in the creeds. Both these documents, but the creeds in particular, should be used as a confession of faith rather than an imposition, as they had been used in the past.²⁹ The ministry should be open to both men and women equally. They were not uncritical of their own polity, however. While Congregationalists sought to preserve local autonomy, they maintained that episcopate or “oversight” was necessary for effective management and to avoid the excesses of independency.³⁰

Congregationalists were not prepared, therefore, to capitulate to ecclesiastical intolerance in order to achieve unity. The small size of Congregationalism in Australia also meant that members feared “absorption” into a church with a hierarchical structure

²⁸ See the reports from congregations on the proposed Basis of Union to the Joint Commission on Church Union, Committee for the Study of Church Union Report, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/6.

²⁹ Henry Wells, Congregationalism in the Church Union, 1 April 1958 and Rev H. Cunliffe-Jones, Comments on Draft in Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/4; Joint Commission on Christian Unity Conference, November 1957, Ormond College, Carlton, Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/8.

³⁰ Joint Commission on Church Union Conference 1958, Ormond College, Carlton and see also the Rev H. Cunliffe-Jones, Comments on Draft, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1/4.

of authority. The rise of Fascism and Communism in Europe had heightened fear among Congregationalists of abuse of central authority. The Statement of Belief passed at the International Congregational Council in 1949 was critical both of fascist and so-called democratic forms of government. It argued that: "Those who have known freedom and responsibility in the church meeting have not been tolerant of tyranny in the state....Our churchmanship is inconsistent not only with any form of state totalitarianism, but also with government by mass-man or the mere power of majorities."³¹ In church union debates in South Australia in 1937, Margaret L W Bevan criticised the report of the church union committee that Principal Kiek had presented to the Congregational Union meeting the previous March. In presenting the report, Kiek had paid tribute to the "generous attitude of the Methodists", which, he said, albeit not very convincingly, "dispelled any fear that by union we might be absorbed in that branch." Bevan replied dryly, that: "With all respect, I regret his words. Generosity implies a favour extended from a greater to a lesser. There is no place for the acceptance by us of favours from anyone. Religious freedom, in the widest sense, is our right and none may bestow or withhold it."³² This Congregational conviction of the right to religious freedom outlined in Chapter 1 was best expressed by their English co-religionists through historical precedent:

It is said that John Howe was criticised by a friend for not joining the Anglican Church at the Restoration, and the friend commented that he judged Howe to be tolerant enough of ecclesiastical forms to have swallowed his scruples. John Howe is said to have replied that it was precisely because he was tolerant of forms that he must stand apart from the Establishment: he could not enter a 'Church' which was less tolerant. This catholicity must be safeguarded; we do not believe that Jesus Christ can be Lord of His Church without it.³³

³¹ *SA Congregationalist*, August 1949, p. 35.

³² *Ibid.*, January 1937, p. 329.

³³ Congregational Union of England and Wales, *Congregationalism and the Ecumenical Movement*, p. 16.

Ultimately, Congregationalists largely achieved what they had hoped for in the new church: it preserved the autonomy of the local congregation, liberty in confession, and also secured the ordination of women. The Uniting Church was established in 1977 with the idealistic hope that it might combine the best of the three traditions in one church. The Reformed emphasis on scholarship, authority, and confessional liberty was present in the new church. In polity, a series of “inter-conciliar” councils, which sought to build consensus between the councils by listening to one another, maintained the autonomy of the congregation and also reduced isolation effectively. The Congregational traditions of the covenant of the congregation and the lay ministry of the sacraments were not continued into the Uniting Church. But over the 1980s, the church developed a system of lay ministry of the sacraments as rural congregations in particular, who sought to maintain themselves when they were no longer able to pay a stipended minister, began to require such a system.

During the 1960s, Congregationalists were largely confident in the future, as gradually, a common culture developed between the three uniting denominations. Broad support for church union was due to a combination of a sense of the inevitability of union due to the small size of the church in Australia, satisfaction with the proposed *Basis*, and good experiences in the joint-parishes that were formed in anticipation of church union. When the votes on the *Basis of Union* were taken in the 1970s, Congregationalists supported union overwhelmingly. They voted on church union in local churches and had to achieve a two-thirds majority to register in favour of church union and then they voted in the state unions. The combined vote of the Congregational churches was 83 percent in favour of church union. The various Congregational Unions voted in favour of it as follows: Western Australia 77 percent, Queensland 85 percent, Victoria 86

percent, Tasmania 90 percent, and South Australia 100 percent.³⁴ From the 1950s to church union in 1977, Australian Congregationalists became partners in over 100 joint parishes. Half of these ventures were located in South Australia where support for church union was strongest. Early examples of joint parishes included those at centres such as Bunbury and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia, and Lindisfarne and Claremont in Tasmania.³⁵ In South Australia, half the membership and two thirds of the Congregational churches were located in United Parishes and over 80 percent of these congregations voted in favour of church union.³⁶ Any lingering doubts they may have had about the Uniting Church were related not to the new polity of the church, but rather to the residual culture of the members of the other two denominations. The two main concerns for Congregationalists – confessional liberty and the ordination of women – had been resolved in the early stages of negotiations for church union.

A Female Ecumenical Culture

As the majority of the members of the three uniting denominations were women, they formed a significant source of support for the ecumenical movement. Such support had been developing for some time. Marriages between people of different denominations had fostered ecumenical commitment in women as they negotiated membership in a new religious community on marriage, but also found ways to maintain links with the

³⁴ G. Lindsay Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia* ed. Bruce Upham (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 2001), pp. 334-40, 345; John Cameron, *In Stow's Footsteps: A Chronological History of the Congregational Churches in South Australia, 1837-1977* (Glynde, SA: South Australian Congregational History Project Committee, 1987), pp. 50-1. See D'Arcy Wood's notes on his broadcast on the ABC's Frontier program, 5 August 1972, Joint Commission on Church Union ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1034 MLK01079/4.

³⁵ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, pp. 130, 222, 331-347.

³⁶ *Central Times*, 2 August 1972, p. 11; Arnold Hunt, *This Side of Heaven: A History of Methodism in South Australia* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1985), pp. 423-429; Julia Pitman, "South Australia: Devoted but Battle-Weary" in William and Susan Emilsen (eds.), *The Uniting Church in Australia: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Melbourne: Circa, 2003), p. 136.

old.³⁷ Support among women for ecumenism was also cultivated over time through an ecumenical culture separate from men. Institutions such as the Women's Inter-Church Councils had been created in South Australia in 1936, in New South Wales in 1939, in Victoria in 1941, and in Western Australia and Queensland in the late 1940s. These women's ecumenical bodies had sought to provide a role for women in the ecumenical movement and a feminist perspective to it.³⁸ Celebratory histories of these councils have provided descriptions of their activities and community service work, but they have neglected their origins following state centenaries and community service during the war. For Victorian Congregational women, for example, the provision of hospitality to service men and women in canteens, had represented, "apart from their main objective, a stimulating adventure in Inter-Church cooperation."³⁹

Congregational women became especially prominent in the ecumenical movement, partly because of their access to both prophetic and priestly roles within their own church. They were well placed, therefore, to offer leadership to women of other denominations to cultivate a female ecumenical community. Congregational women could influence union debates in their own church, within the ecumenical movement, and work toward expressions of local ecumenism. They could also show leadership in the women's interchurch councils to a greater degree than the women of other

³⁷ Winifred Kiek, *We of One House* (Sydney: Australian Council for the World Council of Churches, 1954), pp. 3-4 in Kiek Papers PRG 225/11, State Library of South Australia; June Epstein, *Rosalie McCutcheon: A Memoir* (Adelaide: Rosalie McCutcheon Memorial, 1993).

³⁸ Ruby Peake, *A History of Australian Church Women (SA Unit), Formerly Women's United Church Association Women's Interchurch Council, Commemorating the Diamond Jubilee, 1936-1996* (Beverly, SA: Print Mania, 1996); Ruth Smith, *History of the Women's Inter-Church Council of Victoria, 1941-1964* (Victoria: W. J. Barr, 1964); M. Millar, *The Story of Wybalena: New South Wales Women's Inter-Church Council* (Sydney: Australian Council of Churches, 1963); *Queensland Congregationalist*, February 1947, p. 14; M. Reid, *Queensland Women's Interchurch Council, 1947-1972* (Queensland: Queensland Unit Australian Church Women, 1972).

³⁹ Victorian Congregational Women's Association, 21st Annual Report 1942-3, MS 9239/126, La Trobe Library, Melbourne.

denominations, being among the founders and first Presidents.⁴⁰ Even into the 1960s, the liberty Congregationalism offered to women to represent the views of their church about ecumenism remains stark. In the magazine of the Australian Student Christian Movement, *Crux*, Fernanda Blackwell, a Congregationalist and an Arts student from Queensland, argued for ecumenism alongside two men from Methodism and Presbyterianism.⁴¹ Again, women's organisations such as the Australian Federation of Women Voters noted and encouraged the efforts of Congregational women after the Second World War who worked for a place for women equal with men in the ecumenical movement.⁴²

A questionnaire administered by Winifred Kiek for the World Council of Churches provides some insight into the culture of female church members after the war.⁴³ Associations for young married women became popular. Most women were involved in the Women's World Day of Prayer and in women's inter-church activities. United evangelistic efforts included the Youth For Christ Movement, the Student Christian Movement, and occasional missions. Women continued to be involved in sending food and clothing to Britain, Europe and Asia, and community services such as hospital visiting, support of orphanages, homes for the aged, Aboriginal welfare, and immigration. A very small number of women had read the Universal Declaration of

⁴⁰ See, for example, Congregational Women's Fellowship of Australia C1/4/ix, Uniting Church Records and Historical Society Archives, North Parramatta. See also, *SA Congregationalist*, September 1941, p. 109; September 1943, p. 114; January 1944, p. 175; January 1953, p. 155; Millar, *The Story of Wybalena*, p. 2; Smith, *History of the Women's Inter-Church Council of Victoria*, p. 2; Reid, *Queensland Women's Inter-Church Council*, pp. 1-3.

⁴¹ *Crux*, April-May 1965, pp. 8-9.

⁴² Amy Wheaton to Mrs J. R. Blanchard, 9 July 1952, Australian Federation of Women Voters Papers MS 2818/18/137, see also the cuttings and letters on women's rights, 1947-1967, MS 2818/1/11, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

⁴³ *SA Congregationalist*, February 1951, p. 130.

Human Rights, the charter of the United Nations written in 1948, but its ethos would be imparted through the ecumenical movement.⁴⁴

The Women's Inter-Church Councils were a significant source of a female ecumenical culture that sought to deepen unity between Christian women, to work toward the "Kingdom of God on earth", and to provide a united Christian feminist voice in politics.⁴⁵ The motto of the Women's Inter-Church Council of Victoria revealed its eschatological aims: "Christian Women Working Together Can Change the World."⁴⁶ The councils sought to cultivate a spiritual dimension to world peace and international social responsibility. At a state level, Christian women observed two days ecumenically, Fellowship Day in connection with the Women's World Day of Prayer on the first Friday in Lent, and World Community Day in October. Congregational women read the American ecumenical magazine, *Church Woman* and encouraged members to support the World Council of Churches' ecumenical register in which Christian women subscribed one dollar each.⁴⁷ In local guilds, women were encouraged to give to the Fellowship of the Least Coin, a prayer fellowship and fundraiser founded in 1956 by Mrs Shanti Solomon, an Indian woman who had visited the Pacific and sought to develop international consciousness among Pacific and Asian women. The least coin in the national currency of a given nation was designated to fund service projects; an amount that Solomon hoped would be possible for all women, even the poorest to contribute.⁴⁸ From 1958 to 1968, gifts from Australia were allocated to projects for

⁴⁴ Ibid., January 1952, p. 57.

⁴⁵ World Community Day pamphlet 1948, Kiek Papers PRG 225/4.

⁴⁶ Smith, *History of the Women's Inter-Church Council of Victoria*, cover page.

⁴⁷ *SA Congregationalist*, June 1950, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Mrs T. H. Coates, The Formation of "Australian Church Women", Women's Inter-Church Council of Victoria, 28 June 1963, Kiek Papers PRG 225/9.

Aboriginal and migrant women.⁴⁹ Australian Congregational women reflected the renewed interest of their church in internationalism for the sake of ecumenism by subscribing to journals such as *World Congregationalism* and entertaining a delegation of Congregationalists from America in 1955. They also supported visitors from the international ecumenical movement such as Kathleen Bliss from the World Council of Churches who came out to Australia the following year.⁵⁰

In local congregations, Congregational women reflected the wider movement in Protestant Christianity to provide young women with new evening groups as a night away from care of husbands and children.⁵¹ Although this provision allowed younger Congregational women to assume responsibilities in the denomination, having a family prevented Jean Armstrong, for example, from attending the interstate meetings as secretary of Congregational Women's Fellowship of Queensland.⁵² As a consequence, the most significant leaders in the ecumenical movement continued to be women who were childless or who had completed raising children. After Miss G A Roseby had retired from the position of Principal of Redlands School, for example, she played a key role in the formation of Wybalena Hostel established for business girls and students in 1952 by the New South Wales Women's Inter-Church Council.⁵³ Margaret Holmes, a Congregationalist from Victoria who had served as National Secretary of the Australian

⁴⁹ See Fellowship of the Least Coin pamphlet in Leichhardt Congregational Church, Minutes of the Women's Fellowship, 1960-1964, OMDP/19/2, John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

⁵⁰ See, for example, *SA Congregationalist*, December 1955, p. 73. In 1964, there were 246 subscribers to *World Congregationalism*, 109 were from South Australia, see Congregational Women's Fellowship 2055C/1/2, Uniting Church Synod Archives, Victoria.

⁵¹ See, for example, *SA Congregationalist*, October 1960, p. 5.

⁵² Jean Armstrong to Janet Newman Barker, 7 February 1956, Congregational Women's Fellowship, 2055C/1/1, Uniting Church Synod Archives, Victoria.

⁵³ Millar, *The Story of Wybalena*, pp. 3, 9.

Student Christian Movement for over twenty years, founded the Australian Council of Churches refugee work, and Rosalie McCutcheon became her successor in 1949.⁵⁴

The Prophetic Role

The ecumenical movement provided an avenue for Congregational women to extend their concern from the security of their own immediate circle to the welfare of women and children more broadly. Guilds affiliated to the Congregational Women's Fellowship read publications such as the women's magazine of the International Congregational Council *Congregational Women* (1950) and a pamphlet by an English Congregationalist, the Rev Eleanor Shakeshaft, *Why I am a Free Church Woman*, to prepare for debates about church union. They maintained concern particularly for a feminist perspective on peace, for self-determination for indigenous peoples, for refugees, and for the members of churches overseas that had been colonised by Western powers. At an Annual Women's Rally in 1947, for example, Mrs Owen Fletcher said: "Educate a man and you educate an individual. Educate a woman and you educate a family...Women are the creators in a very special sense of the next generation, and they suffer when that creation is marred...by war."⁵⁵ In calling for an inquiry into the conditions of indigenous people, Mrs Mountford, from South Australia, argued that "as a nation we fought a war to defend the freedom of minorities, but what about the minority in our own country?"⁵⁶ Congregational women in South Australia were part of a team of women organised through the YWCA who raised awareness about refugees, encouraged membership of the Good Neighbour Council, and provided regular visits to

⁵⁴ Rosalie McCutcheon, "Margaret Holmes: Larger Than the Roles She Played" in Sabine Willis, (ed), *Women, Faith and Fetes: Essays in the History of Women and the Church in Australia*, (Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1977), pp. 94-115; Epstein, *Rosalie McCutcheon*, p. 50.

⁵⁵ *Queensland Congregationalist*, May 1947, p. 14; October 1948, p. 11.

⁵⁶ *SA Congregationalist*, May 1949, p. 232.

refugees in camps.⁵⁷ In study groups, Congregational women considered the situation of Christians in formerly colonised nations such as Burma, recognising the lack of conversions to Christianity was because of its identification with Western culture.⁵⁸ In community service work, Congregational women maintained their earlier concern for the beginning and the end of the life cycle — they renewed their support for motherhood and also became concerned with the provision of aged care services. By the late 1960s and with government assistance, Congregationalists had established aged care programs and homes in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia.⁵⁹

The AFWV also influenced the prophetic role of Congregational women with its argument that women should play a special political role as the raisers of children in the context of the threat of atomic war. Evelyn Roland, from Western Australia, for example, argued that women, as housewives and mothers, should be involved in discussions about the use of atomic power. She argued that a woman “is directly involved when milk for her child is made dangerous by cows eating radio-active grass, when constant atomic tests poison the atmosphere and are carried by air currents all over the globe”.⁶⁰ In relation to rocket tests at the Stuart Range in South Australia, the AFWV supported the protest of the Presbyterian Church and circulated the view of the *War Register*, which argued that: “It will be the aborigines now; our children later.”⁶¹ On Victory Day (VE Day), 6 June 1946, Winifred Kiek, in her position as Australian Chairman of the International Standing Committee on Peace of the International

⁵⁷ For refugee visiting work, see *SA Congregationalist*, February 1950, p. 135; November 1950, p. 86; March 1951, p. 151; December 1952, p. 146.

⁵⁸ Congregational Women's Fellowship of Australia, *The Living Word* (1962), in Kiek Papers PRG 225/4.

