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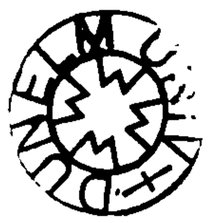
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'The Ministry of Song':

Unmarried British Women's Hymn Writing, 1760-1936

Nancy Jiwon Cho

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A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

to the Department of English Studies

Durham University

2007

1 1 JUN 2007

Declaration and Copyright

Declaration:

This thesis discusses British women's hymn writing in much greater detail than I was able to do in a 10,000-word thesis which formed part of an MA completed in September 2001 at King's College, London, and which briefly examined the work of Dora Greenwell, Anne Brontë and Frances Ridley Havergal. While some development of the discussion of hymns by Greenwell and Havergal is included, no part of this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

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List of Abbreviations

BCP	*Book of Common Prayer*
CIM	*China Inland Mission*
CMS	*Christian Missionary Society*
CEZMS	*Church of England Zenana Missionary Society*
DG	*Dora Greenwell*
DNB	*Dictionary of National Biography*
FRH	*Frances Ridley Havergal: Worcestershire Hymn Writer*
LHW	*Lady Hymn Writers*
MVGH	Maria Vernon Graham Havergal
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
RPC	*Regent's Park College*
RTS	*Religious Tract Society*
SPCK	*Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*
WHVE	*William Henry Venn Elliott*
YWCA	*Young Women's Christian Association*

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If, as I have been reliably informed, the process of a PhD can be likened to a pregnancy, only with a far longer gestation period, I have many people to thank for their help and care in the delivery of this thesis-baby.

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For my parents

Abstract

Because they were not obliged to take on the familial tasks which until recently have defined woman's role, unmarried British women of literary talent and Christian conviction have often seen themselves as being called to the vocation of hymn-writing. Through biographical study, historical contextualisation and close reading, this thesis examines hymns written by seven such writers, over the period 1760-1936.

Chapter 1 examines how Anne Steele's hymns gained entry into print, and came to be circulated and popular. It also demonstrates how the image of Steele as a sickly spinster perpetuated by the Victorian hymnologists is too limited a picture of the writer. Chapter 2 considers two labouring-class hymn writers, Susanna Harrison and Eliza Westbury, and shows how they were heavily influenced by the images and stylistic features of the earlier male hymn writers from the Evangelical tradition. Chapter 3 looks at Charlotte Elliott's writings, which were mostly for invalids, and considers how nineteenth-century Evangelicals often envisaged invalidism as a time for refinement of faith and spiritual action, and the 'cult of invalidism' is contextualised. Chapter 4 considers how the writings of Dora Greenwell championed the underprivileged, and envisaged the second coming of Christ as a time for the vanquishing of evil and injustice. Chapter 5 looks at the work of Frances Ridley Havergal, one of the most popular hymn writers of the Victorian era. It considers her Evangelical background, her interest in organisations which encouraged female fellowship and ministry (such as the YWCA, the Mildmay Deaconess Institution and the Zenana missionary organisations), and the transformation of her active faith into a more contemplative one after her experience of 'Consecration'. Chapter 6 examines the work and life of the Anglo-Indian hymn writer Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, and considers in further detail the opportunities offered to British women by the call for Zenana missionaries. Chapter 7 looks at the life and writings of Amy Carmichael, founder of the Dohnavur Fellowship, who spent most of her life working as a missionary in India. It shows how her hymns, which owe a debt to the Holiness Movement and its stress on the 'rest of faith', and were mostly written for Indian children, are an early example of Indian inculturation.

Introduction

In the Protestant British tradition, the hymn has been a literary medium of self-expression for women of faith from almost the beginning of its development as a vehicle for congregational worship. The contribution of women writers to British hymnody has been substantial and prominent; for instance, in 1863, the pioneer hymnologist Daniel Sedgwick's *Comprehensive Index of Names of Original Authors and Translators of Psalms and Hymns, with the Dates of their Various Works, Chiefly Collected from the Original* contained at least 232 women's names among a total list of 1,416 writers.[1] Sixteen per cent of the hymn writers known to Sedgwick, 'the foremost living English hymnologist of his time', were therefore women.[2] As a comparison, *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* (1861) edited by F. T. Palgrave included only four women. Joanna Russ has noted that only eight per cent of the writers in this work are women, and, perhaps more strikingly, that nearly a century later in 'Auden and Pearson's far less idiosyncratic *Poets of the English Language* [1952] [...] 5 percent of the authors listed are women.'[3] In this context, the impressive proportion of recognised women hymn writers relatively early in the history of British hymnody is extraordinary. However, in spite of the growth of interest in women's writing since the second half of the twentieth century, there has been hardly any discussion in English literary studies

---

[1] Daniel Sedgwick, *Comprehensive Index of Names of Original Authors and Translators of Psalms and Hymns, with the Dates of their Various Works, Chiefly Collected from the Original* (London: Daniel Sedgwick, 1863). I write 'at least' because some authors' names are only given with initials or without Christian names so it is not possible to tell their sex.

[2] *The Dictionary of Hymnology*, ed. John Julian (London: John Murray, 1925), pp. 1036-1037. Sedgwick reprinted some of the rarer hymn writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and was consulted for the first edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1861).

[3] The four women in Palgrave were: Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Jane Elliott, Lady Anne Lindsay, and Lady Carolina Nairne. Joanna Russ, *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (London: The Woman's Press, 1984), pp. 76-78.

about the long and prolific tradition of women's hymn writing that has existed in Britain since the eighteenth century. This thesis seeks to address this gap in women's literary history.

This introduction falls into two parts. The first section considers women's hymn writing within the established traditions of literary criticism, and why it has been neglected for so long, even in the context of 'gynocriticism': '[a] branch of feminist literary theory and studies which focuses on women as writers, as distinct from feminist criticism and evaluation of male writers.'[4] The second examines the place of women's hymn writing within the history of women, particularly in terms of the restrictions that existed regarding female ministry.

1. LITERARY CRITICISM

The Problem of the Genre

One reason for the neglect of women's hymn writing has been that the hymn in general has had the reputation of being 'a second-rate form of poetry'.[5] J. R. Watson has discussed the multi-layered difficulties of the English hymn as a subject for literary study:

> It is known as a verse species of some kind [...] limited in its aims and expressions, and disfigured by sentimentality, inflexible metres, self-congratulation, and religiosity. Its subject matter, and the fact that it is designed for singing in worship, have ensured that it has been regarded as a primarily religious and only marginally and accidentally as a part of literature.[6]

That it is 'designed for music' has meant that the hymn has often been considered more of a musical form than a literary one, even though the words were often written without

---

[4] J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, rev. C. E. Preston, 4th edn (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 370.
[5] David Cecil, introduction, *The Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, ed. David Cecil (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1940), p. xxvii.
[6] J. R. Watson, *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 1.

specific melodies in mind; because they were characteristically written in widely used metres, they could be sung to any number of appropriate tunes.[7] The 'primarily religious' nature of hymns has been another problem. Michael Wheeler suggested that 'For many critics in the modern, mainly secular world, religion is something of an embarrassment, and particularly Victorian religion in Victorian literature. The more strongly held the religious faith, the more violent can be the reaction against it'.[8] Hymns often display the kind of emotional fervour which makes modern critics uncomfortable.

However, some re-emergence of scholarly interest in hymnology has occurred in the past forty years led by critics such as Donald Davie, Lionel Adey and Susan Tamke.[9] In 1997, several studies were published which addressed the hymn as a subject for academic study: Ian Bradley's *Abide with Me: The World of Victorian Hymns*; Peter Newman Brooks's *Hymns as Homilies*; and J. R. Watson's *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study*. These studies assessed the significance of the hymn from a variety of cultural viewpoints including history, literature and theology. Specifically as literature, Davie and Watson have suggested that the regular metre and pattern of the form could be enabling rather than constraining: 'in the hands of a great hymn writer [...] they become an advantage rather than a handicap.'[10] In terms of women's hymn

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[7] This tradition goes back as far as the medieval period. Eleanor Hull and Robert Thornton both had copybooks which 'include a number of collections of songs and carols, almost never with music'. Andrew Taylor, 'Authors, Scribes, Patrons, and Books', in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and others (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), pp. 351-75 (p. 357).

[8] Michael Wheeler, *Heaven, Hell and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). p. 2.

[9] See Donald Davie's *Dissentient Voice: the Ward-Phillips Lectures for 1980 with Some Related Pieces* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, c. 1982); *Purity of Diction in English Verse* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967); *A Gathered Church: the Literature of the English Dissenting Interest, 1700-1930* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); and *The Eighteenth-Century Hymn in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Davie wrote about male hymn writers; there is one passing sentence about Anne Steele in *The Eighteenth-Century Hymn* (p. 5). See also Lionel Adey, *Hymns and the Christian 'Myth'* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), and *Class and Idol in the English Hymn* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988); and Susan Tamke, *Make A Joyful Noise Unto the Lord: Hymns as a Reflection of Victorian Social Attitudes* (Athens, Ohio: University of Ohio, 1978).

[10] J. R. Watson, 'Hymns and Literature: Form and Interpretation', *The Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland Bulletin*, 17 (2004), 126-132 (p. 126).

writing, Bradley's and Watson's books paid tribute to the significant work of British women's hymn writing and devoted some discussion to the phenomenon.[11] That their attention to women hymn writers has started to make an impact on literary studies is evident in the introduction to the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*'s volume on *Victorian Women Poets* (1999). Making specific reference to the work of Bradley and of Watson, William B. Thesing, the editor of the volume, writes that:

> Victorian women poets often wrote to glorify God, and *DLB 199* [the volume number] is notable for featuring women hymn writers. Because they were set to music and popular, the famous works [of women hymn writers] [...] in the past have been sometimes overlooked in discussions of the poetry of the era.[12]

Abide with Me and *The English Hymn* drew attention to the need for scholarly treatment of British women's hymn writing, but, because both projects were comprehensive studies of hymnology, they could only give overviews of the contribution of Victorian women hymn writers rather than in-depth analyses of the larger tradition of women's hymn writing. Some work has been done on American women's hymn writing by June Haddon Hobbs.[13] This thesis seeks to expand upon these critical beginnings, but, as the focus has tended to be on the male writers of the British tradition of hymnody, it is an aim to investigate the lesser-known literary history of the women on their own. At the same time, the place (and sometimes pre-eminence) of the male authors within the interpretive communities to which the women belonged will be demonstrated in individual cases.

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[11] A version of Watson's chapter on 'Victorian Women Hymn Writers' also appears under the title of 'Quiet Angels: Some Women Hymn Writers', in *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture: Reassessing the Angel in the House*, ed. Ann Hogan and Andrew Bradstock (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 128-144. Peter Newman Brooks's work also includes two chapters out of twelve on the hymns of women hymn writers (Charlotte Elliott's 'Just as I am' and Cecil Frances Alexander's 'There is a Green Hill Far Away'), but he does not comment on them as women's writing or ministry.

[12] William B. Thesing, *Victorian Women Poets* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1999), p. xvii.

[13] June Haddon Hobbs, *'I Sing for I Cannot be Silent': The Feminization of American Hymnody, 1870-1920* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997).

The Canon

Another problem of women's hymn writing has been the stigma of being dismissed by cynics as feminine accomplishment rather than serious literary endeavour. Even in feminist literary histories and anthologies, women's hymn writing has not normally been represented. For instance, Roger Lonsdale's impressive anthology *Eighteenth Century Women Poets* (1989) does not include Anne Steele (1717-1778), who published under the pseudonym 'Theodosia', despite the fact that she was the first major woman hymn writer, and a famous cultural figure of the eighteenth century; she was celebrated in a select list of distinguished women in Mary Scott's *The Female Advocate* (1774). Lonsdale includes two works entitled 'A Hymn' by Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674-1737) but makes no reference to the development of women's hymn writing during the eighteenth century.[14]

It has now been recognised that many feminist works have been, in the words of Margaret Ezell, 'constructed in general using the definitions of literary hierarchies found in the male canon -- poetry, drama, fiction'.[15] As women's literary activities were frequently different to those of men in history, owing to restricted access to formal education and the constraints of household and familial responsibilities, the forms of writing that were actually practised by women extended to texts such as letters and diaries, which have not so often been studied as literature, but which women developed into skilled arts of their own. Even with more accepted literary activities such as verse-

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[14] *Eighteenth Century Women Poets*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 45-51. Lonsdale includes seven poems by Elizabeth Tollett (1694-1754) who also wrote hymns but these are not represented in the collection.

[15] Margaret Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 11-40 and p. 44. The early groundbreaking feminist critical works, such as Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists From Brontë to Lessing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), focused only on women novelists and secular poets who wrote in more 'high brow' poetic genres.

writing, the types of poetry women wrote, for instance acrostics, ballads and children's verse, were often considered 'lowbrow' and not academic. The hymn may be considered a similar category of verse writing which was previously dismissed as an unliterary and feminine pastime, although obviously more serious because of its aim to glorify God.

Margaret Maison

Although the early studies and anthologies of women's writing did not include hymn writing, there is one essay which argues that it is a significant tradition of women's writing. Margaret Maison's essay '"Thine, Only Thine!" Women Hymn Writers in Britain, 1760-1835' (1986) was the first serious modern critical study on women's hymn writing. Her essay is an overview of the pre-Victorian tradition which scrutinises the conditions in which hymns were written, and the themes and tropes that emerge. She asserts that:

> [The hymn's] extraordinary popularity gave women welcome opportunities for authorship. Icy hostility to Christian ladies as writers melted in the sunshine of sacred song, and those three giants of eighteenth-century hymnology, Isaac Watts and the two Wesleys, John and Charles, all encouraged, influenced and were influenced by women hymn-writers and hymn-singers.[16]

One idea which Maison perpetuates in her essay is that Anne Steele is 'one of the brightest stars in the firmament of Baptist hymnody, hailed by the historians as the "mother" of English women hymn writers' (p. 14). Maison's discussion is framed by what was known of Steele's biography: a tragic story of lost love and disappointment. From such a reading, the other traits of women's hymn writing that emerge from Maison's analysis of Steele include: 'A sense of her own unworthiness, together with

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[16] Maison, '"Thine, Only Thine!" Women Hymn Writers in Britain, 1760-1835', in *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930*, ed. Gail Malmgreen (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 11-40 (p. 13). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

that deep consciousness of sin'; 'the vanity of human wishes'; outlooks on life 'influenced by her ill health, and by the sorrows and disappointments that she endured' (all p. 16); and a stress on the 'absence of illness in a [heavenly] future' (p. 19). Maison writes that Steele's hymns:

> echo the attractive simplicity, spontaneity and ardour of Watts and the Wesleys, with added notes of feminine sensitivity and introspection. The love and praise of God, the pleasures of the 'grateful rapture,' and the joys of a close personal relationship with Jesus Christ come across strongly. Christ is frequently addressed in the language of a lover [...]. But He is also the crucified Saviour, with 'bloody sweat, like drops of rain'. (p. 15)

The focus on a personal relationship with Christ and his crucifixion is an Evangelical trait; British Evangelicalism has been characterised by D. W. Bebbington as being defined by '*conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.'[17] Maison later makes a pertinent point related to the Evangelicals' privileging of Christ and his redemption of mankind upon the Cross:

> It is somewhat interesting that these Christian women, mourning and weeping in a vale of tears and enduring 'sorrow's discipline' so painfully, did not have more frequent recourse, in their hymns, if not in their lives, to the Holy Spirit, the acknowledged Comforter. (p. 31)

Maison gives examples of later women of the eighteenth century who also followed Steele's view of God as 'the supreme healer' (p. 19). Of this group, she writes about a 'longing to be dissolved' (p. 19) and asserts that 'many Christian women found the task of being "silent and submissive" a burdensome one, and fell more than half in love with easeful death, as the gateway not to oblivion but to paradise' (p. 24). Again,

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[17] D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 3.

in the context of frustrated and unhappy earthly lives, she writes that sublimated desire directed to Jesus as the perfect lover was another means of coping with the disappointments of life:

> The only satisfactory alternative, they found [to death], was to embrace Jesus, and female invalids and insomniacs welcomed Jesus to their bedsides, if not to their beds. Jesus as the Heavenly Bridegroom was a well-established figure in mystical tradition, and kissing the rod may have had subconscious erotic undertones. (p. 25)

Affective feeling and sensibility is another feature which Maison highlights. She quotes Anna Laetitia Barbauld's thoughts on the importance of using the language of love from her 'Thoughts on the Devotional Taste' (1775), an essay which pleads for energy and fervour to be renewed in psalm-singing:

> Love borrows the language of Devotion, for the votaries of that passion are fond of using those exaggerated expressions, which suit nothing below the divinity; and you can hardly address the greatest of all Beings in a strain of more profound adoration than the lover uses to the object of his attachment.[18]

For Barbauld, Maison writes, 'her ideal Christian was a Man of Feeling' (p. 21):

3. Blest is the man whose softening heart
   Feels all another's pain;
   To whom the supplicating eye
   Was never raised in vain.

4. Whose breast expands with generous warmth
   A stranger's woe's to feel;
   And bleeds in pity o'er a wound
   He wants the power to heal.[19]

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[18] Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *Devotional Pieces Compiled from the Psalms and the Book of Job: To Which Are Prefixed, Thoughts on the Devotional Taste, on Sects and on Establishments* (London: Johnson, 1775), p. 49. Cited in Maison, '"Thine, Only Thine!"', p. 20.

[19] 'Hymn IV', A. L. Aikin, *Poems* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1773), p. 121. Cited in Maison, '"Thine, Only Thine"', p. 21. Maison has left out from her quotation speech marks which open both verses; the original reads '"Blest is the man ...[]' and '"Whose breast [...]'.

Emotional empathy as means of being in solidarity with human suffering was important for many women who could not make more active responses owing to social restrictions.

Finally, Maison asserts that women's hymn writing is a tradition that needs to be understood as having been especially conditioned by female concerns:

> The pre-Victorian women hymn-writers had blazed a notable trail, aided by the spirit of ecumenism and romanticism, and the explorations of sensibility and introspection that sprang from the early Evangelical revival. Their work marks a significant break-through in women's writing.
>
> Often they wrote as women to women, about women's concerns and difficulties, their pains and problems, and their hopes and aspirations. They wrote, too, as laywomen and not as theologians. (pp. 36-37)

It is implicit that she believes a gynocritical approach sensitive to the themes and tropes of women's writing would be advantageous to the examination of women's hymn writing as a literary tradition.