⁵⁹ G. L. Barnes, *Understanding Congregationalism* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1969), p. 18; See also, *SA Congregationalist*, March 1950, p. 151.

⁶⁰ *Dawn*, September 1955, p. 1.

⁶¹ *War Register* quoted in *Dawn*, 26 March 1947, p. 1.

Alliance of Women Voters, argued that although the war was over, civilians faced problems such as famine and disease. "The victory that matters most is still to be achieved — victory over war itself." With the dawning of the atomic age, she argued, war had become "more than ever a totalitarian catastrophe" in which "no discrimination" was possible between soldiers and civilians. She argued that the peace settlement should carry the "seeds of re-habilitation" or it would lead to another war, as it had after the First World War. Post-war reconstruction should include the fair distribution of global resources, the education of women, and their political enfranchisement. She argued that:

The "bugles of peace" summon us to a new concern for the rising generation now suffering so greatly from malnutrition, war neuroses and the general collapse of moral standards and family life. A Victory Day which looks backward is not enough...The greatest triumph only emphasises the greatness of our task, which is to build a world, wherein the much talked of four freedoms have become the heritage of our children.⁶²

It was views such as these that Congregational women hoped would be expressed by a united church. Congregational women were concerned that in order to express such statements the church would need to include women in its leadership. Access to the prophetic role meant that Congregational women could influence debates within their own denomination on issues such as the inclusion of women in leadership of the united church. There were no female members in the Joint Commission on Church Union, but in November 1958, the Congregational members of it offered their ultimatum on the nature of ministry. "In the matter of women in the ministry we would presume that in the united church there would be equality of opportunity for men and women in the ministry of Word and Sacrament".⁶³ The papers of the Joint Commission do not shed

⁶² Women in the Church and Standing Committee on Peace, 1943-1951, Australian Federation of Women Voters Papers, MS 2818/18/137.

⁶³ Reports from Denominational Groups, Joint Commission on Church Union Conference, November 1958, Ormond College, Carlton, Joint Commission on Church Union Papers, ML MSS 2733 ADD-ON 1034 Box MLK010176.

light on how this resolution was passed, but the precedent of ordained women in Congregationalism must have been a significant consideration. By this time, eight Congregational women had been ordained. Later, a group of Presbyterians opposed to the union because they believed Presbyterianism was the most superior form of polity, would criticise the “surreptitious introduction, without any discussion, of women into the ordained ministry” as a matter of “expediency” rather than “Scripture”.⁶⁴ Since the 1930s, however, both lay and ordained Congregational women had influenced church union debates considerably because of their membership of the Congregational Unions, who had argued for the ordination of women on the basis of a liberal interpretation of Scripture. Their thought will be explored briefly below.

Congregational women had been concerned about the place of women in a union church since the First World War.⁶⁵ They were particularly concerned that any one denomination might postpone the resolution of a contentious issue, such as women’s ordination, in order to preserve the smooth negotiation of church union debates. Australian Congregationalists looked to the example of the United Church of Canada, a union of Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians that had been achieved in 1925, especially on the question of women’s ordination. When a well-trained woman presented herself for ministry in the United Church of Canada in 1928, the general council considered that the request might prevent future union. The Australian Congregational church press reported that the Church in Canada had been “reminded that this basic principle of policy, wider unification, should restrain action which, however desirable in itself, might complicate the work of uniting the scattered

⁶⁴ *The Other Side: A Critical Discussion of the Joint Commission’s Proposed Basis of Union for the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches* (Preston, Vic.: Presbyterian Church of Australia, 1964), p. 22. I am indebted to the Rev Dr Andrew Dutney for this reference.

⁶⁵ *Victorian Independent*, 1 September 1919, p. 164; 1 December 1919, p. 230.

fragments of the church. To inaugurate the proposed system of ordaining women to the ministry of the church would differentiate the United Church from every communion in Canada.”⁶⁶ Instead, the United Church of Canada revived the diaconate, which allowed women to exercise pastoral, teaching, and preaching functions, and did not permit women to preside at Holy Communion.⁶⁷ By the mid-1930s, Congregational women in Australia were resisting a similar resolution to the issue as union negotiations between the Methodists and Congregationalists gained momentum.⁶⁸ The Methodist Church of Australasia discussed the ordination of women from the late 1920s, but had viewed it as impractical. The membership of the church was generally opposed to women ministers, the leadership could not imagine female candidates and they did not think women would be suitable for the itinerant ministry. In 1935, the General Conference of the Methodist Church resolved to establish a deaconess order as a concession to the movement for the ordination of women.⁶⁹

The Priestly Role

The involvement of Congregational women in the ecumenical movement increased as the opportunities for the exercise of the priestly role in Congregationalism expanded further after the war. The church ordained three women to the Christian ministry: Hilda Abba in 1952, Dorothy Wacker in 1959, and Thelma Murray who had transferred from Presbyterianism to Congregationalism to be ordained in 1963 (for biographical details see appendix 4). Congregationalism also began to open spiritual leadership and administrative roles to lay women. As the Australian economy began to boom, the

⁶⁶ *Congregationalist*, 10 March 1928, p. 6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ For the debate, see *Congregationalist*, 11 July 1935, p. 6; 5 September 1935, p. 7; 5 December 1935, p. 9; 16 January 1936, p. 8; 5 November 1937, p. 8; Congregational Women's Association Annual Report for 1935-6, MS 9239/126, La Trobe Library.

⁶⁹ *Minutes of the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia*, 1929, pp. 94, 96; 1932, p. 132 and 1935, p. 256.

economic status of the Christian ministry declined and there were fears of a further shortage of ministers.⁷⁰ The main sphere of service for Congregational women remained missionary work. From the Second World War until 1977, almost sixty women missionaries, missionary wives or associates had served with the LMS overseas.⁷¹ These included women such as Elizabeth McChesney Clark, who went with her husband Joseph to Papua New Guinea from 1946 to 1968, and Rita Mathews who went with her husband Peter to Rhodesia from 1956 to 1959. Ruth Watts, who served in Western Samoa from 1949 to 1951, and as a teacher in Adelaide, became Principal of the Methodist Ladies College in Wayville, in 1968.⁷² Returned woman missionary Eleanor Rivett worked as Honorary Woman Secretary of the LMS in Australia and New Zealand from 1949 and advised the Federal Government on the Colombo Plan.⁷³ Edna Gault, who returned from missionary service in India after the Second World War, was motivated by questions from Indians about the condition of Australia's indigenous people and became a scholar and activist for indigenous health.⁷⁴

There was still considerable discrimination against women in the ministry in Australia.⁷⁵ In 1950, Principal Kiek argued that: "Theoretically, Congregationalism offers no bar to the ordination of women, but, in practice, a woman minister encounters a fair amount of prejudice, particularly on the part of her own sex."⁷⁶ The Rev Isabelle Merry found that in Collins Street Independent Church, in which she had been a

⁷⁰ *SA Congregationalist*, May 1945, p. 19.

⁷¹ Bernard Thorogood, *Gales of Change: Responding to a Shifting Missionary Context: The Story of the London Missionary Society, 1945-1977* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), Appendix A, pp. 258-302.

⁷² *New Times*, April 2000, p. 15.

⁷³ *Australian Christian World*, 2 August 1949, p. 2; Thorogood, *Gales of Change*, p. 221.

⁷⁴ Bette McLaughlin, *A Very Amazing Life: The Biography of Dr Edna I. Gault* (Warrandyte, Vic.: John Gault and Louise Joy, 1993), pp. 247.

⁷⁵ Committee on Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, *Eve Where Art Thou? Women's Role in the Church* (Australian Council of Churches, 1967), p. 8.

⁷⁶ E. S. Kiek, *Our First Hundred Years: The Centenary Record of the South Australian Congregational Union* (1950), p. 85.

member, the diaconate sought to call her as an assistant minister to the Rev Gordon Powell, but the church meeting, which was dominated by women, was not willing to issue a call.⁷⁷ She became the first female full-time chaplain at the Queen Victoria Hospital from 1954 to 1970.

Australian women ministers had more difficulties gaining access to pastorates than did their colleagues in England and were attracted to churches there. Personal circumstances also meant that they migrated to England. Lorna Stanfield moved to England for further training and became one of the ministers to Congregational churches in Birmingham in 1948 and Hilda Abba, following her husband's career, returned to England. Valerie Dinning, from Western Australia, inquired about the ordained ministry, but did not want to undertake the full five year course in Arts and Theology and travelled to England where she could take a shorter course, to train for the ministry.⁷⁸ Meantime Kiek and Hore retired, Kate Hutley and Gwen Hewett entered congregational ministry after service as missionaries, and Lillian Livingstone entered hostel supervision. Though Livingstone had hoped to stay in congregational ministry, Alan Walker called her to the position of Warden of the Methodist Girl's Hostel in New South Wales from 1954 to 1963, where she ran devotions and sex education classes: "No girl's going to get pregnant without knowing how it happened" to her, she said.⁷⁹

The number of Australian Congregational women ministers remained smaller than in England. A survey conducted in 1965 found that in the Congregational Union of England and Wales, women in the ministry were more readily accepted than they had

⁷⁷ Marc Askew and Christopher Wood, *St Michael's Church: Formerly the Collins Street Independent Church, Melbourne* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1992), pp. 106-7, 112.

⁷⁸ Interview with Valerie Dinning, 10 March 2001, notes in possession of the author.

⁷⁹ Interview with Lillian Hayman, 23 July 1999, transcript in possession of the author.

been thirty years earlier.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, in Australia, women ministers were spread across geographical distances and continued to feel isolated from one another because they were often the only one in active service in their state.⁸¹ At least two women did not proceed to ordination. Sylvia Parry from Victoria, for example, was not accepted as a candidate because she was not permitted to live in the Victorian Congregational College and became the first Congregational woman deaconess in 1959, training with Presbyterian women at Rolland House.⁸² By the 1950s, the Methodists and Presbyterians had established deaconess orders as a concession to the movement for the ordination of women in their own denominations.⁸³ Though the church encouraged the deaconess order, Congregational women were more interested to apply for the ministry.⁸⁴ Theological students who did not proceed to ordination included Margaret Mossom, who qualified both for the ministry and for missionary service, was appointed to the Church of South India in 1951, only to find that it did not ordain women.⁸⁵ There were further opportunities to enter the lay pastorate. Pastor Sylvia L Simpson was a prominent lay pastor who worked in various centres: Bruthen 1959-62, Rutherglen, Beechworth, Seddon/Yarraville, East Doncaster 1967-68, Croydon North 1968-71, Deepdene and Balwyn North 1971-2. During the 1970s she also worked at Collins

⁸⁰ *Report to the Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society of the WCC from the Congregational Union of England and Wales*, 1965.

⁸¹ Interviews with Lillian Hayman, 23 July 1999 and Dorothy Wacker 1 August 2001, transcripts in possession of the author.

⁸² Catherine I. Ritchie, *Not to be Ministered Unto ... The story of the Presbyterian Deaconesses Trained in Melbourne* (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 1998), p. 202.

⁸³ Betty Feith, *Women in Ministry: The Order of Deaconesses and the Campaign for the Ordination of Women within the Methodist Church, 1942-1977* ed. Elizabeth Wood Ellem (Melbourne: Kyarra Press, 1990); Beryl Champness (ed.), *The Servant Ministry: the Methodist Deaconess Order in Victoria and Tasmania* (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 1996); Bethany Hancock, "A Suitable Opportunity for Consecrated Service: the History of the Order of Deaconesses Within the Methodist Church of Australasia, South Australia Conference, 1928-1977" (B.Th. (Hons) thesis, Flinders University of South Australia, 1994).

⁸⁴ *SA Congregationalist*, November 1957, p. 5.

⁸⁵ G. Lindsay Lockley, Register of Congregational Ministers in Australia 1798-1977, Uniting Church Records and Historical Society Archives, North Parramatta. Others included Audrey Herbert, *SA Congregationalist*, August 1960, p. 5; July 1961, p. 1.

Street, as Social Welfare Officer of Huntingdale Presbyterian Church, and at Gippsland Home, Bairnsdale.⁸⁶

Another form of the priestly role was administrative leadership and women's access to it in the Congregational Unions expanded after the Second World War. Blanche Newman was the first Congregational woman appointed Chairman of the Union of South Australia in 1962-3. A member of Brougham Place Congregational Church, she had shown leadership during the Second World War on the Public Questions Committee of the Congregational Union and had taken services at Devon Park.⁸⁷ There was also the appointment of Doris Bilyard LTh, a lay preacher, to the position of Secretary of the Congregational Union of Tasmania from 1959 to 1977; and the appointment of Dr Ida Birchall as Chairman of the Australian and New Zealand Committee of the London Missionary Society in 1964.⁸⁸ Enid Cook, a psychologist and member of Trinity Congregational Church, was the first female Chairman of the Congregational Union of Western Australia 1963-4.⁸⁹ Her appointment was supported by an appeal for gender equity that cited Galatians 3:28 and also the testimony of the woman of Samaria in John 4:28-39.⁹⁰

As ministers, women became active in local ecumenism and the women who gained access to administrative positions and the position of Chairman of the Unions often did so during the height of discussions about church union. Kiek, in particular, had presided

⁸⁶ *News Bulletin*, vol. 3, no. 16, December 1974 and also Congregational Union of Victoria, *Year Books, 1969-1977*; E. M. MacQueen, *Bruthen: The Story of a Church: Whatever You Do: Do All for the Glory of God* (Bruthen Congregational Church, August 1966), p. 30.

⁸⁷ *SA Congregationalist*, August 1952, p. 117.

⁸⁸ Theo E. Sharples, *Congregationalism in Tasmania, 1830-1977* (Hobart, Congregational Union of Tasmania, 1977), pp. 6, 7, 9, 44.

⁸⁹ The Congregational Union of WA Inc, *Annual Assembly Reports, Financial Statements and Church Statistics*, 1964.

⁹⁰ *Dalwallinu and Districts Congregational Mission Newsletter*, May 1963, pp. 4-5.

over the creation of a union church between the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists at Colonel Light Gardens in 1930.⁹¹ At Balmain Congregational Church in the 1950s, Hilda Abba encouraged closer relations with the Presbyterians by holding a United Children's Service and conference on Christianity and child education in 1954.⁹² Isabelle Merry, who had been among the leadership of the Women's Inter-Church Council in Victoria, worked closely with Margaret Rusk Galloway, a Methodist Deaconess at the Queen Victoria Hospital. Merry argued that the deaconess system was unsatisfactory, as it could not provide a continuous service from pastoral care to rituals such as baptism or marriage.⁹³ Merry was also the first woman to attend a meeting of the World Council of Churches as an official representative of an Australian Church, in New Delhi, in 1961.⁹⁴ Such action preceded that of English and Welsh Congregationalism, which did not send women delegates to an Assembly of the World Council of Churches until the United Reformed Church sent two women to the Nairobi Assembly in 1975.⁹⁵

It is important to note, however, the limitations of what women ministers could achieve ecumenically, given that they could be asked to work in conditions that few men would accept. Ecumenical work was only possible when there was a certain amount of stability in congregations. It was not easy for women ministers to foster this awareness when they were sent to difficult pastorates with the task of preserving existing unity. Lorna Stanfield served in Tasmania from 1945 to 1946 among seven small rural congregations, and she worked with Bishop Geoffrey Cranswick to develop closer

⁹¹ Knauerhase, *Winifred*, pp. 39-40.

⁹² *Congregationalist*, September 1954, p. 10.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, October 1966, p. 7.

⁹⁴ Champness, *The Servant Ministry*, p. 133.

⁹⁵ Elaine Kaye et al, *Daughters of Dissent* (London: United Reformed Church, 2004), p. 100.

relations between the Church of England and the Congregationalists.⁹⁶ Her greatest difficulty was trying to heal a split among the Congregationalists that had occurred as a result of the ministry of a lay preacher from another denomination during the Second World War. Having taken charge of the pastorate in 1941, he refused to be disciplined by the Union and left, taking the churches with him. G Lindsay Lockley's account is revealing, for it did not render problematic the expectation that Stanfield accept such a task. He concluded that: "So much damage had been done to the churches that even the pastorate of the Rev Lorna Stanfield...was unable to bring recovery, and in 1949 the churches disappeared from official lists."⁹⁷ It is not surprising then, that she sought to develop her career in England.

Despite turning 60 in 1944, Winifred Kiek was the most significant leader in the post-war ecumenical women's movement. Her responsibility for the Australian response to the World Council of Churches questionnaire on the Status of Women in the Churches placed her in communication with women from most Protestant denominations in Australia. She continued to advocate a spiritual solution to international relations, reinforcing the importance of the missionary movement as a significant spiritual contribution to world peace. At the World Community Day in 1946, she argued that: "for only when the peoples realise that we are all members of one another having one spiritual aim can the demented mind and torn body of the world of nations be healed."⁹⁸ She argued that though the world had become smaller due to the spread of communications and scientific knowledge, this process had been like the shrinking of a woollen garment, in which the "fibres of international relationships tend

⁹⁶ Australia Correspondence 1941-1950 CMS/5, CWM Archives, SOAS, London.

⁹⁷ Lockley, *Congregationalism in Australia*, p. 126.