Feminism(s)

It is likely that the ambivalent relationship of feminism(s) with the institution of the Church has been another factor in the neglect of women's hymn writing by early feminist literary historians.[20] Jacqueline De Vries has written that: 'Early leaders of British feminist history, particularly those specializing in the Victorian age, tended to view Christianity as a hopelessly patriarchal institution and a primary source of oppressive domestic ideology';[21] indeed, an example of the endurance of such thinking may be evidenced in Dorothy Mermin's statement made as recently as 1998 that:

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[20] For the purposes of this thesis, I will be differentiating between individual churches and the universal Church with the use of capitalisation to denote the latter.

[21] Jacqueline De Vries, 'Rediscovering Christianity after the Postmodern Turn', *Feminist Studies* 31 (2005), 135-155 (pp. 135-6).

> Christianity provided [nineteenth century women writers] with subject matter, justification and authority for many kinds of writing, but almost always at the price of accepting their inferiority to men and restricting their imaginative and intellectual scope.[22]

She expands further that:

> For most women, [...] religion was not just a way to enter literature, but a stopping place. Hymn writing was open to women, as it had been in the eighteenth century, and could enable them to reach large audiences, but devotional poetry of every sort had fallen into a minor if popular mode. [...] Their [women's] poetic expressions of faith, by replicating the childlike submissiveness that was expected of them anyway, are apt to seem somewhat flat, since they lack the tension between the strength and independence men are presumed to possess and the devotional poet's humility before God.[23]

Within this context, it is perhaps not surprising that the most recent critical discussion of women's hymn writing has been initiated by male scholars. However, an overview of the multifarious strands of feminisms, each prioritising and focussing on a specific type of female oppression and experience, will throw light on how different feminists may have perceived women's hymn writing.

As Fiona Tolan has observed, 'feminism can no longer be accurately described as a theory -- implying a single and coherent trajectory of thought -- rather, feminism should be understood as a discourse: a discussion of multiple related ideas.'[24] Feminisms have developed which link the experience of female subjugation with other forms of social and cultural oppression. These feminist discourses include black feminism or 'womanism'[25] pertaining to the oppression that has been imposed on

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[22] Dorothy Mermin, *Godiva's Ride: Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. xvii.
[23] Mermin, *Godiva's Ride*, pp. 113-4.
[24] Fiona Tolan, 'Feminisms', in *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Patricia Waugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 319-39 (p. 319).
[25] Maggie Humm writes that womanism 'now implies Black feminism although in the nineteenth century it referred to those who supported women's rights. [...] Alice Walker provides a full account of womanism in *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens* (1983). She argues that womanism is not separatism, and that it derives from the expression Black mothers use with female children as in "you acting womanish", that is like a woman or courageously and seriously. Walker outlines four features of womanism: Black feminism; wom[e]n who love

grounds of 'race' as well as gender; lesbian feminism which considers the experience of homosexual women; and Marxist feminism which prioritises the role of class. In these different manifestations of feminisms, it is evident that certain women, most obviously the white middle-class female (the category into which most British women hymn writers fall), could participate in and maintain the oppression of other women. One effect of Marxism on critical attitudes to women and religion has been Amy Newman's arguement that western feminisms' negative attitudes to women and religion have been entrenched in an unquestioned acceptance of Marx's critique of religion.[26]

Another strand of feminism to be considered is 'French feminism'. Feminism in Britain and America grew out of the Civil Rights Movement and socialist politics, and saw the attainment of equal rights as a feminist goal. In France, it developed from a philosophical tradition. Thus, its perspectives on the debates of second-wave feminism were often different. Its influence in America and Britain gained momentum from the publication of Elaine Marks's and Isabelle de Courtivron's *New French Feminisms* (1980), an anthology of translations covering the work of major French feminists including Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous.

One 'French feminist' project has been *écriture féminine*. *Écriture féminine* describes a mode of writing which is more indicative of female consciousness and sexuality. The Logos, linear language, is seen as phallic and unified. As an alternative, Julia Kristeva describes a writing that is 'anti-phallic', circular and uncontained. Both Kristeva and Cixous suggest that such writing may be appropriated by either sex.[27]

Hymn writing with its particular constraints of metre and form may not be considered

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other women sexually or nonsexually and appreciate and prefer women's culture, emotions and strength; women who love music, dance and themselves; and "womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender" (Walker, 1983, p. xi).' Cited in Maggie Humm, *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, *c.*1990), p. 241.

[26] Amy Newman, 'Feminist Social Criticism and Marx's Theory of Religion', *Hypatia*, 9 (1994), 15-37 (p. 29).

[27] A man does not have to write using phallogocentric language. Kristeva, for instance, sees James Joyce's subversive, experimental language in *Ulysses* as being anti-phallogocentric.

an obvious form of interest to advocates of *écriture féminine*. However, a case may be made on other grounds. Women's hymn-writing engages with a tradition of female spiritual discourse that has existed in Europe since medieval times. Of this tradition, Irigaray has stated that 'This is the only place in the history of the West in which woman speaks and acts so publicly'.[28] She suggests that women's spiritual discourse is a female space for the subversion of oppressive phallogocentrism. Additionally, Cixous has written that 'A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive.'[29] Although women's hymn writing may appear at first glance to be conservative and upholding patriarchal values which have oppressed women, there often exists a subversive layer beneath the conventional surface, as noted by Isobel Armstrong about Victorian women's poetry in general:

> The doubleness of women's poetry comes from its ostensible adoption of an affective mode, often simple, often pious, often conventional. But those conventions are subjected to the investigation, questioned, or used for unexpected purposes. The more simple the surface of the poem, the more likely it is that a second more difficult poem will exist beneath it.[30]

Thus, a female-authored hymn, seemingly conventional in its piety, has the potential to protest against masculinist society's restrictions on the female sex. Elizabeth Cosnett has observed such a difficult under-layer in the final verse of 'A Christmas Carol' by Christina Rossetti:

5. What can I give him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man
I could do my part;

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[28] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 191.
[29] Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture*, 1 (1976), 875-893 (p. 888).
[30] Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 324.

> Yet what I can I give him --
> Give my heart.[31]

Cosnett writes that the symbols of the shepherd, lamb and wise man may bear additional meanings for women which are poignantly related to their secular experience. Her comment is gently devastating:

> If we see the shepherd as someone with a trade or profession who can offer to Christ the material fruit of his daily work and the wise man as someone whose access to education gives him a role in society, and if we also remind ourselves that when a woman wrote these words women were largely excluded from the professions and from higher education, then we reach a statement that might have a special meaning [...].
>
> Looking at in this way the ambiguity of the last two lines becomes evident. They may be consoling and mean something like 'Despite my spiritual poverty I can still offer to Jesus the one thing he really wants', or they can imply much more self-doubt, 'All I can offer you is my heart in a world that privileges the mind'. [...] Christina Rossetti, although not literally poor, was a highly intelligent person who had literary ambitions from an early age and who was educated at home by her mother whereas her brothers were sent to school and then to art school. We seem to have here an unusual example of someone writing in general terms of accepted piety but also, whether consciously or not, more specifically as a woman and as a rebel or at least a protester against some of the contemporary implications of that piety.[32]

The insight that critical exploration of conventional piety might give to the experiences of women in history is becoming recognised by feminist scholars. As De Vries has observed, the climate has recently changed in feminist studies so that that the history of women and Christianity is becoming a more acceptable, even fashionable, field for feminist study:

> Over the last decade and a half, [...] feminist analysis has shifted away from paradigms emphasizing victimization and oppression above all else, opening up

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[31] Christina Rossetti, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Betty S. Flowers (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 210. Rossetti will not be discussed in detail in this thesis because I wish to reclaim the writings of more neglected women hymn writers. The British Library catalogue gives 243 entries for works with 'Christina Rossetti' in the titles alone.

[32] Elizabeth Cosnett, 'A (Female) Bookworm Reads Some Hymns', *The Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland Bulletin* 205, 14 (1995), 172-184 (p. 178).

> possibilities for less reactionary, more nuanced assessments of religion and its relationship to women's roles, self-definitions, and emancipation.[33]

Gender Theory

In recent decades, gender studies has developed as another discipline to throw light on women's writing and literary criticism. Literature departments are now often as likely to offer courses on masculinity/ties as much as on feminism(s). This development is partly owing to the influential work of Judith Butler. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler took Simone de Beauvoir's famous opening statement from *The Second Sex* (1949) that 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman', and developed a thesis about the adaptability and construction of gender behaviour. Butler claimed that masculine and feminine, as two binary and mutually defining positions, were artificial constructs sustained by a society that had imposed heterosexuality. Quoting from Esther Newton's *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (1979) a study of transvestism in America, she demonstrated that gendered behaviour was performed and fluid:

> At its most complex, [drag] is a double inversion that says, 'appearance is an illusion.' Drag says 'my "outside" appearance is feminine, but my essence "inside" [the body] is masculine.' At the same time, it symbolizes the opposite inversion; 'my appearance "outside" [my body, my gender] is masculine but my essence "inside" is feminine'.[34]

By challenging gender norms and rejecting the qualities traditionally allocated to a biological sex, binary gender categories could be deconstructed making numerous gender 'positions' possible.[35]

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[33] De Vries, 'Rediscovering Christianity', p. 137. Although the statements of Mermin in her *Godiva's Ride* (1998) show that the old prejudices also still prevail.

[34] Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (Chicago; London: Chicago University Press, 1972), cited in Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York; London: Routledge, 1990), p. 137.

[35] The issue of deconstructing gender binaries has been addressed by male writers as well as by women; notably, Brian Wren in *What Language Shall I Borrow? God-talk in Worship: a Male Response to Feminist Theology* (London: SCM, 1989). Wren has challenged the dominance of masculine imagery and has re-written many old hymns in a more gender-sensitive language. See Brian Wren, *Faith Looking Forward: the Hymns*

Hymn writing is a genre where the writer may construct a masculine or feminine subjectivity, especially when gender-specific biblical roles are taken on. For instance, Charlotte Elliott's 'Advent Hymn' draws on The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25. 1-13). The Church, waiting in anticipation for the coming of Christ, is gendered as female; this is in keeping with the image of the Church as the Bride. However, any men singing or reading this hymn are also putting on female subjectivities:

> 4. My soul! look well to *thine* attire;
> Hast *thou* thy wedding garment on?
> Is it thy one supreme desire
> The Bridegroom's face to look upon?
> Soon will the bridal pomp draw nigh,
> Bright winged precursors soon will cry,
> "Behold the Bridegroom cometh!"[36]

Male singers/readers of the hymn are being sexualised into the role of the bride who is in the passive (traditionally feminine) position of waiting for her coming (and therefore active) husband.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALISATION

How Significant is Women's Hymn Writing?

Unlike other neglected poetic forms, such as acrostics, which were normally circulated within the limits of family and friends, hymns, if they were successful, could enjoy an extensive circulation not only nationally but also internationally. Hymns became fashionable and popular through stages of gradually widening circles. First, the hymn would be printed and circulated among (and by) friends and family in leaflets,

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and Songs of Brian Wren (Carol Stream: Hope Publishing, *c.*1983); and *Faith Renewed: 33 Hymns Re-issued and Revised* (Carol Stream: Hope Publishing, *c.*1995).

[36] Charlotte Elliott, *Thoughts in Verse on Sacred Subjects* (London: William Hunt, 1871), p. 2.

broadsheets, pamphlets, or postcards.[37] (Some publishers specialised in this trade; Frances Ridley Havergal published her leaflets with Parlane, see figures 1 and 2).



Figures 1 and 2

Afterwards, they would often be published in books of the author's works; then, they would be included in hymnbooks such as *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and *Church Hymns*; and then they could be disseminated by missionaries to the British Empire and beyond. The explosion of cheap print at the end of the nineteenth century with the introduction of monotype and linotype presses would have helped circulation also. Another route for international success was by the export of popular British hymn books. In 1792, the demand for John Rippon's *A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors Intended to be an Appendix to Dr Watts's Psalms and Hymns* (1787), which contained fifty-four hymns by Anne Steele, was so high that two unauthorized editions were printed.[38]

During the nineteenth century, hymns were everywhere. Ian Bradley has noted that they appeared 'on postcards and tombstones, on framed posters to be hung at home

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[37] For more on print culture, see Margaret Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
[38] Kenneth W. Manley, 'John Rippon, D. D., (1751-1863) and the Particular Baptis ts' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1967), p. 190.

and in school reading books. Their tunes were played by brass organs and barrel organs and formed the largest single category of subject matter for pianola rolls'.[39] Such was the extent of their pervasiveness in Victorian society that Susan Tamke has said that:

> It seems indisputable that quantitively the effect of hymns on the Victorian public was more profound than the literary works which traditionally have been mined so assiduously by cultural historians. In sheer volume the writing of hymns outweighed the writing of poetry in the nineteenth century. More important, the people who were affected by hymns far outnumber those who were affected by poetry.[40]

Hymns could be read in almost any setting for many different uses: in the closet for personal contemplation, in the hospital bed for consolation, at school for moral edification, or at churches, chapels and meeting halls as public worship. A good hymn could be used interdenominationally as well as in 'high' and 'low' Anglican churches. As Margaret Maison has asserted, 'Their extraordinary popularity gave women welcome opportunities for authorship' (p. 13), and hundreds of women from throughout the British Isles came to write hymns.

Mrs Pitman's 'Lady Hymn Writers' and the First Appraisal of the Tradition

In 1892, 121 women hymn writers were celebrated in a book entitled *Lady Hymn Writers* by Mrs Emma Raymond Pitman. This was the first wide-ranging appraisal of the tradition of women's hymn writing. It contains sixteen chapters of varying lengths with such titles as: 'Hymn Writers for the Sanctuary', 'Minor Hymn Writers', 'Hymn Writers for the Quiet Hour', 'Writers of Children's Hymns', 'Queenly and Noble Hymn Writers' and 'Translators of Hymns'. Each chapter contains a selection of women writers, each with a brief biographical sketch and an example or two of their hymns.

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[39] Ian Bradley, *Abide with Me: The World of Victorian Hymns* (London: SCM, 1997), pp. xiii-xiv.
[40] Tamke, *Make a Joyful Noise*, p. 2.

The biographical nature of the work may be connected to the growth of interest in the sanctified lives of hymn writers during the second half of the nineteenth century; as Candy Gunther Brown has observed:

> By the 1860s, as an expanding market threatened to depersonalize relationships between writers and readers, evangelicals turned their attention to history and biography [...] to restore intimacy among participants in a textually defined community. Writing in 1869, the Presbyterian minister James Murray voiced a widely held view that 'the personal histories of all hymn-writers should be most deeply studied if we would have their hymns affect us most profoundly.' Singers felt better able to understand the meanings of hymn language when they could identify with the experiences that led authors to compose their texts.[41]

As valuable as Pitman's work is in providing such a lengthy list of female hymn writers, as well as some biographical material about them all, it is a work which was shaped by the assumptions of her time about women, or rather 'ladies'.

Pitman's chapter titles replicate the dominant Victorian idea that women belonged inside the home, a place which Ruskin identified in his famous lecture 'Of Queens' Gardens' (1864) as, 'the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division.'[42] This beatified place of peace was said to be carried around like a wafting fragrance by the eternal female: 'And wherever a true wife comes, this home is always around her. The stars only may be over her head [...] but home is yet wherever she is; and for a noble woman it stretches far round her'.[43]

Pitman's chapter on 'Writers of Children's Hymns' also reflects contemporary ideas about women's relationships with children. By the end of the nineteenth century,

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[41] Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 240. Quotation from James O. Murray, *Christian Hymnology: A Sermon Preached in the Brick Church, New York, December 12, 1869*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1870), p. 39. This comment is made in the context of American Evangelicalism, but the fact that Daniel Sedgwick's republications of the works of eighteenth-century writers, such as *Hymns and Sacred Poems on a Variety of Divine Subjects. By Augustus Toplady* (1860), and *Hymns, Psalms and Poems. By Anne Steele* (1863), contained biographical sketches suggests that Brown's point is also applicable to British culture.
[42] John Ruskin, 'Of Queens' Gardens' in *Sesame and Lilies: Two Lectures delivered at Manchester in 1864*, reprint (London: George Allen, 1905), p. 137.
[43] Ruskin, 'Of Queens' Gardens', pp. 137-8.

the significant and pioneering contribution of women's hymn writing for children was recognised in British culture. Ian Bradley has noted that among Victorian hymns, the proportion written by women were in some categories, such as hymns for children and Sunday School, much higher than those by men: 'There were few walks of life in which the contribution made by women was so prominent, or so openly acknowledged'.[44] It seems to have been believed that women's success in writing for children was a result of an innate affinity between women and children emanating from the female capacity for motherhood. Pitman writes, 'Women---and especially women who were mothers---have excelled in the art of writing hymns for children. Somehow it needs mother-love to interpret divine love to the little ones.'[45] There is also perhaps a further implication that women are capable of communicating better with children because they possess, again in the words of Ruskin, a 'majestic childishness, which is still full of change and promise'.[46] The suggestion is that women are malleable and not yet fully formed, like innocent children.

Another idea which Pitman's work perpetuates is that women hymn writers were refined in faith through suffering. In her chapter on 'Hymn Writers for the Quiet Hour', she wrote of some women who:

> write for the most part for sick and suffering ones, for sad and weary workers, for broken-hearted penitents, and for bereaved, trembling mourners. In all their poetry may be found touches of pathos, evidently wrung from the heart's deepest experiences, scraps of spiritual autobiography, and many snatches of "songs in the night". (p. 246)

Such writers are responsive to emotional and physical pain because of their own painful experiences. Those interpreted as having been refined through suffering include Anne

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[44] Bradley, *Abide with Me*, p. 90.
[45] E. R. Pitman, *Lady Hymn Writers* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1892), pp. 281-2. Further references are given in quotations after the quotations in the text.
[46] Ruskin, 'Of Queens' Gardens', p. 143.