⁹⁸ Kiek, "Concern For Peace" World Community Day Conference, Collins Street Melbourne, Friday 8 November 1946, Kiek Papers PRG 225/14; See also W. Kiek, "A World at Peace or a World in Pieces", n.d., PRG 225/19.

to lose their elasticity, their spring and flexibility.”⁹⁹ She continued to advocate support for the United Nations, international non-government organisations, and the World Council of Churches as “a symbol” of world unity. She remained concerned that the principle of national sovereignty, which she believed had been the main weakness of the League of Nations, had been carried into the United Nations. To her it only represented “the most that can be achieved in the present undeveloped condition of public opinion.”¹⁰⁰ Kiek welcomed the inclusion of the United States in the United Nations, but noted that its role had been offset by the veto provision:

The root of the human tragedy is that spiritual growth has not kept pace with economic and scientific progress....If there is no consciousness of world citizenship, there can be little hope of world government. A dynamic peace cannot be engineered or imposed from without but must come from within. Religion in the past has often been a divisive influence, but now it has become possible to mobilize people of different religious bodies in support of peace. One hopeful sign is the organisation by the Protestant Churches of a World Council of Churches.¹⁰¹

Kiek managed the involvement of Australian Christian women in the study programs on gender relations of the World Council of Churches. Gender equality had been a central question of the ecumenical movement from the inception of the World Council Churches in 1948.¹⁰² Kathleen Bliss, a graduate of Cambridge and a missionary with her husband in India with the YMCA, was the organising secretary for a survey on the position of women in the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Churches.¹⁰³ Based on reports from over 100 churches in nearly 50 countries, *The Service and Status of Women in the Churches* (1952) was the first comprehensive study of Christian women

⁹⁹ W. Kiek, “Concern for Peace” World Community Day Conference, Collins Street Melbourne, Friday 8 November 1946, Kiek Papers PRG 225/14.

¹⁰⁰ *SA Congregationalist*, October 1947, p. 127.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Janet Crawford, “The Community of Women and Men in the Church: Where Are We Now?” *Ecumenical Review*, vol. 40, no. 1, January 1988, pp. 37-47; Anna Karin Hammar, “After Forty Years - Churches in Solidarity with Women?” *Ecumenical Review*, vol. 40, no. 3-4, July-October 1988, pp. 528-38.

¹⁰³ Martin Conway, “Kathleen Bliss, 1908-1989”, *Ecumenical Review*, vol. 42, no. 1, January 1990, pp. 68-70.

since the Reformation.¹⁰⁴ It showed that the church had neglected the principle of equality found in its own tradition and as a result, Christian women had formed groups based on gender that had effectively operated as churches:

Yet for countless women work for and with women is the *only* way open to them to make their contribution to the life of the Church. The more vigorous the women's activities in a particular congregation, the more an organisation, group or fellowship tends to *become* 'the Church' for the woman who finds there Christian fellowship, worship and the upbuilding of her faith. Thus there can arise in practice, although the theory of it is denied, a church within a church, or a church alongside a church. Women constantly feel that in spite of what is said in preaching the men are really 'the Church' and their own participation is derivative from and dependent on, that of men. The question for the future is how the immense achievement of the work of women for women and with women can be made in the life of the whole Church. It is not a women's question, it is a Church question.¹⁰⁵

The study program of the World Council of Churches, the *Man-Woman Relationship* involved discussion of the issues of women's rights, the effect of war on the position of women, changes in moral standards, marriage, and motherhood. It also considered the place of women in the development of policy and women's ordination.¹⁰⁶ Winifred Kiek was concerned that the Christian churches continued to fail to acknowledge the changes in the position of women in society and the attitude of female church members. As a consequence, they were forfeiting the service of women who found opportunities for service outside the church. Kiek suggested that the role of women as money raisers in the church had been "a sublimation of their desire to earn money".¹⁰⁷ Women were not content to raise money while men controlled the spending of it. She continued to argue that Christian women offered the church a superior contribution than men based on traits derived from gender roles and that the church should address the issue of gender equality if it was to maintain its influence in society:

¹⁰⁴ Kathleen Bliss, *The Service and Status of Women in the Churches* (London: SCM Press, 1952); *Church Woman*, June-July 1948, pp. 18-21.

¹⁰⁵ Bliss, *The Service and Status of Women in the Churches*, pp. 30-31. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁶ Report of the Meeting of the Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church held at Bossey, Switzerland, 6-10 March 1950. See, for example, *SA Congregationalist*, July 1950, p. 24; Responses for Life and Work of Women in the Churches Commission on the Status of Women, Kiek Papers PRG 225/6.

¹⁰⁷ Kiek, *We of One House*, p. 24.

A new kind of collaboration between men and women is now required. It is my earnest conviction that the Churches should realise and exemplify this. Otherwise the Church, always conservative in such matters, will lose any powers of leadership which still remain with her...The ecumenical movement in facing this issue, is truly...relevant to our modern situation.¹⁰⁸

As a result of her work for the World Council of Churches, Winifred Kiek again raised the issue of the ordination of women. Her appeal in 1948 sounded very different from her first case for it in 1921.¹⁰⁹ Three decades on, she had a much stronger awareness of a secular emphasis within society and within the feminist movement. She raised the question of women's ordination in the light of the achievement of the franchise, women's public work in centenary celebrations and war and also in the context of the movement for equal rights before the law, equal pay, and greater numbers of women in parliament. She also provided a particularly Australian nationalist perspective. As "creatures of the pioneer spirit", women were the "heirs of the brave and strong founders of a new feminism."¹¹⁰ The pioneers had "bequeathed to their granddaughters a spirit of endurance and practical self-help", but the great variety of women's church work was done "invariably in a secondary position" to men. She also voiced her impatience with women for what she saw as their complicity in their own marginalisation. Despite "the advancement of women's interests the fact remains that women have been content to take a very subordinate place in the life of the churches."¹¹¹ In the few denominations in which women were ordained, they had found "it hard to establish themselves", and were often assigned "to positions which no man will take at salaries which no man will accept."¹¹²

As leaders determining or directing policy in the governing bodies of the churches, as contributors to the thought and teaching of the churches, and as organisers of programs for

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ *SA Congregationalist*, January-February 1948, p. 203; *Dawn*, July 1948, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ *SA Congregationalist*, January-February 1948, p. 203.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

church conferences, they hardly count at all...Women are still denied any real equality in church life.¹¹³

By the mid-1960s, however, Christian women who had sought a role for themselves in the ecumenical movement had become marginalised in the separate female culture that they had created only twenty years previously. They did not directly influence the prophetic role of the ecumenical movement and it remained largely developed by men. The creation of Australian Church Women in 1965 sought to address this issue, but again, largely failed. Winifred Kiek played a significant role in its formation. The supporters of this new ecumenical organisation hoped that by integrating women into the mainstream of the state inter-church councils, women would influence the ecumenical movement more successfully. Women such as Margaret Holmes contested the creation of the organisation, as they feared that it would not address the marginalisation of women in the ecumenical movement.¹¹⁴ But Congregational women such as Kiek pressed on regardless. In a letter to John Garrett, Secretary of the Australian Council of Churches, Kiek suggested that Australian Church Women could be “a national organisation through which ‘our leaven’ could be active.”¹¹⁵

A significant catalyst in the creation of Australian Church Women was the Winifred Kiek Scholarship (see Appendix 5 for a list of the recipients for the years 1965 to 1977). It also contributed toward making Winifred Kiek a household name within Australian Christianity. The scholarship helped to develop leadership in Christian women from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. It also helped to develop an international ecumenical consciousness among scholars and their supporters. Preparations for the award of the

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ See letter from Rosalie McCutcheon to Constance Fairhall, Rosalie McCutcheon Papers MS 9380/12/7, National Library of Australia, Canberra.

¹¹⁵ Mrs T. H. Coates, The Formation of “Australian Church Women”, Women’s Inter-Church Council of Victoria, 28 June 1963, Kiek Papers PRG 225/9.

first scholarship were completed before the formation of Australian Church Women in 1965.¹¹⁶ Following a visit to the International Alliance of Women in Ceylon in 1955, Kiek had become concerned that the student support scheme, the Colombo Plan, had tended to favour men and non-Christians. She wanted to provide training for Christian women to further develop leadership skills for use in the churches and also in wider society.¹¹⁷ The scholarship would be funded from Inter-Church Aid, donations from individuals and the state Women's Inter-Church Council in which the scholarship holder had been placed.¹¹⁸ The scholarship also contributed to increased national consciousness among applicants from Asia, the Pacific, and Africa. For Veronika Kafa, aged 25, from the British Solomon Islands, the scholarship-holder for 1970, the experience strengthened her desire to "see the Solomon Islands a united country, not just a group of independent islands".¹¹⁹ The scholarship also affected the movement for the ordination of women with Violet Sampa, for example, becoming the first female minister of the United Church of Zambia.¹²⁰

Conclusion

After the Second World War, Congregational women reflected the dominant view within their denomination that commitment to it was provisional as they worked toward church unity. By 1969, when Congregational women celebrated their anniversary of fifty years of service as federated women's guilds, plans for the Uniting Church were

¹¹⁶ Mabel G. Wyllie, circular letter to state units, Federal YWCA and denominational women's organisations, 14 September 1964, Interim Committee of Australian Church Women, Kiek Papers PRG 225/9.

¹¹⁷ W. Kiek, Australian Council of the World Council of Churches, Commission on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society, Report year ending 31 December 1955, PRG 225/8; Harvey Perkins, General Secretary of the Australian Council of Churches, to W. Kiek, 15 July 1963, PRG 225/9.

¹¹⁸ Winifred Kiek Scholarship, September 1964, PRG 225/9.

¹¹⁹ *Canberra Times*, 11 November 1970, p. 22; See also Australian Church Women Scholarship pamphlet 1965, Kiek Papers PRG 225/9.

¹²⁰ *Courier Mail*, cutting in Kiek Papers PRG 225/9.

well underway. Reflecting on the fiftieth anniversary of the Congregational Women's Fellowship of Australia, Madge Anderson noted that commitment to ecumenism had become "one of the most marked characteristics of the Church today."¹²¹ The greater access of Congregational women than women of other denominations to leadership roles in the ecumenical movement was due, in part, to their greater access to prophetic and priestly roles in their own church. As a result, Congregational women sought to develop a prophetic role that reflected the position of women as wives and mothers in an atomic age. A significant concern was to ensure that their access to the priestly role would continue in the Uniting Church. This was achieved, but the separate form of organisation that they helped to establish led to marginalisation and they did not inform the prophetic role of the ecumenical movement to any significant degree. By the 1970s, a new and unsympathetic movement challenged the notions of female identity and authority, the forms of organisation, and the roles that Congregational women had established over the previous fifty years. This phenomenon became known as the women's liberation movement.

¹²¹ Madge Anderson, *A History of the Congregational Women's Fellowship of Australia: 50 Years 1919-1969* (Melbourne, 1969), p. 14.

CHAPTER 8

Responses to the Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-1977

In the 1970s, Congregational women reacted against change on two fronts: a revived masculine emphasis within their own church and the ecumenical movement, and a new secular emphasis within the feminist movement. Like Christianity more broadly, Australian Congregationalism was influenced by the social and political turmoil that had occurred in wider society: the movement against the war in Vietnam, resistance to apartheid in South Africa, and the fight against discrimination of indigenous people, women, and the gay community. This period marked an unprecedented questioning of the role of the Christian churches in western societies. Higher education, greater paid employment for women, increased leisure options, and a wholesale rejection of institutions meant that church attendances dropped markedly. In South Australia, the end of six o'clock closing was symbolic of a transition in the role of Protestantism in shaping community values, from a dominant to a marginal force in society.

The response of Australian Congregationalists to this changed context reflected the wider response of Christians, which was marked by a polarisation of ideas and movements, a criticism and rejection of received structures, and a spirit of confrontation. This reaction widened the gap between "liberal" and "conservative" trends in Christianity.¹ It also took on a gender dimension, although historians have not always recognised this in their accounts of the changes in Christianity during this

¹ David Hilliard, "The Religious Crisis of the 1960s: The Experience of the Australian Churches", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 21, no. 2, June 1997, pp. 209-227; David Hilliard, "Australian Anglicanism and the Radical Sixties" in Susan Emilsen and William W. Emilsen (eds.), *Mapping the Landscape: Essays in Australian and New Zealand Christianity* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 99-117; David Hilliard, "Anglican Relations with the Protestant Churches in South Australia, 1836-1996" in George Potter (ed.), *Heritage of Faith: Essays in Honour of Arnold Hunt* (Adelaide: George Potter, 1996), pp. 204-205.

period. Both liberal and conservative currents began to emphasise a particularly masculine spirituality, which drew attention to the characteristics of Jesus Christ that were derived from gender, such as physical strength.² Christian leaders supported this masculine emphasis with a reading of the life and work of Jesus as the Liberator of individuals and of oppressed peoples.³ Images appeared in the church press of Jesus with a whip of cords turning over the tables in the temple, with the caption “Gentle Jesus – meek and mild?”⁴ The Jesus People movement, which mobilised large numbers of young people, sought to recover the Evangelical emphasis on “real Christianity” which, they believed, had become lost in the lifestyle of middle class suburban Australians. The movement embraced the optimism and heightened political and cultural interests of the generation. A fresh band of liturgy writers appropriated the mass media images and the direct language that had become current in wider society. But the movement also rejected certain shifts in the wider community such as sexual liberation.⁵

This newly masculine spirituality subordinated, even rejected, “feminine” values in Christianity. The masculine emphasis was particularly expressed in radical action for social justice. Like other Christians, Congregational women had begun to voice their concern that there were greater opportunities outside the church to work for social justice,⁶ but they became involved nevertheless in protest action as members of their church and the ecumenical movement. They sought to influence this work with “feminine” forms of protest. During a protest against apartheid in South Africa, for

² Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 186-93, esp. p. 192.

³ Jaroslav Pelican, *The Illustrated Jesus Through the Centuries* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 223-248.

⁴ *Dalwallinu and Districts Congregational Mission Newsletter*, June 1966, p. 7.

⁵ See, for example, Julia Pitman, “South Australia: Devoted but Battle-Weary”, *Uniting Church in Australia: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Melbourne: Circa, 2003), pp. 138-144.

⁶ Commission on the Status of Women, *Report of the Enquiry into the Status of Women in the Church* (Sydney: Australian Council of Churches, New South Wales State Council, 1974), p. 64.

example, in which an ecumenical group tried to stop the Springbok Rugby Union team's visit in 1965, Congregationalist Mary Engel employed a particularly sexually specific strategy. Having had a mastectomy, she had removed the prothesis and filled her bra with whistles and smoke bombs for distribution to protesters in the football ground.⁷

Secular feminism

Congregational women also reacted against what they saw as the excesses of secular feminism. In 1992, Ann Curthoys provided an outline of the women's liberation movement, in what she saw as an interim period, before the movement received sustained attention.⁸ The first full study of the Australian women's liberation movement was produced by Gisela Kaplan, who outlined the cultural conditions for the rise of the movement and the various ways it challenged gender norms, particularly sexism and the assumption of heterosexism. Writing from the perspective of a migrant, Kaplan argued that women's liberation benefited white women at the expense of migrant and indigenous women who found in it a "meagre harvest".⁹ Concomitant with Kaplan's study, Chilla Bulbeck considered the position of the "ordinary woman" in the women's movement.¹⁰

These studies neglected the divergent responses of Christian women to the women's movement. In her full-length study of Australian feminism in the twentieth century,

⁷ Frank Engel, *Times of Change: 1918-1978* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1993), pp. 297, 324.

⁸ Ann Curthoys, "Doing it for Themselves: the Women's Movement since 1970", in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1992), pp. 425-447.

⁹ Gisela Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest: The Australian Women's Movement, 1950s-1990s* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1996).

¹⁰ Chilla Bulbeck, *Living Feminism: The Impact of the Women's Movement on Three Generations of Australian Women* (Cambridge, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Marilyn Lake depicts only the reaction of women in the women's liberation movement to their perceived understanding of Christianity and their own experience of it.¹¹ By contrast, Gisela Kaplan states that the women's movement failed to discuss issues of religion – even though its campaigns were at times responses to experiences or interpretations of it. But by focusing her critique on the response of Catholicism and the far right of Protestantism (the Festival of Light) to women's liberation, Kaplan neglects a large liberal middle ground in Protestantism that was prepared to consider the implications of the movement for Christians. Bulbeck includes a section on church-women in her study and discusses the origins of the first Christian women's liberation group, Christian Women Concerned, but she limits herself to discussion of the access of women to leadership in the church, and their attempts to change it. Her discussion employs assumptions derived from women's liberation, rather than assesses the broader question of the complex relationship of Christian women to both their church and the women's liberation movement.¹²

This chapter seeks to provide a more sympathetic assessment of the extent of the involvement of Christian women in the late twentieth century feminist movement. "Women's Liberation" failed to attract the interest of Congregational women largely because the main plank of their reform platform, the ordination of women, had been achieved fifty years earlier. Nonetheless, a small number of Congregational women appropriated the idea of the social construction of gender from the women's liberation movement. They were involved in a new feminist ecumenical movement that became known as Christian Women Concerned, which was one of the first women's liberation

¹¹ Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1999), pp. 222-225.