Steele who 'was certainly kept humble by her many sufferings' (p. 70); Charlotte Elliott who 'learned in suffering what she taught in song' (p. 83); Mary Shekleton who 'from her sofa, influenced many and many a heart by her poems and other quiet ministries of love' (p. 166); and Frances Ridley Havergal whose 'many sharp attacks of illness [...] were made means, in God's hand, of increasing her own spiritual life and her usefulness to others' (p. 74). Pitman's interpretation is, as she explains in her section on Jeanette Threlfall, that emotional and physical pain provides authority of experience to write consolatory hymns for the sick and sorrowing:

> It almost seems as if some hymn writers were permitted---indeed appointed--- to suffer nights of pain and days of languishing that they might know how to write such hymns and poems as would comfort others in like circumstances. Nobody in the full flush of health, ignorant of what was meant by pain and weakness, could write thus. (p. 168)

Pitman was a religious writer interested in exemplary Christian women.[47] The hymns chosen by her as samples of her writers' works function to support biblically-prescribed feminine ideals of being. The first hymn by a woman in the volume is one by Anne Steele, which is described as 'one of our sweetest hymns on resignation [to God's will]' (p. 68) in the face of earthly suffering. The hymn seems to be praised implicitly because it illustrates obedience to St Paul's and St Peter's instructions that women should be submissive (I Timothy 2. 11 and I Peter 3. 1). Endurance in suffering is admired again in the biographical sketch of Madame Guyon (1648-1717), a leader of the Quietist Movement in France.[48] Pitman writes that, despite suffering in a difficult

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[47] Her other works include: *Vestina's Martyrdom: A Story of the Catacombs* (London: [n. pub.], 1869); *The Women of All Lands for Jesus: Heroines of the Mission Field* (London: Cassell, [1880]); *Mission Life in Greece and Palestine: Memorials of Mary B. Burton etc.* (London: Cassell, [1881]).

[48] Quietism was a seventeenth-century movement emphasising passivity and the 'prayer of quiet' before God. Guyon 'was the only Catholic woman hymn writer widely acclaimed in eighteenth-century Britain. [...] British Protestants of all varieties applauded this "truly pious" soul': Maison, '"Thine, Only Thine!"', p. 25.

marriage to an irreligious man and living with 'an imperious and quarrelsome' mother-in-law, Guyon's 'religious principles led her to *submit quietly and uncomplainingly* [my italics]' (p. 125).

Of 'Another Year is Dawning', one of the hymns chosen to illustrate Frances Ridley Havergal's writings, Pitman gives the verdict that is it is 'both plaintive and trustful' (p. 77). The suggestion is that the hymn was written by an author who was broken in spirit, and yet trusting like a child. An examination of the verses reveals that while it is certainly 'trusting', it is far from 'plaintive'. In fact, it is a triumphant and energetic hymn:

4. Another year of progress,
Another year of praise;
Another year of proving
Thy presence 'all the days'.

5. Another year of service,
Of witness for Thy love;
Another year of training
For holier work above.

6. Another year is dawning,
Dear Master, let it be,
On earth, or else in heaven,
Another year for Thee![49]

Havergal's hymn communicates confidence and assurance in faith but Pitman, who favours the syndrome of the plaintive, mild and weak woman hymn writer, is trying to make Havergal conform to this model. Pitman's interpretation reinforces the idea that women are meek and receptive as members of the Church rather than the forceful and active dispensers of God's words and will. She repeatedly constructs this picture of the meek, childlike woman hymn writer; for instance, of Anna Laetitia Waring's hymns,

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[49] Frances Ridley Havergal, *The Poetical Works of Frances Ridley Havergal* (London: Nisbet, [c.1880]), p. 386.

she suggests that dependency is a key characteristic: 'It is difficult to read them without being profoundly touched by their expressions of loving, childlike confidence in that guiding Hand which yet we cannot see' (p. 82).

Words like 'tender', 'touched' and 'loving' are repeated throughout *Lady Hymn Writers*. Elizabeth C. D. Clephane's 'There were ninety and nine that safely lay' is described as 'like most of the hymns that come from the heart of a woman--tender, touching, and true' (p. 162). The implication is that women's hearts are especially soft (perhaps because, in terms of dominant Victorian ideology, they are sheltered in the sanctity of the home away from the harshness of life in the public sphere) and are therefore especially responsive in feeling and sensitive to others' needs. For Pitman, the childlike (innocent and malleable) and motherly (tender and caring) characteristics of women hymn writers enable them to offer pure love and reassuring comfort to others. Her language reflects this belief; Charlotte Elliott's poem 'Paternal Chastening' is described as 'a gem of comfort' (p. 92).

Pitman's depiction of the woman hymn writer as a gentle, submissive, physically frail, and morally pure 'lady' corresponds with the ideological construction of 'spiritual womanhood', or the 'Cult of True Womanhood', which stands at the opposite end of the spectrum to the 'New Woman' who was becoming the subject of cultural anxiety at the time of the publication of *Lady Hymn Writers* (1892).[50] Indeed, her chapter on 'Queenly and Noble Hymn Writers' harks back to an earlier Victorian category of feminine ideal being, such as elaborated by Ruskin in his 'Of Queens'

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[50] Jenny Daggers writes that 'The linking of women with superior moral qualities is the defining characteristic of spiritual womanhood as vehicle for the civilising mission': 'The Victorian Female Civilising Mission and Women's Aspirations towards Priesthood in the Church of England', *Women's History Review*, 10 (2001), 651- 670 (p. 652). For more on the development of the ideal of the selfless and chaste true woman see Marlene LeGates, 'The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 10 (1976-1977), 21-39.

Gardens' (1865).[51] While Pitman's book may be considered feminist in terms of its celebration of the achievements of women hymn writers, the implication is that they are to be admired and emulated most for their 'ladylike' qualities which accord with traditional models of feminine exemplarity. *Lady Hymn Writers* may have been participating in a conservative backlash against the figure of the New Woman whose presence was being increasingly felt at the *fin de siècle*. As many of the qualities praised by Pitman came to be seen as oppressive and limiting negative stereotypes by first- and second-wave feminists, the image of the woman hymn writer constructed into a model of hyper-femininity and selflessness may have been a factor in the neglect of women's hymn writing by feminist literary historians.

The Place of Women in Religion

Women's roles in the Church have historically been restricted in accordance with certain texts from the Pentateuch and Pauline epistles which were applied to propose that women were subordinate to men; as such, women were excluded from taking priestly office and from preaching and teaching theology. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, some anxiety was developing owing to the fact that, in the words of Charles Booth, 'the female sex forms the mainstay of every religious assembly of whatever class'.[52] In 1919, a committee into the ministry of women appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury acknowledged the 'extraordinary amount of good work [...] achieved by women' since 1860:

> under the different heads of district visiting, Sunday-School teaching, Church music, parochial clubs, missionary societies, study circles, rescue and

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[51] Nina Auerbach says of the Victorian cultural imagination: 'Actual queens and queenly women proliferate in literature and art'. *The Woman and the Demon: A Life of a Victorian Myth* (London; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 36.

[52] Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London. Third Series: Religious Influences*, 2nd edn, 17 vols (London: Macmillan, 1902), VII, p. 424.

> preventative agencies, besides the larger organizations represented by the Sisterhoods and Deaconess Institutions, by the Girls' Friendly Society and the Mothers' Union. [...] [Added to these, the accomplishments of] hundreds [...] of wives, widows and daughters of clergymen, and of single women, who in obscurity have dedicated their lives and their own substance to the promotion of the Kingdom of God in our own country and in heathen lands.[53]

It was acknowledged that women had a significant part to play in the Church, but it is evident that the roles admired in the list above are supportive and secondary. Although 'the mainstay' of church congregations, they were frequently perceived as passive and receptive audiences barred from the active space of the altar and the pulpit. 'Waiting', a hymn by Anna Montague, articulated this position clearly. As J. R. Watson has explained:

> The woman stands by the master's vineyard, longing to go in and work; as she turns to enter, she meets the 'Master', who tells her
>
> 'Daughter,
> I know thy longing heart
> In the toil of my laden vineyard,
> Is eager to bear a part.'
>
> The master tells her that her duty is to do 'no active labour'. She is to stay in her cottage and 'sit with folded hands', so that the hymn ends by adapting Milton for the condition of women --
>
> They also serve who patiently
> But fold their hands, and *wait*.[54]

Indeed, the forms of women's ministerial activity which were acknowledged were those in which power was limited to ministering to the weak and helpless: children, the

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[53] [No author], *The Ministry of Women: A Report by a Committee Appointed by His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury* (London: SPCK, 1919), p. 22.
[54] J. R. Watson, 'Quiet Angels', p. 131. Montague's 'Waiting' is included in Pitman, *LHW*, pp. 158-160. Watson is referring is to the final line of John Milton's 'On His Blindness': 'They also serve who only stand and wait.' *Literature Online*, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/searchFulltext.do?id=Z300440729&divLevel=3&queryId=../session/1165872380_22561&trailId=10ED8E9EFED&area=Poetry&forward=textsFT&warn=Yes&size=2Kb> [accessed 10.12.2006].

sick and the poor. Women are constructed as selfless spiritual regenerators of society.

As Elisabeth Jay has noted:

> Religion, congregations were told, was a matter of individual conviction, but it was not a thing apart from daily life: it was imbibed and practised in the context of social relationship and institutional framework. This tension between the inner life of the spirit and the cultural expectation was felt particularly acutely by women whose very being was frequently described in relational terms.[55]

For those with literary talents and aspirations, 'Religion offered', as Joanne Shattock has observed, 'an alternative network to women who were excluded from masculine literary circles and contacts' (p. 6). Hymn writing became a socially acceptable literary and religious practice for women. It was viewed as 'ladylike', as Pitman's title, *Lady Hymn Writers*, demonstrates. The Victorians often differentiated between (forceful, male) 'poets' and (gentle, lady) 'poetesses', and hymns seem to have been perceived as an especially feminine and inoffensive form of women's writing. As Elisabeth Jay has noted, it was easier for women writers to publish religious verse than prose during the nineteenth century:

> The manuscripts of notable women writers of the period [the nineteenth century] leave us in no doubt that they indulged in theological speculation, but finding a public voice was harder. A late nineteenth-century survey book, *Religious Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, devoted only 8 of its 396 pages to women's contributions. Macmillan was happy to publish Christina Rossetti's poetry but not so willing to put out her books of devotional, moral and exegetical reflection on biblical texts and Church offices.[56] (p. 256)

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[55] Elisabeth Jay, 'Women Writers and Religion: "A Self Worth Saving, a Duty Worth Doing and a Voice Worth Raising"', in *Women and Writing in Britain, 1800-1900*, ed. Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 251-74 (p. 253). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

[56] P. J. Hunt, *Religious Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Gibbings, 1896). He included Hannah More, Sara Hennell, Francis Power Cobbe and Harriet Martineau. See Jan Marsh, *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Biography* (London: Pimlico, 1994), pp. 267-9 and pp. 450-4. Jay writes that 'Despite Rossetti's disguising the genre by the inclusion of poetry, and being at pains to emphasise "the second-hand nature" of her scholarship and rebut the slur of "a reputation for prevalent originality" ('The Key to My Book', *Called to be Saints: The Minor Festivals Devotionally Studied* (London: SPCK, 1895), p. xiii), these works were, nonetheless, theological': 'Women Writers and Religion', p. 271.

One reason why nineteenth-century women's religious verse penetrated print culture when their prose did not may be found in Cynthia Scheinberg's assertion that John Keble's refutation of the idea of 'the poet as prophet' in favour of the vision of poet as 'handmaid of poetry' enabled women to claim a poetic identity more easily.[57] As Emma Francis has further elucidated:

> Keble's notions of modesty, indirection, concealment and 'shame' as the currency and essence of poetry granted to women poets [...,] dovetailed with the work of explicit articulation of the cultural 'mission' of the woman poet [...], women poets and their critics maintained a strong conviction of the moral and social importance of women's poetry. [... T]he argument is that women's poetry enacts a socially enobling performance of virtues of the private sphere inside the public sphere.[58]

The high purpose of hymn writing (to express worship and glorify God) meant that the activity could be defended as being weighty and important. It could thus avoid accusations of being a trivial or capricious pursuit. For serious-minded, religious women, it gave space in which to share the education of their inner lives.[59] In the patriarchal institution of the Church where opportunities for women's work were limited in accordance with several much-quoted passages from the scriptures, women's hymn writing offered a means for some religious women to offer their services for the glory of God. It was a genre that was thus both conservative and radical: endorsed by the Church as an appropriately feminine activity, and yet exceptionally close to both preaching and teaching. As Jenny Daggers observes:

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[57] Scheinberg, *Women's Poetry and Religion in Victorian England*, pp. 18-19. She notes from G. Tennyson-Turner's *Victorian Devotional Poetry* that Keble's *Christian Year* (1827), 'a book of poetry constructed specifically along his own literary principles', was the most popular poetry book of the Victorian age. See p. 19 and note 14 on p. 239.

[58] Emma Francis, '"Healing Relief ... Without Detriment to Modest Reserve ..." Keble, Women's Poetry and Victorian Cultural Theory' in *John Keble in Context*, ed. Kirstie Blair (London: Anthem Press, 2004), pp. 115-124 (p. 120).

[59] The inclusion of Margaret Maison's essay on British women hymn writers in Malmgreen's groundbreaking *Religion in the Lives of English Women: 1760-1930* (1986) intimates the significance of the activity as a form of religious experience for some British women.

> It is something of a contradiction that while women's silence in the church was strictly enforced, the words of women hymn writers made a substantial contribution to the liturgical words for worship used, not only by women and children, but also in mixed congregations.[60]

Indeed, Catherine Hall has further observed that, by attempting to construct women as moral regenerators to 'sustain and even to improve the moral qualities of the opposite sex [..., Evangelicals also] offered women an area of importance which therefore holds within itself considerable contradictions'.[61]

In order to protect themselves from accusations of pride and literary ambition, women hymn writers could, and often did, assert that they were channels for the emission of God's grace. Anne Steele's self-consciously feminine pseudonym, 'Theodosia', means 'female gift of God'. Implicit in Steele's public authorial identity was the idea that God's gifts must be spent as Christ had taught in his Parable of the Talents. The early women hymn writers in particular took advantage of the idea that they were servants of God being used for the consolation of his people. As such, they may be compared to Margaret Homans's interpretation of the Virgin Mary as a vessel who:

> gives birth to [...] a child who is the Word, the embodiment of the Logos. Successor to Eve and to Sarah, each of whom was 'the channel through which that illustrious prophecy was carried into effect,' Mary is 'the instrument of the Redeemer's incarnation.'[62]

A long tradition of women authors claiming to be ciphers for God's word exists. Julian of Norwich described her contemplative insight into the love of God as 'revelations' granted by God's grace as gifts to be imparted for the benefit of others:

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[60] Jenny Daggers, 'The Victorian Female Civilising Mission', p. 659.
[61] Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 86.
[62] Margaret Homans, *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 30. Quotation from Hugh Hughes, *Female Characters of the Holy Writ* (London: Frederick Warne, 1845), p. 37 and p. 196.

> though I speak of myself I am really speaking of all my fellow Christians, for I was taught by the inner meaning of this revelation that God intends this. So I beg you all [...] to stop thinking about the poor wretch who has shown these things, and with all your strength, wisdom and humility look at God [...]. For it is God's will that you should receive it with great pleasure, as if Jesus had showed it to you all.[63]

As in the case of Mother Julian, being a channel for God's grace is to take on a ministerial, and therefore priestly, identity. Women's hymn writing thus also engages in questions about female vocation and identity. It suggests the possibility of alternative female callings which interact with the public sphere instead of the traditional domestic roles of wife and mother inside the family home.

The Changing Roles of Women in Society, 1760-1936

The period 1760 to 1936 was obviously one of great change in terms of the position of women in society. Many of the women reformers whose examples and influence helped 'widen the sphere', to allude to Martha Vicinus's seminal work on the transforming roles of women in the Victorian era, were motivated by their Christian faiths; these include Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845), Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), and Josephine Butler (1828-1906).[64] Although this thesis seeks to examine British women's hymn writing primarily as a tradition of English literature, the study will also intersect with other disciplines including church history, women's history and nineteenth-century studies.

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[63] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Clifton Wolters (London: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 74.
[64] See *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington; London: Indiana University Press, 1977), and *Suffer and Be Still*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1972).

Singleness

Single women were drawn to Evangelicalism in great numbers from early in its development. For instance, Bebbington has noted of Wesleyan Methodism that women were numerous in the movement:

> 'I have heard Mr. Wesley remark', reported a rather jaundiced ex-Methodist, 'that more women are converted than men; and I believe that by far the greatest part of his people are females; and not a few of them sour, disappointed old maids [...]'[65] [A]bout 55 per cent of a sample of East Cheshire Methodists in the later eighteenth century were women and nearly half of them unmarried.[66] Religion may have provided psychological reassurance, even emotional outlet, for this section of the population.[67]

As William M. Jacob has suggested, church attendance gave women the opportunity to 'both make sense of their lives in relation to each other in the context of liturgy and to identify themselves in relation to each other in the context of local society.'[68] Indeed, Evangelical religion often gave single women new social opportunities:

> In the proliferating cottage meetings of early Evangelicalism it was often women who took the lead in prayer and praise, counsel and exhortation. In 1803 Wesleyans effectively prohibited female preaching for the sake of propriety, but the custom was restored by the Primitives. The Bible Christians of south-western England, too, put what they called 'female brethren' on the preaching plan.[69] In the upper echelons of society Hannah More, blue-stocking and Evangelical ideologue, played a no less significant role.[70] In an age when avenues for women into any sphere outside the home were being closed, Christian zeal brought them into prominence.[71]

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[65] James Lackington, *Memoirs of the Forty-Five First Years of the Life of James Lackington: The Present Bookseller in Chiswell-street, Moorfields, London. Written by Himself. In a Series of Letters to a Friend. With a Triple Dedication. 1. To the Public. 2. To Respectable Booksellers. 3. To Sordid [Booksellers] [...]* (London: [James Lackington], 1795), p. 72.

[66] G. Malmgreen, 'Domestic Discords: Women and the Family in East Cheshire Methodism, 1750-1830', in *Disciples of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*, ed. J. Obelkevich and others (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan, 1987), pp. 55-70 (p. 60).