¹² Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest*, pp. 78-9; Bulbeck, *Living Feminism*, pp. 178-80.

groups to emerge in Australia, in Sydney, in 1968. It promoted ideas derived from feminist theology, which had become a discrete, professional discipline in America. Where they were aware of it, the larger group of Congregational women approached the perspectives that emerged from this feminist theological reflection critically, often bringing their denominational perspective to bear in debates about policy.

Marie Tulip has written the majority of the published narratives of the Christian feminist movement for this period.¹³ Tulip's accounts were intended for a church audience and for women in the women's liberation movement and have sought to explain the position of women in the Uniting Church in Australia. Her description of Christian feminism in this period now forms a substantial part of the entry on religion and spirituality in the *Oxford Companion to Australian Feminism*.¹⁴ Tulip's work suffers from being overwhelmingly negative and has obscured the actual diversity of responses of the women involved in the Christian feminist movement, both from within and also across the denominations that formed the Uniting Church. The rise of the Christian feminist movement was more dependent on the structure and resources of local churches such as Chester Street Congregational Church, Epping, than her accounts allow.¹⁵ Tulip's approach, reflecting that of the women's movement more broadly

¹³ Marie Tulip, *Woman in a Man's Church: Changes in the Status of Women in the Uniting Church in Australia, 1977-1978* (Sydney: Commission on the Status of Women of the Australian Council of Churches, 1983); Marie Tulip, "Women in a Man's Church, Part I: The Struggle for Change", *Trinity Occasional Papers*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 20-39; Marie Tulip, "Affirmative Action in the Uniting Church, 1977-1983" in Margaret Ann Franklin (ed.), *Force of the Feminine: Women, Men and the Church* (Sydney, London, Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986), pp. 120-140; Marie Tulip, "Women in Christianity: Australia, 1970-1985" in Margaret Ann Franklin and Ruth Sturme Jones (eds.), *Opening the Cage: Stories of Church and Gender* (Sydney, London, Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987), pp. 135-140; For a personal historical account of the impact of women's liberation on a Christian feminist see Dorothy McRae-McMahon, *Memoirs of Moving On: A Life of Faith, Passion and Resilience* (Paddington, NSW: Jane Curry Publishing, 2004), pp. 225-235.

¹⁴ Marie Tulip and Kathleen McPhillips, "Religion and Spirituality" in Barbara Caine (ed), *Australian Feminism: A Companion* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 263-73.

¹⁵ Wilfrid T. Riley, *Do You Remember? A Story of the Chester Street Uniting Church Congregation, 1963-1993, Epping NSW* (Epping Church, 1993), pp. 67-71.

conceived, seeks to describe women's activism on the basis of universal conclusions drawn from her personal experience. Such an approach has been criticised by women who have not identified with the experience of white, middle class, and middle-aged women. Sevgi Kilic has argued that for women who differed from a given leader of the women's liberation movement, whether they were migrants, or indigenous people, or white women from a different class, they could find the call to respond to her "universal" experience unappealing.¹⁶ Young women have indirectly questioned the approach of the 1970s women's movement by rendering problematic their assumption of authority to speak about feminism in the public domain. In 1995, Anne Summers lamented the dearth of young women assuming the mantle of feminism and issued a call for them to adopt it. In response to Summers' challenge, a group of young women issued a series of essays entitled *Talking Up*. Instead of simply complying with her request, they called it into question: "Who (are we) to say what feminism means?"¹⁷ These young women argued that if public comment on feminism could be justified, it should be more modest than that of the previous generation, and more honest about the source of its authority and the particular women that it claimed to represent.¹⁸

In the 1970s, the Christian feminist movement suffered from internal conflict over its response to the detailed negotiations that the three uniting denominations pursued in order to create the Constitution and Regulations of the Uniting Church. Women were divided according to their experience of policy-making in the three uniting denominations. Methodist and Presbyterian women were more likely to pursue gender

¹⁶ Sevgi Kilic, "Who is an Australian Woman?" in Katie Pritchard Hughes (ed.), *Contemporary Australian Feminism* (Melbourne: Longman, 1997), pp. 30-51. Kilic draws on the theory of E. Spelman, *Inessential Women: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (London: The Women's Press, 1990).

¹⁷ Naomi Flutter and Rosamund Else-Mitchell (eds), *Talking Up: Young Women's Take on Feminism* (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1998), p. xviii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. xi-xxiii.

equality in the denomination by means of affirmative action, in part, because, on the basis of their past experience, they did not trust the male leadership to provide it in principle. Congregational women, by contrast, believed that the Uniting Church should demonstrate its commitment to gender equality as a matter of principle and without recourse to affirmative action.

Prophetic role

By the 1970s, the significance of the access of Congregational women to the prophetic role had declined due to increased opportunities for women to express themselves in the community. The traditional means of developing the prophetic role, through the women's guild system, did not appeal to a new generation of women who either ignored or called into question the fundamental assumptions of the guilds. As many women were now in paid employment, which provided socialisation during the week and an increased domestic burden at weekends, they viewed the activities of the women's guilds as unnecessary and irrelevant, both in content and form. Women who remained members of the church rejected the essentialist belief in the moral superiority of women derived from the Victorian era, and saw their role as one of partnership with men in the ordinary councils of the church, rather than in a separate form of women's organisation.¹⁹

The great majority of Congregational women were members of day guilds and were over 55 years of age.²⁰ They either remained unmoved by, or expressly rejected the women's movement. This was due, in part, to the existing, relatively advanced status of

¹⁹ Commission on the Status of Women, *Report of the Enquiry into the Status of Women in the Church*, p. 47.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

women in the Congregational Churches that, in turn, led to “complacency and disinterest” in International Women’s Year, although they might celebrate gains for women in other denominations. In 1977, the piece selected for the retrospective in the *News Bulletin* of the Congregational Women’s Fellowship of Victoria was rather detached: “Some other denominations have only recently opened up the offices of the church to women as well as men. One notes a freshness and eagerness on the part of women to take their place in these offices, and a willing acceptance of men to have them there. International Women’s Year should bring nearer the time when women and men live and work in equal partnership.”²¹ Congregational women sought reform in three broad areas: to reassert the value of Christian maternalism in response to the masculine emphasis in Christianity; to provide a spiritual perspective in the light of secular feminism; and finally, to provide a denominational perspective in the ecumenical movement.

By the 1970s, older Congregational women were concerned that support for Christian maternalism had declined. They acknowledged that through pursuit of maternalism as a strategy for reform of gender relations, some of their objectives remained unrealised. Yet they believed that maternalism had enabled them to combine mothering and public work and to work toward a form of equality with men that recognised gender difference. In the 1970s, they were surprised to find that this longstanding view was suddenly out of favour in the church and the feminist movement. They were also concerned that the church had begun to pursue a masculine emphasis in Christianity to the detriment of the feminine. Hence they upheld traditional Christian festivals such as Mothers’ Day against rejection of them by both the secular feminist movement and by

²¹ March 1975 edition quoted in *News Bulletin*, June 1977, p. 2.

the church. In 1971 in Sydney, the Bread and Roses Group, part of the women's liberation movement, organised a public meeting to discuss Mothers' Day and called for "Crèches not Chrysanthemums".²² Leaders in Congregationalism appropriated this low view of Mothers' Day. The Rev Ronald and Mrs Pearl Wasley, Congregationalists working in the Dalwallinu Group of churches in Western Australia, questioned the "great number of ministers" who had "abandoned any efforts to observe Mother's Day services on the ground that they don't like sentimentality." The Wasleys accepted that the essentialist notion of "motherhood as virtuous" was a misnomer, as some mothers were not righteous. But to "exclude from our church services all mention of mothers simply because some mothers don't measure up to standard", they argued, was to neglect a "mighty ministry to mankind." Ronald Wasley stressed the role of the "mother-spirit" in the world and the importance of women extending their responsibility for their own family to include other children, especially if these children could not experience the "ministry" of their own mothers.²³

In taking such a stand, the Wasleys were at least engaging with the times. Other Congregationalists appeared unmoved. They held to traditional ideas that they were prepared to discard only if they found that the new ones were superior, which was not likely. The local church presses continued to publish articles and prayers as if nothing had changed in wider society. Depictions of domestic work as a saintly form of activity are striking not so much for their attempt to reinforce traditional gender relations, but for completely ignoring the thoroughly altered social context. The following prayer published in 1963, reused a dated hymn that was published as Martha's Hymn in 1931 and cited in Chapter 3, as if it was fresh advice:

²² Lake, *Getting Equal*, p. 225.

²³ *Church Tidings*, May 1971, pp. 1-3.

A Housewife's Prayer

Lord of all pots and pans and things,
Since I've no time to be
A saint by doing lovely things,
Or watching late with Thee,
Or dreaming in the dawnlight,
Or storming heaven's gates,
Make me a saint by getting meals
And washing up the plates.²⁴

Congregational women were critical of secular feminism and argued that it had neglected the importance of a spiritual dimension to life and had been unfairly critical of Christianity. They reacted particularly to the search for liberation. The absolute freedom of the individual that was central to secular feminism was alien to their understanding of self-expression through the submission of the individual to religious authority, expressed in a social context. Congregational guild women reiterated their conviction that only through submission to Christ would women realise "liberation". For example, Mrs Morva Davey, at Burakin and Jibberding, Western Australia, asked: "Now we speak of liberating women...and maybe men also! Didn't Christ come that we might be free?"²⁵ Similarly, when Mrs Cross spoke on "The Christian's Liberation" at Roleystone Congregational Church in Perth, Western Australia, she questioned whether the current emphasis of the women's movement on liberation meant only "doing your own thing?" She cited Psalm 119 to argue that only through "the wonder of the law of God" would Christians find "true liberty."²⁶

Christian feminist movement

A small number of Congregational women were influenced by a radical ecumenical feminist movement that had gained impetus from its secular counterpart, women's liberation. Its most significant expression was Christian Women Concerned noted

²⁴ *Dalwallinu and Districts Congregational Mission Newsletter*, May 1963, p. 6.

²⁵ *Dalwallinu and Districts Church News*, July/August 1975, p. 12.

²⁶ *Roleystone Congregational News*, April 1973, p. 3.

above, which also had two branches in South Australia.²⁷ Christian Women Concerned sought to address the difficulty young Christian women had in reconciling their commitment to both Christianity and women's liberation, as the two had become separated from each other.²⁸ Through promotion of feminist theology by way of seminars, conferences, street marches, and the publication of a magazine, this movement was responsible, in part, for radicalising a new generation of Christian women, some of whom would become leaders in the churches and the broader community in the ensuing years. In 1973, the membership of the group became the Commission on the Status of Women of the Australian Council of Churches.²⁹

The leaders of Christian Women Concerned ranged in age from 20 to 60 years old and came from a range of denominations, including: Catholicism, Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, Methodism, and the Society of Friends. Among the Congregationalists were Nan Barnes, Betty Marshall, Marie Tulip, and other lay people from Epping Congregational Church. Many meetings were held in Keelah Dey's home. Christian Women Concerned also included Toni Smith, who was a Roman Catholic, and Sabine Willis and Carol McClean, who were Quakers. Methodists included Dorothy McMahon, Assistant Secretary of the New South Wales State Council of the Australian Council of Churches, and Jean Skuse, first woman and longest serving General Secretary of the Australian Council of Churches from 1976 to 1988.³⁰

²⁷ Franklin, *The Force of the Feminine*, pp. vii-viii; Circular Letters from International Chair Elise Boulding, no. 2, 1968, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Papers MS 7755/2/10, National Library of Australia.

²⁸ See for example, Janet Powell, "Christian and Feminist: The Tension", *Trinity Occasional Papers*, vol. 3, no. 1, January 1984, pp. 13-18; see also *Magdalene*, no. 5, 1975, p. 8.

²⁹ Franklin, *The Force of the Feminine*, pp. vii-xix; Tulip, "Women in Christianity", pp. 135-136.

³⁰ Engel, *Times of Change*, p. 304.

The main anchor of Christian Women Concerned was Marie Tulip, a lecturer in English as a Second Language at Sydney University. She had grown up as a Presbyterian, had worshipped as a Methodist, and in the 1970s had found more in common with Congregationalism than other denominations. In her enthusiastic style, Tulip identified the movement with those that occurred around the world at the time as an opportunity for women to dream of future possibilities:

As women we began sharing our pain, telling our stories, finding one another and the commonness of our experience—the beginnings of the movement for women’s liberation. It was both a painful and an exhilarating time, painful to discover and reveal the way we had been limited and been conned into limiting ourselves, and exhilarating to discover the new warmth and acceptance and richness of possibility for ourselves and, we thought, for everyone.³¹

Tulip argued that contrary to its own teaching (Galatians 3:28) the church perpetuated sexual discrimination. She believed that this epistle was congruent with the ideas found in the women’s movement and considered that Christian Women Concerned was part of the recovery of a prophetic tradition in the church. In 1973, Tulip wrote: “In rediscovering trust, and friendship, and love, and freedom from competitiveness and judgement, I believe women are the true prophets of today’s church – and I hope we’re not just crying in the wilderness.”³² She argued that by excluding women from leadership and reducing them to supporting roles, the church had denied the creativity of women as persons to the detriment of both women and the church.³³ She pointed to the number of women taking tranquillisers and other drugs and the incidence of domestic violence as symptoms of women’s oppression. With a flourish, she summarised her position by the use of a variation on a gospel passage from Mark 8:36:

What shall it profit a man if he gains money, power, success, fame, and loses his true self? What would it profit a woman if she gains a beautiful house and garden, successful husband and children, whiter than white washing and goes neurotic in the process?³⁴

³¹ Tulip, “Women in Christianity”, pp. 135-136.

³² *Australian Congregationalist*, September 1973, p. 4; *Magdalene*, September 1973, pp. 2-3.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Tulip believed that the women's movement offered a model of prophecy that the church might adopt. She argued that the movement was actually fulfilling a prophetic role in society in relation to gender that, in former times, had been the role of the churches.³⁵

Tulip identified herself with women's liberation in contrast to the reformist strand of women's movement that was expressed in the Women's Electoral Lobby. She declared that the latter body wanted a "bigger slice of the cake", while Tulip found that women's liberation wanted "a different cake."³⁶ In the women's movement, Tulip had found a sense of community that transcended social boundaries, which she hoped to apply to Christian Women Concerned:

A real feeling of warmth and sisterhood is right through the women's movement and I found it quite moving to be in a group in which everyone is welcomed and accepted. Unmarried mothers, single, divorced, separated people, people who feel excluded by the church's strong emphasis on the nuclear family, are all free to be accepted as they are.³⁷

While Christian Women Concerned sought to distance itself from an earlier essentialist form of feminism that had been developed in the guilds or was ignorant of it, the movement appropriated perspectives and causes that used essentialist arguments, such as pacifism. Tulip recalled that the group had formed in Lent 1968, amid the ongoing war in Vietnam and following the tragic deaths of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. It sought "to draw Christian women together, to remind each other that as people we were responsible for the peace and love of the world. Too long we had remained uninvolved. Were we not persons? mothers? who knew how much it hurt to see little people suffer? or to lose someone we love? Women of all other nations, other colours, could surely care no less?"³⁸ Keelah Dey was a member of the organisation

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ *Magdalene*, May 1973, p. 9.

“Another Mother For Peace”, which reflected the long tradition in the women’s peace movement of an essentialist perspective:

I am another Mother for Peace, we who have given life, must be dedicated to preserving it. We owe a world to children everywhere...Australian women are looking at the reality of war, seeing mothers everywhere raising their sons to kill and die. They call on their leaders to end the tragedy of war. Are you another Mother for Peace?³⁹

The first meeting was a session on the meaning of Easter that was stimulated by the visit of an American Methodist, Dottie Pope, who happened to be in Sydney because of her husband’s work for the Central Methodist Mission. Following Pope’s example of American women, Christian Women Concerned started speaking to groups of churchwomen about social issues in small groups that could present a panel of five-minute speeches. She was particularly interested in the technique of consciousness-raising and Christian Women Concerned ran seminars using these techniques.⁴⁰ During one seminar held at Chester Street Congregational Church Hall, Epping that had been organised between the Pennant Hills Women’s Liberation Group and Christian Women Concerned, up to 300 women argued that they wanted “more than marriage and children and the femininity that society has imposed on us.” Not surprisingly, the participants did not achieve consensus on their views on sexual morality, but the most controversial question was the length of time a woman should take for child-rearing before returning to work. “It seemed that most women can accept, or at least tolerate the idea of a certain amount of sexual licence, but that many can at present see no satisfactory substitute for a mother in the home during the early years of a growing family.”⁴¹

³⁹ *News Bulletin*, vol. 3, no. 2, June 1971.

⁴⁰ McRae-McMahon, *Memoirs of Moving On*, pp. 225-6.

⁴¹ *Magdalene*, April 1974, p. 3.