[67] T. C. Smout, 'Born Again at Cambuslang: New Evidence on Popular Religion and Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *Past and Present*, 97 (1982), 114-127 (p. 116); J. Kent, 'Wesleyan Membership in Bristol, 1783' in *An Ecclesiastical Miscellany*, ed. D. Walker and others (Bristol: Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 1976); p. 107. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, pp. 25-26.

[68] William M. Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 53. Cited in Susan J. White, *A History of Women in Christian Worship* (London: SPCK, 2003), p. 41.

[69] W. F. Swift, 'The Women Itinerant Preachers of Early Methodism', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 28 (1952) and 29 (1953).

[70] M. G. Jones, *Hannah More* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1952).

The cultural significance of this phenomenon can be contextualised within the history of the increasing numbers of single women in Britain throughout the nineteenth century.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a growing national debate on the large numbers of single women of marriageable age in the population. Perceived as a problematic social group, they were labelled 'excess', 'superfluous', 'surplus', and 'redundant' women. One of the sources of this anxiety was William Rathbone Greg's provocative but much-circulated article 'Why are Women Redundant?' (1862). This essay highlighted data from the national census that 'There were in *England and Wales*, in 1851, 1,248,000 women in the prime of life, *i.e.* between the ages of twenty and forty years, who were unmarried, out of a total number of less than 3,000,000'.[72] Greg's essay reflected the sexual politics of his time in perceiving the problem of female 'redundancy' as a break down of the middle-class woman's 'natural' function to be man's helpmeet, with 'hundreds of thousands' of women:

> who have to earn their own living instead of spending and husbanding the earnings of men; who not having the natural duties and labours of wives and mothers, have to carve out artificial and painfully-sought occupations for themselves; who, in the place of completing, sweetening and embellishing the existence of others, are compelled to lead an independent and incomplete existence of their own. (p. 441)

The combination of 'independent and incomplete' suggested that a self-sufficient woman could not be complete.[73]

The fact that single women were deemed 'redundant' implies that they were not only understood as social excess but also as economic waste. This idea is elucidated by

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[71] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 26.
[72] William Rathbone Greg, 'Why Are Women Redundant?', *National Review*, 15 (1862), 434-460 (p. 441). Further references appear after quotations within the text.
[73] Working-class single women were not counted among the 'redundant' as Greg wrote, 'they fulfil both essentials of women's being: *they are supported by and they minister to, men* [my italics]'. 'Why Are Women Redundant?', p. 451.

Marx's suggestion that, in capitalist societies, such as that of the industrialist nineteenth century, unpaid labour by the housewife becomes, 'a hidden condition, and thus the invisible support for the generation of surplus value.'[74] The economics of marriage were frequently discussed in the cultural commentary of the time. When Edwin Long's painting 'The Babylonian Marriage Market' (figure 3) was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1875, John Ruskin astutely commented that parallels existed between Herodotus's ancient (heathen) history and contemporary marriages in Victorian (Christian) society.[75]

Figure 3



In 1876, this connection was made explicit in a Punch cartoon which reproduced the work with Victorian society belles in crinolines with signs around their necks indicating they were 'sold'. In Anthony Trollope's Palliser series, Lady Glencora implied that she

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[74] Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, p. 44.

[75] 'The souls of our most beautiful and marvelous maidens announced annually for sale by auction in Paris and London'. Cited in Simon Poe, 'A Fitting Marriage: Leighton House is the Ideal Location for a Highly Focussed Exhibition on the Most Expensive Victorian Painting of the 1870s', *Apollo* (2005), <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0PAL/is_515_161/ai_n13499291> [accessed 24.10.2006].

was like a prostitute because she sold herself in marriage to a man she did not love.[76] Elizabeth Gaskell also discussed the idea of the 'marriage market' in *Wives and Daughters* (1865).[77]

Some of Greg's ideas in the essay implied that women were economic goods to be sold at market. One 'cure' he suggested was mass emigration of women to the colonies:

> If the redundant numbers *here* were transported thither, they would scarcely be filled, and we should be denuded. Further, such an exodus, such a natural rectification of disproportions, [...] such a vast reduction in the redundant numbers could not fail to augment the value, and the demand for, the remainder. (p. 443)

Although Greg used the word 'emigration' to describe his plan, his language seems to refer less to emigration made with free will than to the transportation of livestock for market consumption.

As objectionable as Greg's essay seems to the twenty-first century reader, his anxieties about the lot of the single woman are reflected in art and literature of the times. Popular novels such as Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* (1847-8) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853) explored the frequently unhappy condition of the middle class woman relegated to the position of an impoverished governess or school teacher. Richard Redgrave's series of paintings on the plight of the 'redundant' woman, such as *The Reduced Gentleman's Daughter* (1840, figure 4) and *The Governess* (1844, figure 5) which were displayed at the Royal Academy also aroused much pity. Not all depictions were sympathetic; unlike the delicate beauties of

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[76] 'I did it [marry Plantagenet Palliser, despite not loving him] like a beast that driven as its owner chooses. I know it. I was a beast': Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?* (London: The Trollope Society, 1989), pp. 233-4.

[77] For instance, Squire Hamley says to Osborne: 'you're the only marriageable one left in the market....' Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, ed. Angus Easson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 455.

Redgrave's paintings intended to arouse pathos, spinsters were also caricatured as coarse old hags, such as in the *Punch* cartoon by George Cruikshank below (1854, figure 6).



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

Insight may be gained into Victorian anxieties about unmarried women from Nina Auerbach's observation that 'Both old maid and fallen woman find identity in exclusion from family'; both existed outside the natural sphere of women as upheld in dominant Victorian ideology, and pointed to alternative, dissident forms of female existence.[78] The surplus of women in the population was seen as a social problem because they could not perform the roles sanctioned by patriarchy, such as wives and mothers. Like the prostitute, the spinster was another problematic figure to be controlled; dominant Victorian society wished her to be self-sacrificing, chaste and good. However, as Martha Vicinus asserts, 'Single women transformed this passive role into one of active spirituality and passionate social service. Celibacy, within the context of loving friendships, became a vital and empowering ideal. Women did not reject the Victorian myths but reinterpreted them.'[79] Indeed, Frances Power Cobbe wrote in 1862 that:

> The 'old maid's' life may be as rich, as blessed, as that of the proudest of mothers with her crown of clustering babes. Nay, she feels that in the power of devoting her *whole* time and energies to some benevolent task, she is enabled to effect perhaps some greater good than would otherwise have been possible.[80]

It is also notable that, within Christianity, although there has been some suspicion of celibacy in Protestantism, it has been a continuing tradition followed by many Christians as a way of life enabling greater freedom of service to God.[81]

While living in singleness must have been painful and difficult for many women who faced a lifetime of economic uncertainty, exclusion from 'functional' society and

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[78] Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon*, p. 4.
[79] Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (London: Virago, 1985), p. 5.
[80] Frances Power Cobbe, 'Celibacy v. Marriage', in *'Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors': Victorian Writing by Women on Women*, ed. Susan Hamilton (Peterborough, Ontario; Hadleigh, Essex: Broadview Press, 1996), p. 81.
[81] See St Paul's advice in I Corinthians 7.8.

the loneliness that could ensue, the experience necessitated a search for alternative vocations to the traditionally accepted and expected roles of wife and mother. Tuula Gordon has observed an 'existential angst' which is often experienced by single women.[82] She has explained that:

> As a majority of people [...] expect to marry and to have children, and also do so, those who remain outside of this institution are more likely to be confronted by a need to *make sense* of their lives. Those who pursue the same path as the majority of others are less likely to have to explain their lives to themselves or to others. [...] It is difficult for single women to avoid asking questions about the purpose and meaning of life.[83]

Such a state can be seen as producing the conditions for internal searching. Many religious women came to find purpose in active Christian service in the community. This was an impulse that drove many of the great Victorian women social reformers. As Vicinus has observed:

> Underpinning all women's work was a sense of religious commitment. Single women of vastly different convictions felt consecrated in their work to a sacred cause. This devotion to others' welfare was the highest expression of and validation for the idea of women's self-sacrificing nature. The stigma of paid labour was thus removed. The rather negative notion of doing one's duty was thus changed into a positive hope for the future; work for others was part of God's plan, in which single women played a crucial role.[84]

METHODOLOGY

The critical theories and historical positions discussed above form the context of the present thesis. The starting date of the study, 1760, has been chosen because it was when Anne Steele (1717-1778) first published her *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional*. The terminal is 1936 because that was when Amy Carmichael published *Toward Jerusalem*. I wanted to explore what would change about women's hymn

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[82] Tuula Gordon, *Single Women: On the Margins?* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), p. 143.
[83] Gordon, *Single Women*, p. 143 and p. 145.
[84] Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p. 37.

writing from the start of the tradition in the mid-eighteenth century when opportunities for women were extremely limited, to times when the doors of opportunity were beginning to open; the final hymn writer of this study, Amy Carmichael, became a famous missionary to India and left not only her home but also her nation to pursue work for God.[85]

The final date is also related to the fact that the 1930s saw the peak of the first wave of the women's movement in the Church. As Brian Heeney has written:

> By 1930, church feminism had achieved a measure of success, although it was far short of achieving equal status and professional opportunity for women in the Church; nor had it converted the Church of England to a feminist theology. After 1930 the movement stalled, not to be reactivated until the 1970s.[86]

Women's franchise had been won, the universities had opened up to women, and optimists believed that it would not be long before the ordination of women into the established Church.[87] After the Second World War, women's hymn writing seems to have experienced a hiatus before the impact of second-wave feminism in the 1970s, which brought about the development of feminist liturgies and debates about gender-inclusive language. The preface to *Rejoice and Sing* (1991) illustrates how feminist theology has changed the use of gendered language in contemporary worship:

> The Committee has had to make some difficult decisions about the language of hymns. Some years ago the General Assembly resolved that inclusive language should be used wherever possible in the publication of the Church. The Committee has therefore avoided the use of words like 'men', 'brothers', 'sons', etc. where the reference is intended to include both sexes.[88]

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[85] See Chapter 7.
[86] Brian Heeney, *The Women's Movement in the Church of England, 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 2.
[87] Maude Royden (1876-1956)'s fame grew to its height in the 1920s. See Sheila Fletcher, *Maude Royden: A Life* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell, 1989).
[88] *Rejoice and Sing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. vi.