Christian Women Concerned read and promoted the liberation theologies of Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Barbara Thiering. These thinkers considered the oppression of women as an error, like racism, that had been sanctioned by religion.⁴² Feminist theology offered Christian women the religious authority of personal experience rather than authority based on church history or tradition. Thiering summarised American feminist theology for an Australian audience by drawing on secular feminist thought and Christian theology and, in particular, the work of Betty Friedan. Thiering asked: "In what does the female nature consist?" She suggested that Friedan's notion of "the feminine mystique", a process by which women were socially conditioned to fulfil the mothering role to the detriment of all other interests, was often perpetuated by religion. She argued that:

Women are taught, and do their best to believe, that through an act of deliberate self-destruction, the stunting of whole areas of their personality, they are fulfilling an ideal of Christian love...Their false image of self-sacrifice is fed by religiosity, that romantic perversion of religion that believes it possible to make oneself into a saint...The rigid definition of a woman's role in terms of the fulfilment of her biological potential and nothing else, and also in terms of a static symbol of goodness, has the effect of dehumanising half the human race.⁴³

Thiering did not appropriate secular feminist writers wholesale; she challenged the tendency in secular feminism for women to emulate men as idolatrous: "When feminists want to be liberated simply to copy distinctively male characteristics – and this usually means, in practice, male vices – the Christian would demur, for this misses the whole point of emancipation from sexism."⁴⁴ Similarly, she challenged the sexual libertinism of Germaine Greer who believed that marriage should be avoided on the assumption

⁴² For Mary Daly, see *Australian Congregationalist*, September 1971, p. 11; For Ruether, see *Australian Congregationalist*, May 1973, p. 6; Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (London: Chapman, 1968); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974); Barbara Thiering, *Created Second? Aspects of Women's Liberation in Australia* (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide: Family Life Movement of Australia, 1973); *Magdalene*, May 1973, p. 7; July 1973, p. 2.

⁴³ Thiering, *Created Second?* pp. 23, 24, 28.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

that its main element was power and conquest. By contrast, Thiering argued that a central characteristic of marriage was acceptance and love, which “disarms the patriarchal structure...from within.”⁴⁵

Thiering argued that the Christian ideal was for each human being to develop their personhood and that women should consider marriage, divorce, and abortion on the principle of the extent to which the decision would enhance the lives of the partners involved equally. Thiering argued that as higher education and smaller family sizes had shortened the time women devoted to child rearing, the best means of self-realisation for a woman might lie in a career.⁴⁶ Her argument that women should contribute to society on an equal basis with men challenged the specifically feminine role that Christian women had promoted – for her there was no special ministry of women.⁴⁷ Finally Thiering believed that if the Church realised its own ideals through the liberation of women, it could liberate itself and provide a model of church unity that would act as a symbol of ideal gender relations to the international community. Women, she concluded:

are ready now for a new Exodus, out of the restrictions, which,...have limited them in the past to their simple biological role. They are ready to take their place in the *koinonia* of Christ, and their equality within the Church could be a model to the secular world. This new form of ecumenism, that of male and female, is one of the most pressing tasks which the Church at present faces. It can be a means of liberating the Church itself to the realisation of an aspect of the Kingdom of Heaven which was envisaged from the beginning, but which has not yet been implemented. When the task is accepted, the world will be shown in a new way the meaning of the redemption wrought by Christ.⁴⁸

How did Congregational women respond to these ideas? In a review of a seminar given by Barbara Thiering and Jean Skuse, Keelah Dey considered the implications of their thought for Christian women’s organisations. If women refused to be confined to

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 71.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 64.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 72.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 78-79.

socially constructed definitions of femininity and if they accepted responsibility for themselves as persons, they would need to develop themselves in the context of a sisterhood that was more supportive than the then-current women's guild system. "We should no longer...accept church women's organisations in their stereotyped role but in the role of mutual support in the process of helping one another to find our identity, relating to each other, learning what being female is all about."⁴⁹ Maynard and Ruth Davies also reviewed Thiering's work with appreciation. Maynard had been President of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand and a member of the Joint Commission on Church Union, and Ruth had been a President of the Women's Fellowship of the International Congregational Council. They responded positively to the work of Rosemary Reuther who had dealt, in part, with the reluctance of women to embrace liberation. But they had also criticised Thiering for her "pathetically weak and evasive treatment of abortion" as lacking a critical awareness of class.⁵⁰ They argued that:

Surely Barbara Thiering could do better than go along passively with the so-called "right-to-life" brigade of the conservative theologians. Is abortion always to be restricted to the wealthy, available only through furtive back room manipulators, degrading and dangerous (sic) to their desperate patrons? For, regardless of the law, abortions will continue to be performed as individual women decide what seem (sic) best to the family and to them. The objective of reform is to legalise, to raise to (sic) medical standard and broaden the sociological base of a procedure which is infinitely preferable to the production of unwanted children. Obviously, contraception is better still. Sixty years ago, Dr Marie Stopes startled the world with her pioneering advocacy of birth control, and her clarion cry was "Every child a wanted child." It is still valid.⁵¹

When Christian Women Concerned found they could not keep up with the demand for speaking engagements, they founded a journal, *Magdalene*, in 1973. The name was chosen because it referred to the fact that Mary Magdalene had been named, falsely, as a prostitute, when she was actually a disciple of Jesus.⁵² Chester Street Congregational

⁴⁹ *Magdalene*, July 1973, p. 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, June 1974, p. 18.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² McRae-McMahon, *Memoirs of Moving On*, p. 232.

Church, Epping provided much of the infrastructure for the journal in the early years. Nan Barnes was the distribution and financial manager, and a team including Keelah Dey, Marie Tulip, Betty Marshall, Joan Jackson, Ruth Spencer, and Jean Gledhill worked on content. Chester Street members supported the publication by writing for it, and, at least initially, by providing the labour needed to produce each issue.⁵³

Contributors to the journal employed religious arguments to justify their use of the consciousness-raising techniques of women's liberation. Jean Skuse argued, for example, that the secular feminist movement had "revived" a technique derived from the Judaeo-Christian tradition of "testimony".⁵⁴ In the introduction to the first issue, Marie Tulip promoted honest sharing among women about their own experience as a source of religious authority: "None of us have any authority other than our own experience, our faith, hope and love. We are simply trying to be responsible in our own lives. Nor do we accept any authority over us other than that of Christ. We speak simply as human beings and we hope you will too."⁵⁵ *Magdalene* actively encouraged women to testify in the pages of their magazine as women had been doing in the feminist movement. The cartoon *The Spirit "It"* was a combination of the symbols for male and female designed to give expression to Galatians 3:28. It was supported by the insight of feminist scholarship that the Hebrew word for spirit was feminine and the Greek word for spirit was neuter.⁵⁶ In February 1974, *Magdalene* told its readers:

The greatest liberation story of the Gospels was spread by the disciples by word of mouth who wanted to tell the story of their new-found freedom. Women are telling the story, making known their experiences. Their life experiences are their authority, not how they are taught to feel, or relate, or behave, but who they know they are – persons made in the image of God full of possibilities for "being". Those participating in these cell-groups have testified to their assistance in helping women overcome their fear and distrust of each other and themselves. This type of sharing could be the beginning of an open dialogue at all levels of church life and

⁵³ Riley, *Do You Remember?* p. 68.

⁵⁴ *Magdalene*, February 1974, pp. 4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, May 1973.

⁵⁶ See, for example, *Ibid.*, February 1974, pp. 2, 5.

a willingness to listen and support each other as well as to be able to confront one another with an honesty a(t) present seldom known in the institutional church.⁵⁷

Magdalene provided a place of self-exploration that had not been possible in the church, which had generally supported traditional gender roles. In *Magdalene*, women raised issues such as sexuality, abortion, and childcare. They also questioned the social expectation of the unpaid labour of women as minister's wives. The journal provided one of the few opportunities in which Christian women could discuss lesbianism. In particular, it allowed mothers to discuss their children's homosexuality with other Christian women. One of the first letters from such a mother read: "I found somebody outside the church who did not flinch when I said homosexual...Then I found MAGDALENE. Now I realise that there are women in the church who would not flinch either."⁵⁸ Contributors sought to bring the plain speaking of women's liberation to Christianity. An ex-nun suggested that women had been "learning to say 'fuck' or to hear it without apparent horror."⁵⁹ One contributor insisted that the magazine differed significantly from women's liberation, however, for it provided a sense of hope that drew on different sources from the secular women's liberation movement.⁶⁰

In South Australia, Jean Parkin, a Congregationalist, welcomed the publication of *Magdalene* as an ecumenical venture and as a bold excursion in feminist theology. Parkin considered the magazine had sufficient material to "keep our women's groups occupied" for a long time, if only they could "be persuaded to discuss such inflammable material."⁶¹ After the first issue, however, one Congregational woman suggested the utilitarian view that traditional roles provided the greatest good for the greatest number.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁸ Ibid., September 1973, p. 5; For a special issue on lesbianism see December 1973.

⁵⁹ Ibid., September 1973, p. 13.

⁶⁰ Ibid., no. 2, 1975, p. 8.

⁶¹ *Australian Congregationalist*, September 1973, p. 6.

“It may be our role to...realis(e) our own potential with insistence that the traditional beliefs of monogamy and Christian family life offer the greatest range of emotional satisfaction for the most people over the longest period.”⁶² Though Parkin sympathised with this critique of the journal’s content, she maintained her support for any “effort to wrestle responsibly with the complicated social effects of the awakening of women to their own identity and to their educated potential.”⁶³

Christian Women Concerned also raised awareness through a number of large conferences. The first one, “In Christ there is Neither Male Nor Female: Women’s Liberation and the Church”, was held in August 1974 with approximately 100 women from several states present. It was informed by the World Council of Churches’ Consultation on “Sexism in the 1970s: Discrimination Against Women” in West Berlin in 1974.⁶⁴ The conference discussed issues such as the role of women in church and society, the relationship of Aboriginal women and the church, feminist theology and inclusive language in worship, abortion, and human sexuality.⁶⁵ The ecumenical organ of the Australian Council of Churches, *In Unity*, reported that the “The balconies of the stately Coogie Bay Hotel on the waterfront in Sydney rang to the laughter of liberated church-women.”⁶⁶

The Conference was a highlight of the year for twelve South Australian Congregational women who were part of a group of twenty women from Adelaide who attended the

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ World Council of Churches, *Sexism in the Seventies: Discrimination Against Women*, (Geneva: WCC, 1975).

⁶⁵ *Magdalene*, no. 5, 1974, pp. 1, 10-11, 14, 15; *Australian Congregationalist*, October 1974, p. 10.

⁶⁶ *In Unity*, October 1974, quoted in Engel, *Times of Change*, p. 302.

conference.⁶⁷ On their return, they promoted a follow-up conference in Adelaide and publicised the central theme of the conference that women's subordination should not be misread as inherent female virtue.⁶⁸ The *Pink Page* of the Congregational Women's Fellowship of South Australia declared that lack of confidence among women should not be mistaken for humility:

I have often heard it said that women find it easier to be humble than men. I wonder if what is seen to be humility is not sometimes lack of courage or confidence. At the conference in Sydney in September on "Women's Liberation and the Church" it was said that you must stand up before you can decide to bow down. Standing up takes courage. As the favourite hymn says "A life of self denouncing love is one of liberty" but the decision to bow down is a free choice.⁶⁹

Estelle Gobbett and Nan Partridge, both returned missionaries from Africa, held a church service in Union Church in the City, (a joint parish of Methodists and Congregationalists formed in Flinders Street, Adelaide, in 1968 that was later renamed Pilgrim Church). Both women had worked with their husbands for the London Missionary Society in Southern Rhodesia: Gobbett from 1963 to 1968, and Partridge from 1946 to 1967.⁷⁰ The service explored the theme of the social construction of gender. In the centre of the church were two boxes large enough for a person to sit inside. In one box, covered with blue paper, sat a man, and in another box, covered with pink paper, sat a woman. At one point in the service, they suddenly stood up and announced: "I've been in this box too long." A lively dialogue followed. Gobbett saw the internalisation of oppression among women as the greatest barrier to their liberation:

The church has helped form these attitudes...Voluntary work is more Christian than paid employment for married women...That woman is the servant of the family...That childless marriage is less than perfect!...That women feel...men think...That Christian women raise money...Christian men spend it...That Christian women are never angry or aggressive, but always resigned and peaceful...That theologising is for men...Women thus become nobodies... and it is not possible to have effective relationships with a non-entity.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Marney Forward, SA Report 1973-4, Congregational Women's Fellowship 1/10, Uniting Church Synod Archives, Elsternwick, Victoria.

⁶⁸ *Australian Congregationalist*, November 1974, p. 13.

⁶⁹ Congregational Women's Fellowship of South Australia, *Pink Page*, May 1975, Congregational Women's Fellowship 1/10.

⁷⁰ Bernard Thorogood, *Gales of Change* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), pp. 273, 287.

⁷¹ *Magdalene*, no. 5, 1974, p. 11.

Nan Partridge gave the address during the service, entitled “Get up my child”. She suggested that even Union Church, which was renowned in Australian Christianity for its expression of radical views, needed to reconsider gender roles. She suggested that for women, the pain of social dependence was “akin to the pain of being black in a white world.” She quoted Milan David, a black American who had said:

If you hate me because I am ignorant, I will educate myself...But if you hate me because I'm black, I can only refer you to God who made me black.⁷²

She then went on to apply this theory to men's views of women, arguing that:

We have discovered that many women feel like saying to the men around them: If you look down on me because I react emotionally, I will be logical – when that is called for. If you look down on me because my conversation is dull and all about the children and the house, I'll really listen to radio interviews or I'll get an outside job, but if your real reason for looking down on me is that I am a woman, I can only refer you to God who *made* me woman.⁷³

Partridge argued that the church had reinforced traditional gender roles “in the name of religion”. She argued women should embrace their own liberation or risk becoming “whiner(s)”, women who had hidden “possessiveness under the cloak of seeming inselphness (sic)”. She argued that the gospel brought liberation to women:

Jesus is saying to us, women *and* men: break out of your boxes and help each other to break up those boxes for good – because I am calling you not to those deadening restrictions...but to life, fully human life. That's the sort of life Jesus lived himself...and it included treating women as fully human beings.⁷⁴

The Christian women's liberation movement has had an impact on men in many ways that are often unrecorded as women challenged men's assumptions in conversations and meetings, with relative degrees of success. Occasionally, women sought to communicate to men the implications of the women's movement for their lives more systematically. At Chester Street Congregational Church, a group of about twenty people called the “Community of Women and Men”, met monthly for eight years at

⁷² Ibid., no. 6, 1974, p. 3.

⁷³ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 3-4. Emphasis in original.

Betty Marshall's house. The group included Nan and Geoff Barnes, Jim and Marie Tulip, Jean and Walter Gledhill, Ranjini and Basil Rebera, John and Keelah Dey, Betty and Sam Marshall, and Thelma Skiller. The Chester Street history records that the group "gave some of the men of Chester Street...a deeper understanding of what women were feeling and they worked hard to understand even though at times the going was difficult for them and us all."⁷⁵

Congregationalism began to reflect the critique of the women's movement of gender relations in its liturgies and formal publications. A prayer that expressed the boredom and frustration of the housewife appeared in the Congregational Union Prayer Fellowship Handbook in 1972, itself reflecting the lamentations found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Its emphasis was similar to the second half of the Martha's Hymn published in 1931 in which Martha laments, "Although I must have Martha's/Hands, I have a Mary's mind":

A Housewife Prays

Maybe all the others find it just as hard
to be a good housewife...to pray...
O God, it isn't that I cannot see
The marvels, the beauties, the memories in the making...
But sometimes it seems there is no end, and nothing happens:
There is always another meal to make, shopping to do,
Work that makes nothing, that nobody sees.
I just can't get spiritual about ironing shirts.
Forgive me, O God, if my prayer is full of little things,
my life is filled up with them too.
Help me to see the worth of little parts
of great endeavours: to make a home, to prove love,
to grow a piece of human care.
'Martha, Martha,' he said 'you worry and fret about
so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed
only one.' (Luke 10:41 J.B.)⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Riley, *Do You Remember?* p. 69.

⁷⁶ Congregational Union of Australia, *Danger! People at Prayer: Congregational Prayer Fellowship Handbook*, 1972, p. 4.

Through Christian Women Concerned, Christian women developed an advocacy role in relation to social justice issues in the church and the community. The pages of *Magdalene* had allowed Methodists such as Dorothy McMahon to articulate her experience of her first Methodist General Conference, particularly her challenge to the exclusion of women from the councils of the Methodist church, more forcefully than she had done in the press of her own church. She concluded: "I wrote this for the Church press but wasn't brave enough to send it in."⁷⁷ The resolutions from the 1974 Christian Women Concerned conference called the churches to show solidarity with the Aboriginal women of Mapoon in their attempt to regain tribal lands. They also called for more women in church councils, women's control of women's organisations, and a woman in every pulpit on one Sunday of the year. They also called the churches to accept the expression by women of "free", "responsible", and "non-exploitative" sexuality.⁷⁸

While these were and continue to be important goals, the advocacy of Christian Women Concerned in relation to indigenous people has been subject to rigorous critique by Anne Pattel-Gray, herself an indigenous woman, who argues that white Christian women have confirmed racism in wider society, rather than challenged it. They were no different from their secular sisters, she argues, in their lack of awareness of the different needs of indigenous women. As a consequence, their attempts at advocacy on behalf of indigenous women were patronising.⁷⁹ "In short, we do not need to be liberated by our oppressors",⁸⁰ Pattel-Gray writes. Like other critics discussed earlier in this chapter, she

⁷⁷ *Magdalene*, June 1974, pp. 16-17. Contrast her contribution to the church press see, Betty Feith, *Women in Ministry* ed. Elizabeth Wood Ellem (Melbourne: Kyarra Press, 1990), pp. 40-44.

⁷⁸ *Magdalene*, no. 5, 1974, p. 14.

⁷⁹ Anne Pattel-Gray, "Not Yet Tiddas: An Aboriginal Womanist Critique of Australian Church Feminism" in Maryanne Confoy, Dorothy A. Lee and Joan Nowotny (eds.), *Freedom and Entrapment: Women Thinking Theology* (Victoria: Dove, 1995), pp. 165-192. Emphasis in original.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

exposes the hypocrisy of the appeal by white women to “universal” experience, as no more than an appeal to their own experience. In the work to which white women devoted themselves that will be discussed below, Pattel-Gray rightly noted that Aboriginal women were “virtually invisible”.⁸¹

Priestly Roles

Christian Women Concerned became the New South Wales Commission on the Status of Women of the Australian Council of Churches and established an Enquiry into the Status of Women in the Christian Churches.⁸² The inquiry was the second such project since the work of Winifred Kiek for the Australian Section of the World Council of Churches, but it was limited to New South Wales for financial reasons. The idea for the inquiry emerged during discussion at Keelah Dey’s house and again many women from Chester Street Congregational church became involved.⁸³ Sabine Willis, a Quaker representative on the New South Wales State Council of the Australian Council of Churches had overall responsibility for it. The inquiry received two hundred submissions representing eleven denominations.⁸⁴

The report demonstrated the overwhelming lack of women in formal roles in the Christian churches, despite the fact that the female membership of the Christian churches was greater than the male membership. In the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, for example, three women served among the 600 clerical and lay representatives to the Synod. There were no women members in the New South Wales Presbyterian

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 181.

⁸² Engel, *Times of Change*, p. 300.

⁸³ Riley, *Do You Remember?* p. 68.

⁸⁴ Denominations included Anglican, Baptist, Roman Catholic, Christian Scientist, Church of Christ, Congregational, Eastern Orthodox, Latter Day Saints, Methodist, Presbyterian, Salvation Army and the Society of Friends.

Assembly. The New South Wales Methodist Conference had 34 women out of 180 members, and the General Conference included 12 women out of 184 members. By contrast, in the Assembly of the Congregational Union of New South Wales, 40 percent of 175 lay delegates were women and only 80 members of the Assembly were ordained ministers.⁸⁵

Congregational women had been elected Chairmen of the Congregational Unions from 1963 and in the 1970s they began to be elected to executive positions in the Unions more frequently.⁸⁶ The confidence of the denomination in the ability of women remained noteworthy in ecumenical contexts. One Congregationalist commented to the inquiry that her appointment to the Joint Constitution Commission for the creation of the Uniting Church had been “greeted with amazement by the male representatives from the other two denominations”.⁸⁷ Respondents to the report indicated that younger women were not prepared to accept the expectation that they teach Sunday School. They wanted women to become candidates for the ministry and the priesthood, although they recognised that few were likely to offer for ordination.⁸⁸ By 1974, eleven Congregational women had been ordained in Australia and six had retired. Methodists had ordained eight women from 1969, Churches of Christ had ordained three from 1931, and Presbyterians had begun to ordain women in 1974. During this period, opportunities increased for experienced Congregational women ministers such as Merry

⁸⁵ Commission on the Status of Women, *Report of the Enquiry into the Status of Women in the Church*, p. 5.

⁸⁶ They included the Rev Dorothy Wacker, who gave the Assembly Address in 1971, was President of the Union of Congregational Churches in Western Australia 1973-4 and Vice President of the Congregational Union of Australia, 1974-5. Kath Howie was President of the South Australian Congregational Union 1970-1 and Elizabeth Finnigan was President of it in 1974. The Rev Elizabeth McChesney Clark was Vice President of the Congregational Union of Queensland in 1972-3. Lilian Wells was President of Congregational Union of New South Wales, 1975-7 and Dora Plumb was President of the Congregational Union of Victoria in 1975.

⁸⁷ Commission on the Status of Women, *Report of the Enquiry into the Status of Women in the Church*, pp. 62-63.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

and Livingstone to move from chaplaincy to church ministry. Only four Congregational women were ordained in this period, however, in contrast to Methodism and Presbyterianism, which ordained a backlog of 22 women from 1969 and 1974 respectively, most of whom had been directed into the deaconess order of their denomination after the Second World War.⁸⁹

For Elizabeth McChesney-Clark, who had been a missionary with the LMS, the call of Eagle Junction Congregational Church in December 1969, in which her husband had been minister before his death in October, was “an answer to prayer”. She entered the lay pastorate and having received her education in theology at Cambridge University, she passed a few supplementary subjects and was ordained in 1973. (For more biographical details on Elizabeth McChesney-Clark see her entry in Appendix 4).⁹⁰ The road to ordination could still be difficult for others such as Jillian Wilkins, who, having completed the required training and having received a call from Henley Beach Congregational Church to become their minister in 1969, was not ordained, at least, not immediately. The officials of the Congregational Union sought the concurrence of all other state Unions who argued that as the church would not offer an adequate stipend, she should not be ordained. While privately Wilkins believed the matter had more to do with gender than with money, the issue was laid to rest. When she and her husband travelled to the United States for the purpose of his study, however, she was called to a congregation of the United Church of Christ in Maine and was ordained in 1974. (For more information on Jillian Wilkins see her entry in Appendix 4).⁹¹

⁸⁹ Peter Bentley, “Women Ministers Before 1977”, *Church Heritage*, vol. 10, no. 3, March 1998, pp. 161-174; Feith, *Women in Ministry*, pp. 25-39.

⁹⁰ Interview with Elizabeth McChesney Clark, 24 March 2001, transcript in possession of the author.

⁹¹ Interview with Jillian Wilkins, 26 September 2000, transcript in possession of the author.

By the 1970s, Congregational women had also become aware that access to the highest offices of Congregationalism was no guarantee of gender equality. Most Congregational women believed that the “pervading attitude of men to women in society” meant that there was “still room for improvement” in the church.⁹² The reflection of Stewart Firth on his experience in relation to gender roles in Strathfield-Homebush Congregational Church in the 1950s summarises what had become an issue for Congregational women:

From the perspective of 1980 any Church in the 1950s fell far short of fulfilling the Biblical injunction that there is neither male nor female in Christ; on the contrary, Churches maintained rigid distinctions of sex. And ours was no exception. The Congregationalist church has a better record than most. I remember the excellent services taken by the Revd Lillian Livingstone at Strathfield-Homebush, for example. But when it came to who did the washing-up of cups after Sunday morning tea in the School Hall, there was never any question that the women would do it. A few women became deacons, but only a few. Had their talents been tapped, they could have contributed much more to the life of the church than they were allowed to. Here again the church was a mirror of society rather than a challenge to it.⁹³

The role of Congregational women in the detailed negotiations regarding the position of women in the Uniting Church

Congregational women contributed their own denominational perspective to the advocacy work that Christian Women Concerned pursued in relation to the position of women in the Uniting Church. The national conference in 1974 and subsequent meetings galvanised support among the women of the three uniting denominations to address those responsible for the drafting of the Constitution of the Uniting Church in relation to the position of women in the new church. After the conference finished, women from the executives of the women’s organisations of the three uniting churches met to draft a series of proposals. They requested that the Commissioners promote inclusive language in Christian discourse; encourage women to seek ordination,

⁹² Commission on the Status of Women, *Report of the Enquiry into the Status of Women in the Church*, p. 62.

⁹³ Stewart Firth, “Strathfield Homebush Church, 1950-1965: A Recollection”, *Church Heritage*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1980, pp. 352-353.

leadership in theological education, and senior administration; and that they create a system of quotas for the involvement of women in the councils of the church.⁹⁴

After voting on the *Basis of Union*, the three uniting churches authorised the Joint Constitution Council and the Joint Constitution Commission to draw up a Constitution and Regulations for the new church. The Joint Constitution Commission was composed of 21 members from the bureaucracies of the uniting churches. The Joint Constitution Council was composed of 70 people, of whom 12 were women, including six Presbyterians, four Congregationalists, and two Methodists.⁹⁵ Assisted by Justice John Dey, a prominent lay person from Chester Street, Epping, the women presented their submission to the Joint Constitution Council on 1 November 1974. The Council passed legislation that required that for the first six years of the life of the Church, women would comprise at least one-third of the lay members of official committees of the parish and congregation, and one-third of the lay membership of Presbyteries, Synods and the Assembly. Marie Tulip hailed this action as one of the first institutions in Australia to adopt an affirmative action program.⁹⁶

Tulip has also argued, however, that because the Joint Constitution Council did not follow the process that the women proposed, that is, the proposals were not circulated and discussed in the uniting churches, the women were dismayed at the “deep resistance” they encountered.⁹⁷ While this could have been done easily and the recommendations need not have been adjusted from the Joint Constitution Commission

⁹⁴ Tulip, “Affirmative Action in the Uniting Church”, in Franklin (ed), *The Force of the Feminine*, pp. 120-140.

⁹⁵ Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Constitution Commission, Sunday 3rd November 1974, Joint Commission on Church Union Papers, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/1, Mitchell Library, Sydney; Tulip, “Affirmative Action in the Uniting Church”, pp. 126-7.

⁹⁶ Tulip, “Affirmative Action”, p. 120.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126; McRae-McMahon, *Memoirs of Moving On*, pp. 230-231.

to the Joint Constitution Council, nevertheless the women were naïve in their assumption that the Council would simply accept the recommendations. While they have acknowledged opposition from men that was misogynist as well as bureaucratic stalling, they have not recognised that the Council had limited jurisdiction. It viewed some of the proposals as already fulfilled in the regulations or administrative and policy matters that would be better implemented by the councils of the Uniting Church when they were finally constituted after inauguration.⁹⁸

Tulip's attitude to the Joint Constitution Council was informed by her experience of Methodism, which, in her view, had stalled on the issue of gender equality, making her sceptical that the Joint Constitution Council would be any different.⁹⁹ The initial response from the Council to the proposal for quotas was that it was "unnecessary" or "impractical".¹⁰⁰ This response strengthened the resolve of women from Methodist and Presbyterian backgrounds to press on. Tulip argued that only when the meeting was presented with the figures of the composition of the most recent national gatherings of the three uniting churches were the Councillors convinced of the need for legislation for percentages.¹⁰¹ The Council had assumed that the involvement of women would occur naturally without percentages, but she argued that:

This has not been the experience of any group that has tried to break the middleaged male clergy monopoly on church government. For example the battle for equal lay representation was won in the Reformed Churches at the Time of the Reformation, and hundreds of years later the proportion of lay persons still has to be constitutionally guaranteed. For years the Methodist Church has been talking about equality between men and women but the representation of women in church government has remained at the level of tokenism. In 1973 the NSW Methodist Conference passed a resolution one morning that women should be given higher representation on committees including the Standing Committee. On the same day outstanding women were nominated but only the three previous members were elected....For years the churches have been passing resolutions and making statements about the equality of men and women,...but nothing...happened, and it won't happen in future unless positive steps

⁹⁸ Minutes of the Joint Constitution Council, 1 November 1974, Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/2/7.

⁹⁹ Tulip, "Affirmative Action", p. 121.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-9.

are taken to bring about change...we see the setting of percentages as the best way of intervening to break the old pattern.¹⁰²

In her accounts of the case, Tulip not only glossed over the views of the Councillors themselves regarding how this participation would be achieved, but also the differences between the women of the three uniting denominations who had developed the resolutions. In *Magdalene*, she argued that “those of us involved in the struggle moved from feelings of anger at the way we were put down and sadness at the church’s continuing alignment with the status quo, to a deep sense of excitement that the JCC had voted in favour of our proposals”.¹⁰³ Tulip even used the differences between the women to develop support for her own opinion:

After the meeting a Presbyterian woman said, ‘As far as I am concerned I’m just hanging on till 1976, hoping the Uniting Church will be different’. Another Presbyterian: ‘My church has never asked me to do anything’. A Congregational woman: ‘I got so mad hearing all those women begging the men to allow them to be part of the Uniting Church. We have to struggle to be accepted as baptised members of the church.’ A Methodist: ‘I’m more convinced of the need for percentages than ever!’¹⁰⁴

Tulip particularly neglected the attempt by Congregational women to influence the submission on the status of women. Congregational women had wanted the new church to reflect the liberty of Congregationalism at all levels from the formal regulations of the church, to the existential position of the believer in it. In response to one questionnaire, Congregational women’s groups in New South Wales expressed “real fear” that they would have to “strive to maintain the freedoms” that they had experienced within Congregationalism in the Uniting Church.¹⁰⁵ Methodist and Presbyterian women also saw aspects of Congregationalism as precedents for reform in

¹⁰² A response to a discussion between women members of the United Church and Members of the Joint Constitution Council, Joint Commission on Church Union Papers, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1302/2/7. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰³ *Magdalene*, no. 6, 1974, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Tulip, “Affirmative Action”, p. 128.

¹⁰⁵ Summaries of replies to questionnaire to Women’s Groups in NSW, Joint Commission on Church Union Papers, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1358/3/6.

their own denominations. Congregationalists considered that oppressive church structures within Methodism and Presbyterianism had been responsible, in part, for generating fierce anger and suspicion among their female members. They feared that the residual conservatism of these denominations would be carried into the Uniting Church. In the 1960s, one Congregational woman quipped that Methodists and Presbyterians would “drag us back 50 years.”¹⁰⁶ As a consequence, Congregational women argued against quotas for women in the church councils on the basis that their denomination had demonstrated the principle of gender equality without recourse to affirmative action. They conceded that over time, such a system would secure gender equality and would eventually become unnecessary.¹⁰⁷

Before concluding this section, it is important to note the growing number of Christian women who were not involved in these activities due to their increasing access to paid employment. Patty Riley, a minister’s wife, represented the new generation of women, who, if they were Christian at all, or members of churches, would have little time for traditional female Christian activities centred in the local congregation. Riley was not involved in the activities of the women’s liberation movement at Chester Street as an organiser, although she did attend meetings occasionally. In many respects, she had already found her liberation. When her husband was appointed minister of the Epping/Cheltenham Congregational churches in 1963, she had commenced work as the first married female part-time social worker in the New South Wales Health Department. After sixteen very happy years as a mother, her youngest child was five and she was ready to return to work. She advised the churches that she would not be a

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Feith, *Women in Ministry*, p. 43.

¹⁰⁷ W. D. O’Reilly, Implications of Union for women’s work with representatives of the CWA, PWA and FMW, 3 October 1974, Joint Commission on Church Union Archives, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1358/3/6; Congregational Women’s Fellowship of Australia Council Meeting Minutes, 12 May 1975, MN/PRN 257/A, ACCNO 4251A/28, Congregational Union of Western Australia, Battye Library, Perth.

minister's wife in the "accepted sense", which meant sharing the pastoral responsibilities of the minister and serving as President of the Women's Guild, as she had already made her "debut into the bigger world".¹⁰⁸ For some women such as Riley, therefore, the movement for women's liberation was unnecessary. Eventually, the achievement of its main platform, paid work for married women, meant that the movement would lose steam and decline.

Postscript: The Uniting Church

At the first Assembly of the Uniting Church in 1977, the third largest church in Australia, there was no separate women's meeting. Women were present at the Assembly as members of the meeting alongside men. Over the next twenty years, the church began to build a corporate identity, but the continuities with the previous denominations remained so strong that it was often possible to guess the previous denomination of a given member. Congregational women, for example, had a sense of personal liberty and strength that was remarked upon at union and in the following years.¹⁰⁹ At the local level, older women continued to meet in women's guilds as they had done in the previous three denominations, but their meetings lost their special emphasis on the development of a prophetic role, especially as they were open to men from church union onward. From time to time, women held special conferences on gender issues that reflected the consciousness-raising techniques of the women's liberation movement. Some of the resolutions of these conferences were implemented in the new church in part, such as the introduction of inclusive language especially in worship and the teaching of feminist theology.

¹⁰⁸ Riley, *Do You Remember?* p. 70.

¹⁰⁹ I am indebted to Jenny Hayes for this information.

The assumption of the access of women to priestly roles, especially women's ordination, from church union in 1977 had implications for the composition of the church, which, to conservatives, reflected a larger commitment to modern biblical criticism. As a consequence, women's ordination formed part of the reason why some churches remained outside the Uniting Church. The quota system of one-third women in church councils was enforced from 1977 until 1983. When the regulations were allowed to lapse in that year, the representation of women in the councils of the church suffered initially, but over twenty-five years, adequate representation of women has become accepted practice. The attention of women turned to meeting procedure, with consensus decision-making procedures introduced during the term of the first female President, Dr Jill Tabart from Launceston, Tasmania, from 1994 to 1997.¹¹⁰ Thirty-six women ministers joined the church in 1977, but women ministers remained a minority, numbering no more than four percent of clergy in 1985.¹¹¹ The introduction of national, as opposed to local, stipends addressed discrepancy in pay rates between men and women and lifted the overall financial status of the ministry. Freda Whitlam, who had been Principal of the Presbyterian Ladies College, Croydon, from 1958 to 1976 and, in her position as Moderator of the Synod of New South Wales for 1985 to 1986, had herself experienced discrimination from both conservative men and young feminists.¹¹² She notes, however, that the theological training of men and women together influenced the ministry of men in positive ways. Male ministers who had trained with women had "an added sensitivity in their liturgy and a depth of compassion in their pastoral concern

¹¹⁰ McRae-McMahon, *Memoirs of Moving On*, p. 233; Jill Tabart, "What I know now" in William W. and Susan Emilsen (eds), *Marking Twenty Years: The Uniting Church in Australia, 1977-1997* (North Parramatta, NSW: UTC Publications, 1997), p. 23.

¹¹¹ Social Responsibility and Justice Committee, *Why Does the Uniting Church in Australia Ordain Women to the Ministry of the Word?* (Sydney: Uniting Church in Australia, 1990), p. 9.

¹¹² Elizabeth Wood Ellem, *The Church Made Whole: National Conference on Women in the Uniting Church in Australia* (Melbourne: David Lovell Publishing, 1990), pp. 272-274.

that was heartwarming.”¹¹³ A comparative sociological study that tested the perceptions of the laity concluded that Uniting Church members, by their willingness to accept a woman minister, have generally accepted the equal ministry of men and women as “a criterion for fellowship”.¹¹⁴ The minority view of resistance to women ministers was related to the level of sexism and other forms of discrimination of a given member and emphasis by ministers on evangelism rather than pastoral care.¹¹⁵ But the assumption of the ordination of women in the church has not been allowed to pass without question. Opposition from conservative members and clergy meant that the Uniting Church justified commitment to the ordination of women with statements issued from the late 1980s and a major conference of women in 1990.¹¹⁶ There have, however, been moments when the leadership of the Uniting Church has not defended its commitment to the equal ministry of men and women due to a lack of willingness to discipline its members and clergy.¹¹⁷

At first, church union meant that women were not elected to positions of leadership and staff positions in the church bureaucracies, because, by extending the pool of candidates for priestly roles, church union severely limited opportunities for women to serve in the highest offices of the church. Dorothy Wacker and Jean Skuse were the only two women nominated for the position of General Secretary of the Uniting Church, for

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 274.

¹¹⁴ Edward C. Lehman, *Women in Ministry: Receptivity and Resistance* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1994), p. 120.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 119-120.

¹¹⁶ Social Responsibility and Justice Committee, *Women in the Uniting Church in Australia* (Sydney: Uniting Church in Australia, 1988); Social Responsibility and Justice Committee, *Why Does the Uniting Church in Australia Ordain Women to the Ministry of the Word?*; Elisabeth Wood Ellem, *The Church Made Whole*; See also Margaret Ann Franklin and Richard Franklin, “A New Challenge for the Church: Creating a Male-Female Community in Australian Society” in Andrew Dutney (ed), *From Here to Where? Australian Christians Owning the Past - Embracing the Future* (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 1988), p. 88.

¹¹⁷ Judi Fisher and Janet Wood (eds), *Colours True and Splendid: the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women* (Sydney: National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, 1999), pp. 87-89.

example. They were no competition, however, against the male candidates who eventually became President and Secretary. Davis McCaughey was an Irish Presbyterian who was Professor of New Testament at Ormond College, Melbourne and had largely written the *Basis of Union*. Winston O'Reilly had been a lecturer in the United Faculty of Theology, Principal of the Methodist Ladies College, Burwood, and Connexional Secretary of the Methodist Church in New South Wales.¹¹⁸ Equally, men were often appointed to positions in synod bureaucracies. I have described elsewhere how Gene Wenham, Executive Officer of the YWCA, "could have wept" as she watched nine men being commissioned for staff positions in the South Australian synod of the Uniting Church.¹¹⁹ Although Lillian Wells, a former Congregationalist, was the first Moderator of the New South Wales Synod in 1977, female Moderators, or state heads of church, have been in the minority, but have become more frequent in recent years.¹²⁰ Over twenty-five years, women began to gain access to administrative roles, such that they are now in senior staff positions. Broader anxieties about declining membership and leadership development as much as the principle of gender equality have been responsible for the promotion of women and young people into positions of leadership in church councils.

The access of women to the priestly role in the Uniting Church was complicated further by the issue of sexuality. Attitudes to sexuality had been tested in the three former denominations in relation to the decriminalisation of homosexuality, but few members had considered the leadership of openly gay and lesbian members in the church or issues such as blessings for same-sex couples. The debate had begun in the early 1980s,

¹¹⁸ Nominations for President and Secretary of the UCA, ML MSS 2733 ADD ON 1358/2/5; *Australian Congregationalist*, June 1974, p. 13.

¹¹⁹ Julia Pitman, "South Australia: Devoted but Battle-Weary" in William and Susan Emilsen (eds), *The Uniting Church in Australia: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Melbourne: Circa, 2003), p. 143.

¹²⁰ See, for example, Elizabeth Finnegan, in Ellem, *The Church Made Whole*, pp. 243-244.

as gay and lesbian members of the church had increasingly begun to feel that they could not present themselves as candidates for the ministry and also assume a life of celibacy or live with integrity in silence. When the first openly gay person presented as a candidate for ministry in 1982, the church refused to issue a doctrinal statement on the matter and sought to educate the church about homosexuality based on biblical criticism and the findings of social and medical scientists. Ever since, the church has restated the policy that the presbytery, a regional grouping of ministers and laity, has the power to accept or to reject a given candidate on the basis of their character. No openly gay person has yet been accepted into the ministry, although there are a significant minority of gay and lesbian clergy in the church, who have been able to secure ministry placements in liberal presbyteries.¹²¹

The implications of this controversy were that the legitimacy of women's leadership was subject to further questioning. Speculation about female sexuality meant that women experienced anxiety at every stage of the candidature for ministry and placement process, which could interrupt and even sever their careers. The extent of division within the church over the issue of sexuality was portrayed powerfully in the case of Jennifer Byrnes, arguably one of the ablest ministers in the Synod of Victoria, when she was nominated for the position of Moderator of the Synod in 1996. By the day of the election, it had become widely known that Byrnes was in a committed, long-term relationship with a woman. A significant minority of the synod were opposed to her relationship and moved a resolution that the election should require a majority of 75 percent, rather than two-thirds as was the usual pattern. Consequently, Byrnes did not receive the majority required for her to be elected as Moderator, but the gasping,

¹²¹ Tulip, "Women in Christianity", p. 136.

weeping, and the standing ovation that she received when the vote was taken, indicated that she had received an absolute majority. That evening, the young members of the synod called other members to stand with them at the front of the church to express their support for Byrnes and their dismay at the course of events that had occurred that day. In a powerful display of divided loyalties, two-thirds of the synod stood at the front of the room and faced the other third that remained seated.¹²²

Women who gained access to priestly roles in the Uniting Church have used their position to extend a prophetic role to a certain extent. As has been seen in Chapter 5, the expectation has emerged in the church that women ministers would not only provide such a role, but, more specifically, would advocate for the place of women in the church.¹²³ Wendy Snook's analysis of the content of sermons of lay as well as ordained women preachers across six denominations, has shown that Uniting Church and Anglican women who were educated since the 1970s (regardless of age) were most likely to adopt a feminist perspective on Scripture.¹²⁴ In this context, then, Snook argued that:

there were some themes that were present in...sermons, which appeared more connected to the gender of the preacher than other factors such as lectionary text, denomination, age, geographic context, and ethnicity. These included the importance of relationships and inclusivity, whether based on age, race, gender, or sexuality, the importance of kinship and family, and the need to be prophetic to the world about issues such as rape, domestic violence, and inadequate government and agency responses (to these issues).¹²⁵

From sermons to pastoral care, Dorothy McMahon has observed that women ministers in the Uniting Church have exercised a distinctive ministry. After only two years of

¹²² Robyn Richardson, Katalina Tahaafe and Nonie Wales, "Sing about Life, Sing about Possibilities: Women and the Uniting Church" in William W. and Susan Emilsen (eds), *Marking Twenty Years*, pp. 228-9.

¹²³ Jennifer S. Byrnes, "A Descriptive and Hermeneutical Consideration of the Experiences of Ordained Women in Parish Ministry" (Master of Sociology thesis, La Trobe University, 1992), pp. 235-41.

¹²⁴ Wendy Snook, "'God Speaks to Australia through Women': Homiletics and Gender in the Preaching of Australian Women in the 1990s" (Master of Theology thesis, Murdoch University, 2000).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

experience as a Uniting Church minister, for example, she found male ministers were willing to express their feelings with her and even to shed tears, which they felt they could not do with other male ministers. Similarly, five victims of rape sought her counsel, with the majority of these crimes having been committed by Christian men. She stated baldly that: "I have yet to meet a male minister who has had a rape case." McMahon argued, moreover, that this seemingly unique ability to provide pastoral care was related to the fact that women were culturally conditioned to be more accessible than men, to be viewed as "less important" than men, and therefore as more understanding. In short, lay people could view women ministers as: "more approachable mother figures."¹²⁶

Conclusion

By 1977, Congregational women were much more accepted in prophetic and priestly roles in their church than they had been fifty years earlier. It was no longer unusual for a congregation to call a woman to be their minister or for a Congregational Union to appoint a woman as their Chairman. Their influence also made a significant contribution to gender equality in the Uniting Church. But changes in wider society had meant that the significance of access to these prophetic and priestly roles had declined. From the late 1960s, the assumption of a feminine consciousness based on the spiritual superiority of women in the church had been questioned and found wanting. Congregational women no longer spoke of the view of the "women of the Congregational churches", younger women did not join Congregational women's organisations, and very few offered themselves as candidates for the ministry.

¹²⁶ Dorothy McMahon, "Standing in the Right Place at Last" in Franklin and Jones (eds.), *Opening the Cage*, pp. 147-8; see also Dorothy McMahon, "Two Questions for Ministry", *Trinity Occasional Papers*, vol. 3, no. 1, January 1984, pp. 40-45.

Nevertheless, influenced by the women's liberation movement, Congregational women joined Methodist and Presbyterian women in seeking access to priestly roles in the church, although they differed from Methodist and Presbyterian women in the means they used to pursue such goals. Though church union and the sexuality debate impeded the access of women to some priestly roles, women have now gained access to all aspects of the priestly role in the Uniting Church, with the exception of the ordination of openly gay or bisexual women. In general, however, it is likely that the future of the ministry of women will not be determined so much by the acceptance of gender equality, or even views about sexuality, as the rapidly contracting size of the Uniting Church in general.

CONCLUSION

This account of Congregational women in Australia is intended to address, in part, the neglect of women's religious history by scholars of Australian feminist and women's history and to correct the self-congratulation among scholars of Congregationalism in relation to the position of women in their denomination. Congregational women have played a significant role in Australian Protestantism. The records of their activities reflect a particular church culture that has allowed unique insight into what they thought, what they said, and how they acted. Their access to prophetic and priestly roles within their own church often provided them with opportunities to serve in the community and also in the ecumenical movement in ways that were not open to women of other denominations.

The culture of English and Welsh Congregationalism was distinctive in its emphasis on confessional liberty and independent polity. The decentralised structure of the church could allow pockets of liberalism or conservatism to develop in various regions, but the Congregational Unions defended the right of each congregation to liberty of conscience independent of ecclesiastical and secular authority. Congregationalism encouraged each member to express the implications of their faith in acts of Christian citizenship, which, under the impact of theological liberalism in the nineteenth century, led to a strong emphasis on the social gospel. As ordination was a matter of church order, rather than a sacrament, and its conferral the responsibility of autonomous churches, women could demonstrate their ministry in the lay pastorate, and eventually gain access to ordination.

Australian Congregationalism differed from English and Welsh Congregationalism, which was the third largest church in Britain, as it failed to achieve a large following in

Australia. Competitors from other denominations, lack of local and British resources, independent polity, and over-reliance on ministers meant that Congregational churches had difficult sustaining themselves in nineteenth-century Australia. By the turn of the twentieth century, economic depression and moving in search of work led to further decline, ^{the result} with that the Congregational Unions had trouble finding wealthy patrons and leaders to serve on their committees. This institutional weakness prepared the way for the entry of women into leadership.

Australian Congregational women adopted prophetic and priestly roles within their own church to give expression to Christian citizenship. The prophetic role referred to a feminist message women offered to the church and the community, while the priestly role was defined broadly as the life of service of the individual and narrowly as the administration of the sacrament. In the face of opposition to women in ministry, Congregational women used theological liberalism and Christian maternalism (their traditional responsibilities as Christian wives and mothers) to challenge opposition to women's leadership and to expand their sphere of influence in society. They often sought access to the priestly role in order to extend the prophetic role to a wider audience.

Though the evidence is fragmentary, Congregational women sought to challenge traditional understandings of womanhood through an alterative reading of the Scriptures. They mined out examples of women in the bible and viewed women in the gospel narratives as the disciples of Jesus, equal with men. Similarly, in relation to questions of social policy, they argued that Congregationalists should approach issues of world security and welfare policy from the viewpoint of the greatest potential victims: mothers and their children. This view, which was derived from the

international women's peace movement, appealed to women across class differences, and was based on their shared cultural responsibilities in raising children. Such a view helped to foster acts of service among women locally, to develop community cohesion, and to stimulate acts of protest against militarism.

The prophetic role was effective only to a certain extent, as the aims of Congregational women were eschatological. To work for seemingly impossible goals such as world peace and the elimination of poverty was bound to result in failure, but it is from this position of certain failure that the work of Congregational women should be evaluated. They realised that their meagre attempts at community service and legislative reform would result in limited social change, but they believed that their faithfulness to their task was most important. They knew that their access to the priestly role would not transform the theology of the church entirely, or even moderately. Given this reality, Congregational women sought to ensure that their efforts resulted in self-determination rather than oppression for the people with whom they worked and that in this work, they themselves did not degenerate into bitterness.

Nevertheless, the adherence of Congregational women to Christian maternalism had costs for themselves, for the women around them, and also for future generations of Christian women. Their worldview was predicated upon a superior view of women that was ultimately incompatible with equality with men. It was also based on the experience of white, middle-class, heterosexual women at the expense of those who differed in some way from this category, be they indigenous, migrant, working-class, or lesbian women. Christian maternalism therefore was little different from the forms of maternalism that non-Christian women promoted. After the extension of the franchise to women, maternalism had appeared to provide a basis for cohesion in the women's

movement. Such a strategy was predicated upon an acceptance, rather than a thorough critique, of existing social inequities, such as the distinction of war service and served to reinforce, rather than to challenge existing stereotypes, such as those of race.

Needless to say, Christian maternalism, like secular maternalism, was gradually undone by the weight of its own internal contradictions. The notion of the “selfless helping the helpless” was not a just basis from which to seek to reduce social distinctions between women and to build a cohesive Australian society. The women’s liberation movement exposed the assumption of heterosexism. Indigenous and migrant women criticised the universal claims of both maternalism and the women’s liberation movement. Indigenous women have been particularly scathing of the way white Christian women have sought to “save” them, when all they appeared to be interested in was their own moral purity.

Access to the priestly role could serve to reinforce this problematic view of the “selfless helping the helpless”. Congregational women became a presence in priestly roles long before the advent of women’s liberation and viewed access to this role as a means of challenging the sources of women’s subordination in theology. Winifred Kiek in particular has left a clear account of her critique of the curse of Eve and her argument that women were emancipated through Mary’s motherhood. Her work provides an indication of the way Congregational women sought to extend their prophetic role in relation to the adverse impacts of war and poverty on women and children. Her use of racial stereotypes to support her critique, however, has served to limit her work.

The way Congregational women sought access to the priestly role on the basis of traditional responsibilities also confined their place within it. Congregational women

ministers accepted the task of promoting the ordination of women at the request of other denominations and the women's movement, thereby contributing, in part, to the expectation that women would advocate for the ministry of women, rather than such advocacy being the responsibility of the whole church. This was a double burden that Congregational women ministers endured and women ministers in the Uniting Church continue to suffer to some extent.

The Second World War provided Congregational women with further opportunity to extend the exercise of the prophetic and priestly role. They sought to provide a Christian maternalist perspective to the war effort through prayer, community service, and the attempt to gain access to the position of chaplain's assistant, which, despite the best efforts of Janet Barker, was not achieved. The war contributed to a feminine ecumenical consciousness that would form the basis of post-war activism among Christian women in the 1950s, particularly in relation to the threat of atomic warfare.

A central concern of Congregational women after the Second World War was to ensure that the liberty that they had experienced as women in Congregationalism was maintained in the Uniting Church. In Australia, where there was no established church and where division between the denominations had become a source of embarrassment for church leaders, Christians supported ecumenism with greater urgency than they did in other nations. Ecumenism symbolised the unity to which they believed all Christians were called by God, the wise stewardship of resources, and a central means by which Christians could influence wider society. An overwhelming majority of Australian Congregationalists voted to become part of the Uniting Church. During this process, Congregational women sought to provide a feminist perspective to the ecumenical movement and to influence the Uniting Church in order that it would contain the best

aspects of Congregational polity. The latter goal was realised and the Uniting Church accepted the ordination of women as a matter of policy.

Between 1919 and 1977, the position of the church in the community declined and became marginalised. As a result, the significance of the access of women to prophetic and priestly roles in Protestantism was reduced. From the late 1960s, the basis of the prophetic role, in the women's guilds, failed to appeal to younger generations of women. Those that sought to maintain a prophetic role in the church increasingly saw themselves caught between the church and the secular feminist movement, which assumed that the church was thoroughly patriarchal. Though the majority of Congregational women believed that women's liberation had been won with the entry of women into the ordained ministry, the viability of the ordained ministry is now seriously threatened. Only the community services arm of the church has grown, and access to it has been on the basis of secular social work qualifications, rather than access to the ordained ministry. It is unfortunate that Congregational women achieved access to prophetic and priestly roles in their church just as it was beginning to decline. Their influence remains dispersed throughout the community and their example can continue to teach lessons about the past.

Appendix 1

Numbers of Congregational Adherents, Australian States, 1881-1971

(The majority of Congregational Churches joined the Uniting Church in 1977).

Source: Colonial and Commonwealth Censuses.

YEAR	NSW	VIC	SA	QLD	WA	TAS
1881	14 328	19 878	9 908	4 764	1 262	n.a.
1891	24 112	22 110	11 882	8 571	1 573	4 501
1901	24 834	17 141	13 338	8 300	4 404	5 544
1911	22 655	16 484	13 357	10 445	6 203	4 880
1921	22 235	15 893	15 289	9 976	6 557	4 543
1933	20 274	12 458	13 836	8 669	5 961	3 963
1947	19 331	11 374	13 916	8 546	5 950	4 007
1954	21 280	11 922	15 650	9 086	6 844	4 425
1961	23 743	12 104	17 867	9 166	8 026	4 193
1966	23 017	11 820	12 288	9 949	8 375	4 530
1971	20 902	9 252	15 238	9 627	8 258	4 134

Appendix 2

Congregational adherents As a Proportion of Total Population, Australian States,
1881-1971 (percentages).

Source: Colonial and Commonwealth Censuses.

YEAR	NSW	VIC	SA	QLD	WA	TAS
1881	1.9	2.3	3.6	2.2	4.2	n.a.
1891	2.1	1.9	3.8	2.2	3.2	3.1
1901	1.8	1.4	3.7	1.7	2.4	3.2
1911	1.4	1.3	3.3	1.7	2.2	2.6
1921	1.1	1.0	3.1	1.3	2.0	2.1
1933	0.8	0.7	2.4	0.9	1.4	1.7
1947	0.6	0.6	2.2	0.8	1.2	1.6
1954	0.6	0.5	2.0	0.7	1.1	1.4
1961	0.6	0.4	1.8	0.6	1.1	1.2
1966	0.5	0.4	1.1	0.6	1.0	1.2
1971	0.5	0.3	1.3	0.5	0.8	1.1

Appendix 3

The first Australian and New Zealand women missionaries to serve in the LMS

Source: Joseph King, *Ten Decades: the Australian Centenary Story of the London Missionary Society* (London: LMS, c. 1895), p. 204.

Year	Missionary	Home	Posting
1889	Lois Cox	Adelaide	India
1890	Edith Goode	Adelaide	Peking, China
1891	Clara Goode	Adelaide	Peking, China
1891	Ethel Halley	Melbourne	Shanghai, China
1891	Miss Crouch	Hobart	Salem, South India
1892	Alice Rea	Sydney	Shanghai
1892	Miss Ardill	Sydney	Rarotonga, South Seas
1892	Miss Lodge	Hobart	Salem
1893	Miss Wells	Melbourne	Canton
1893	Miss Harband	Christchurch NZ	Madras

Appendix 4

Biographies of Congregational Women Ministers by Date of Ordination

Notes and Sources: The following biographies are drawn from a range of primary sources including local church records, Yearbooks of the Congregational Unions, the denominational newspapers, the candidates papers of the LMS, and G. Lindsay Lockley's Biographical Card Index of Congregational Ministers in Australia, 1798-1977, Uniting Church Archives, North Parramatta. The biographies also rely on and are intended to help to update the section relating to Congregational women ministers in the listing provided by Peter Bentley, "Women Ministers Before 1977", *Church Heritage*, vol. 10, no. 3, March 1998, pp. 161-174.

Winifred Kiek

Born: March 1884, Manchester

Church: Quaker became Congregationalist at time of marriage

Married: Edward Sidney Kiek (1883-1959) Principal Parkin College, SA. Ord.
1909

College: Parkin College, Adelaide, SA

Ordained: 13 June 1927, Colonel Light Gardens, SA

Distinctions: BA (Manchester), MA (Adelaide), BD (Melbourne College of Divinity)
Acting Chairman Congregational Union of South Australia 1944-45
Vice Chairman Congregational Union of South Australia 1948-1949
President Congregational Women's Association of Aus & NZ 1941-6

Ministry: Colonel Light Gardens, SA, 1921-33
Knoxville SA, 1938-1946

Publications: *Child Nature and Child Nurture* (London: RTS, n.d.)

Portrait: Knauerhase, *Winifred* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1978)
Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. 9, pp. 587-588

Death: 30 May 1975

Joan Mary Hore

- Born:** 12 August 1890, Bedford, England
- Church:** Davey Street Congregational Hobart
Mosman Congregational, NSW
- College:** Extra Mural Course, NSW
- Ordained:** 28 May 1931 Speers Point NSW
- Distinctions:** BA (Tasmania)
- Teaching:** Geography and Physiology, Girl's High School, Hobart, 5 years
English and History, Collegiate School, Hobart, 5 years
English and History, Redlands Collegiate School, Sydney, 5 years
- Ministry:** LMS Madras High School, Calcutta, India, 1924
LMS Speers Point NSW 1928-1932
Islington NSW 1931-1935
Mayfield West NSW 1934-1936
West Epping NSW 1936-1940
Devonport Tasmania 1942-46
Presbyterian Church North West Tasmania 1947-1955
- Portrait:** *Southern Congregationalist* September 1955
Congregational Union of NSW Yearbook, 1956, p. 14
- Death:** 20 July 1955

Additional Source: H J Gibbney and Ann G Smith, *A Biographical Register, 1788-1939: Notes from the name index of the ADB*, vol. I, A-K (1987), p. 344.

Kate Hilda Louise Hutley (nee Keen)

Born: 28 November 1887, Maidenhead, England

Married: Walter Hutley J.P., 22 May 1929, who died 13 February 1931

Church: Blackheath Congregational Church England (member January 1903)
Port Adelaide Congregational Church, SA

College: British schools, Maidenhead
Henley Fosdene Road Board School Carlton
1902-06 Student at Deptford Pupil Teacher's Centre half time
1902-06 half-time Teacher Glenister Road Infants School
East Greenwich
1906 University Matriculation French
1906-08 Homerton College, Cambridge, Government Teachers Diploma
1908-11 Creton Road Infants School, Camberwell
1911-12 Mary Datchelor Secondary Training College, Cambridge Dip.T.
1912-13 St Colm's Missionary Training College, Church of Scotland,
Edinburgh
1929-32 Parkin College, Adelaide

Ordained: 31 March 1932, Port Adelaide Congregational Church, SA

Distinctions: LTh Parkin 1931

Ministry: LMS Amoy China 1913-1929, 1932-1948
Devon Park SA, 1952-55

Death: 17 May 1976, Rose Park, SA

Alice Elizabeth Cochrane Jeavons (née Ferris)

Born: 24 February 1912

Married: 1944

Church: North Adelaide Congregational Church, SA from 1928

Taught Sunday School from 1936

School: North Adelaide State School, 1919-1926

Adelaide High School 1927-29

Chartres Business College Adelaide 1930-1932

Probationary Nursing September 1933 - June 1935

College: Parkin College 10 June 1935-37

Ordained: 15 November 1937

Distinctions: LTh (Melbourne College of Divinity) 1937

Ministry: LMS South India 1937-1940

Profile: LMS *Chronicle*, 1937, p. 206

Isabelle Elizabeth Merry

Born: 20 February 1907

Church: Collins Street Independent Church, Melbourne

College: Victorian Congregational College

Ordained: 19 December 1937, Croydon, Victoria

Distinctions: BA (Melbourne), OBE June 1976. Dip. Soc.

Delegate to the World Council of Churches Assembly, New Delhi, 1961

Ministry: Croydon and Croydon North, Victoria, 1937-45

W/S 1945-50, including Medical Social Work for the Victorian Society

for Victorian Society for Crippled Children and Adults, 1947-49

Hospital Chaplain, Royal Worcester Infirmary UK, 1949-1950

North Balwyn, Victoria, 1951-3

Hospital Chaplain, Queen Victoria Memorial, 1954-70

Chaplain and Social Worker, After Care Hospital, Collingwood, 1971-73

Chaplain and Social Worker, Association for the Blind, 1973-75

Croydon North, Victoria, 1975-77

Retired: 1977

Died: 20 May 2000

Additional Source: Phyllis Gorfine, phone conversation, 7 December 2004.

Gwendoline Estelle Hewett

Born: 24 January 1903

Church: Port Adelaide Congregational Church, SA from 1920

College: Parkin College, Adelaide, SA

Ordained: 10 June 1943, Devon Park, SA

Distinctions: LTh (Melbourne College of Divinity)

Ministry: LMS Amoy China, 1931-1940

Hindmarsh, SA, 1941-1943

Devon Park, SA, 1943-44

Bunbury, WA, 1946-1948

Loxton, SA, 1950

Salisbury, SA, 1950-1952

Encounter Bay, SA, 1954-62

Retired: 1962

Death: 26 March 1983

Lillian Ethel Hayman (nee Livingstone)

Born: 22 May 1914, Paddington, NSW

College: Camden College, Sydney, NSW

Married: Rev Charles Venton Hayman (1908-1989), Ordained 1934

Ordained: 1 July 1943, Allawah, NSW

Distinctions: BA (Sydney), Dip. Soc.

Vice-Chairman Congregational Union of New South Wales, 1957-8

Ministry: Allawah, NSW, 1943-51

Nursing, Kogarah and Waverley, 1952-53

Warden, Methodist Girl's Hostel, 1954-63

Warden of Women Students, Goldstein College, University of New

South Wales, 1964-74

Mosman, New South Wales (acting), 1975-81.

Retired: 1981

Lorna May Stanfield

Born: 21 May 1916

Church: Hobart Memorial Church, Tasmania

College: Parkin College, Adelaide, SA

Ordained: 25 October 1945, Memorial Church, Hobart

Ministry: Sorrell – Tasman Peninsular, Congregational Union of Tasmania,

1944-46

Central Churches Group, Birmingham, 1948-1951

Bournebrook, Birmingham, 1952-3

Wycliffe, Leicester, 1958-60

Bude, Cornwall, 1964-67

Retired: 1967

Hilda May Abba

- Born:** Birmingham, England
- College:** Camden College, Sydney
- Married:** Raymond Abba (1910-1987), who was ordained 1940, and appointed Principal, Camden College, Sydney, New South Wales.
- Ordained:** 8 October 1951, Pitt Street Church, New South Wales.
- Distinctions:** BA (Sheffield), BD (Melbourne College of Divinity), MACE, DHum.
- Ministry:** Honorary Tutor Camden College, Sydney, New South Wales,
1948-1955.
Balmain, 1953-55
UK, 1955-76
Hamptons, Victoria, 1977-80
Essendon, Victoria, 1981
Phillip Island - San Remo, Victoria, 1982-1987
- Retired:** 1987

Dorothy Ivy Wacker

(After leaving the ministry, Dorothy Wacker changed her name to Thea Rainbow and later to Thea Gaia).

Born: 9 February 1931, Gatton, Queensland

College: Cromwell College, Brisbane, Queensland

Ordained: 17 April 1959 Broadway, Woolloongabba, Queensland

Distinctions: President Congregational Youth Fellowship, 1950s

BA (Qld), BD (Melbourne College of Divinity)

President, Congregational Union of WA, 1973

Vice-President, Congregational Union of Australia, 1973-75

President-Elect, Congregational Union of Australia, 1975-77

Member of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 1975

President, Australian Church Women, 1976

Ministry: Mt Gravatt, Queensland, 1958

Broadway Belmont, Queensland, 1959-64

Director Christian Education, Queensland Congregational Union,
1965-68

Acting Secretary, Queensland Congregational Union, 1966-7

Chermside, Queensland, 1968-69

Applecross – Mt Pleasant, Western Australia, 1970-1975

Applecross – St Stephen's, Western Australia, 1975-77

Pilgrim Church, South Australia, 1977-1979

Resigned: 1980

Chaplain to Telecom, 1980

Portrait: *Notable Queenslanders*, 1975

Valerie Dinning

Church: North Perth Congregational Church, Western Australia

College: BD London (NEW) 1963

Ordained: 1963

Ministry: Heaton Way – Romford, 1963-8

Warwick Road, Coventry (Assistant minister), 1968-75

Thelma Osborne Murray

Born: 18 August 1907

College: Cromwell College, Brisbane, Queensland

Ordained: 22 March 1963, City Church, Brisbane

Distinctions: BA (Qld), BD (Melbourne College of Divinity)

Ministry: Presbyterian Deaconess from 1931

Park, South Brisbane, 1931-36

Home Missionary, Maleny, 1940-44

Toowoomba, St Stephens, 1945-47

Training: Sought ordination in the Presbyterian Church before training at
Cromwell

Ministry: Mt Gravatt, Queensland, 1959-61

Mt Gravatt – Manly, Queensland, 1961-66

Retired: 1966

Death: 8 September 1993

Corin Nyree Svenson

Born: 8 September 1924

College: Cromwell College, Brisbane, Queensland

Ordained: 2 January 1970, Yeronga, Queensland

Distinctions: LTh (Melbourne College of Divinity), BCom, BD, AEd (Qld)

Placements: Yeronga-Brighton Road, Queensland, 1970-1

Yeronga-Brighton Road – Coopers Plains, Queensland, 1971-3

Toowoomba, Queensland (Collegiate Ministry), 1973

Postgraduate study Clinical Pastoral Education in Melbourne, 1974

Chaplain, Dandenong High School, Victoria, 1975-78

Maryborough Uniting, Queensland, 1978-1983

Capricorn Coast, Queensland, 1983-1989

Retired: 31 December 1989

Elizabeth C McChesney-Clark (née Williams)

Born: 21 November 1918, Swinton, Scotland

Married: 20 October 1945 Joseph Arthur McChesney (1912-1969), Ordained 1940

Ordained: 8 March 1973, Eagle Junction, Queensland

Distinctions: MA (Cant.), Systematic Theology, Congregational Practice and Principles, Queensland Congregational College, 1970

Ministry: London Missionary Society, Papua New Guinea, 1946-1968

Eagle Junction, Queensland, 1969-1975

Redcliff, 1976-1980

Rockhampton, 1981-1983

Retired: 1984

Jillian Irene Wilkins

Born: 5 January 1940, Mitcham, South Australia

Church: Colonel Light Gardens Congregational Church, South Australia

Married: Rev Robert Arthur Wilkins, Henley Beach, South Australia

Divorced.

College: Parkin Wesley College, Adelaide, South Australia

Ordained: 28 April 1974, United Church of Christ, Bingham, Maine, USA

Distinctions: LTh (Melbourne College of Divinity) 1969, DipThS 1971, DipRE 1972

Ministry: Minister, United Church of Christ Bingham, Maine, USA, 1973-76

Area Director YMCA, Perth, Western Australia, 1977-8

Social Welfare Officer, Melville Council, 1979

Minister, United Church of Christ Freeport, Maine, USA, 1979-1980

St Pauls Uniting Church, Nedlands, Western Australia, 1981-84

Minister, United Church of Christ Wiscasset, USA, 1985

Minister, United Church of Christ Wilton, Maine, USA, 1986-1994

Minister United Church of Christ Bangor, Maine USA 1994-6

Chaplaincy Placement, UCA Homes, Western Australia, 1996-1998

Minister, United Church of Christ USA, E. Millinocket, 1999-2000

Mount Hawthorn Uniting Church, 2001-2002

Resourcing Local Mission team Synod Office Western Australia 2003

Melville Uniting Church, 2004

Retired: 6 January 2005

Linda May Loader

Born: 29 November 1921

College: Victorian Congregational College

Ordained: 7 February 1975, Church of All Nations, Carlton, Victoria

Distinctions: LTh, Dip.R.E. (Melbourne College of Divinity)

Ministry: Youth Leadership & Training Officer Congregational Union 1962-72

Teacher-Counsellor, Victoria, 1973-5

Heathcote Joint Parish, Victoria, 1975-6

Without Settlement, 1977

Wynyard, Tasmania, 1978

Retired: 1980

Death: 25 September 1982, South Australia

Appendix 5

Winifred Kiek Scholars

Source: Ruby Peake, *A History of Australian Church Women (SA Unit), Formerly Women's United Church Association, Women's Interchurch Council, Commemorating the Diamond Jubilee, 1939-1996* (Beverley, SA: Print Media, 1996), p. 71.

Year	Recipient	Origin/Home Country	Discipline
1965	Connie Tan	Indonesia	Social Work
1966	Sabita Swarup	Fiji	Secretarial
1967	Anna Basini	Papua New Guinea	YWCA worker
1968	Jacki Kini	Papua New Guinea	Teaching
1970	Veronika Kafa	Solomon Islands	Teaching
1971	Violet Sampa	Zambia	Christian Ministry
1972	Terani Aisake	Fiji	Deaconess
1973	Kalpara Airan	India	Teaching
1975	Mary Werne	Kenya	Social welfare
1976	Sarrah Ah You	Samoa	Community Development
1977	Jennifer Yeo Suan Phoon	Taiwan	Evangelism

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