Styles of worship also changed with the growth in use and popularity of chorus-style worship songs. The ordination of women in the Anglican Church, finally achieved in 1994, again changed the position of women in the Church (as has the current debate about women bishops).

My main critical method of examination will be the close reading of individual hymns considered within the socio-historical context of the time in which they were written. Although my work may at times implicitly engage with literary theories (the historical contextualisation of my readings could, for instance, be viewed as approaching a new historicist reading or as intersecting with cultural studies), I will not be using any one specific theoretical model explicitly as a means of investigation. The study of women's writing has obviously emerged out of feminism(s), and this thesis may be considered 'gynocritical', but my approach will not be aligned explicitly with one particular political strand or theory of feminisms such as Marxist feminism or feminist psychoanalysis. (It may be noted that such theoretical approaches have often not been sympathetic to religion in the past.) As this will be the first extensive study of women's hymn writing as a literary tradition, it is my belief that examining the hymns closely, set in their historical context, will be the most valuable approach to examine the development of the mode.

As all of the women writers of this study have been under-researched to date and are not well known, this study will also be engaged in literary biography. Indeed, in some cases, such as with Ellen Lakshmi Goreh and Amy Carmichael, I have not been able to locate any literary criticism about their writings. Consequently, a considerable amount of the background information presented in this thesis has not been previously known or brought together in a cohesive narrative. Biographical framing has thus been conducive to presenting new material about the writers of this study. As such, this

thesis will be involved in one of the earliest aims of gynocriticism, to reclaim 'lost' women writers, and to make their work and history better known and more accessible.[89] While some feminist critics have, sometimes quite rightly, objected to the way that women's writing tends to be read as more autobiographical than men's, this thesis argues that the British tradition of hymn writing by unmarried women often used autobiographical experience, sometimes out of professional need (see Candy Gunther Brown's observation on page 18), as a creative inspiration. Of course, devotional writing normally arises out of personal faith. Indeed, Havergal said of her own literary labours: 'I think God would teach me that a great deal of living must go into a very little writing', suggesting that her hymns were a distillation of her spiritual experience.[90] In some cases, primary sources will be discussed, such as letters and poems from unpublished manuscripts, in order to place the author's hymns within the fuller corpus of their writing and thinking. Indeed, this thesis will sometimes be involved in the discussion of non-hymnic verses by the writers examined in this study, as they often throw light on the hymns, and because the chapters also function as a way of reclaiming entire poetic oeuvres of these neglected women writers.

Due to constraints of time and word space, I have focused my research on hymn writing by women who remained single throughout their lives. As a consequence, I will not be examining the work of Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825), or Sarah Flower

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[89] A pioneer of this project in Britain was the Virago Press which was established in 1973 as a publishing house for women writers only, including Virago Modern Classics (a series which republishes texts by women that are no longer easily available). Other printing presses which seek to make women's writing more available include Persephone Books, and Girls Gone By Publishers which republishes girls' fiction from the twentieth century. Several dictionaries and literary guides have also been compiled since the impact of feminisms on the study of literature, which attempt to provide more comprehensive literary histories of women's writing, one of the earliest being Janet Todd's edition of *A Dictionary of British and American Women Writers, 1660-1800* (London: Methuen, 1984). In the last decade, the development of the internet and electronic texts has also been utilised to make women's writing more readily available: The Perdita Project, The Brown University Women Writers Project, and Orlando are examples of academic ventures attempting to produce internet textbases and catalogues to make works by women more accessible.

[90] Havergal's words were recalled by her friend Margaret L. Watson, the secretary of the Leamington branch of the YWCA, in an 'In Memorandam' article which was published in the YWCA Almanack of 1880, and are quoted in Janet Grierson, *Frances Ridley Havergal: Worcestershire Hymnwriter* (Bromsgrove: Havergal Society, 1979), p. 75.

Adams (1805-1848), or the domestic tradition of hymn writing for children which was often, though not always, undertaken by women who married and became mothers, the most famous example being Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895).[91] Other women who wrote hymns for children include: Ann Taylor Gilbert (1782-1866) and Jane Taylor (1783-1824); Felicia Hemans (1794-1835); Jemima Luke (1813-1906); Dorothy Ann Thrupp (1779-1847); Jane Eliza Leeson (1808-1882); and Frances Mary and Charlotte M. Yonge (1795-1868), (1823-1901). While most of the single women writers of this study were Evangelicals and 'Low Church', some women hymn writers for children were from the 'High' tradition, including Cecil Frances Alexander, Frances Mary and Charlotte M. Yonge, Jane Eliza Leeson, and Mary Howitt (1799-1888) (the later two became Roman Catholics late in life). I suggest that a separate study on the phenomenon of women's hymn writing for children would be useful as the tradition differs from the writing by the single women.[92] In my final chapter on Amy Carmichael (1867-1951), I will be looking at some hymns for children, but these were not of the domestic tradition of Ann and Jane Taylor's or Mrs Alexander's hymns.[93]

All the women of my study were Protestant. The earliest women hymn writers belonged to dissenting traditions including the Baptists and Congregationalists; this is not surprising, as hymn-singing was not officially sanctioned in the Anglican Church until well into the nineteenth century. Maison has noted, 'Dissent from orthodoxy [...] often involved dissent from [...] sexist stances, and it is refreshing to observe how many women of Nonconformist persuasion enjoyed an exceptional measure of liberty.

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[91] Often remembered as 'Mrs Alexander' although she wrote her famous *Hymns for Little Children* (1848) before she married.

[92] For instance, as many of the hymns written for children focus on the figure of the infant Jesus, the theology of hymns for children may be considered more incarnational rather than crucicentric, as in the case of hymns by the unmarried Evangelical women of this study (except perhaps in the case of Dora Greenwell, chapter 4, whose theology was strongly incarnational).

[93] Carmichael wrote hymns for the Indian children under her care because she felt that English hymns for children were not suitable to their circumstances (see chapter 7). Her work in many ways marks a new development in women's hymn writing and writing for non-British people.

equality and fraternity in religious activities throughout the eighteenth century.'[94] However, from the Victorian period onwards, most of the women examined are 'Churchwomen', although they tended to belong to the Evangelical wing of the Church of England in terms of their personal theology and worship.[95] Unmarried Catholic women did write hymns: *The Westminster Hymnal* (1940) contains a hymn by 'Michael Field', as well as works by nuns.[96] That these hymns differ from those by the Protestant women of this study is indicated by the fact that one is an 'Ave Maria' and that Michael Field's hymn is in a section entitled 'Our Lady'. Indeed, Thomas E. Muir has noted of *Convent Hymns and Music Used by the Sisters of Notre Dame* (Liverpool, 1891) that 58 out of 137 texts are devoted to the Virgin Mary.[97] This suggests that female spirituality and subjectivity could be manifest in different ways in the hymns of unmarried Catholic women, who could identify themselves with, and make supplication to, Mary, rather than Jesus or the Father as in the Protestant tradition.

Although most of the women of this study were also of the middle classes, the second chapter looks at the works of two labouring-class women hymn writers: Susanna Harrison (1752-1784) and Eliza Westbury (1808-1828). The inclusion of their work demonstrates how accessible the form was for literate church-going women. There have also been aristocratic women hymn writers, although none are included in this study because they were not major hymn writers and were mostly married. Selina

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[94] Maison, '"Thine, Only Thine!"', p. 11.

[95] Dora Greenwell was a Churchwoman but was a kind of early ecumenist and drew from other Christian traditions. Amy Carmichael was Presbyterian.

[96] 'Michael Field' was the pseudonym of Katherine Harris Bradley (1848-1914, 'Michael') and Emma Edith Cooper (1862-1913, 'Field'), aunt and niece lovers who jointly published poetry and drama at the *fin de siècle*. The couple converted to Roman Catholicism in 1907. Hymn no. 105 is 'The Presentation' taken from their book of religious poetry *Mystic Trees* (1913), *The Westminster Hymnal*, new and rev edn (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1940), p. 142. No. 136 is 'Hail, glorious Saint Patrick, dear saint of our isle' by Sister Agnes of the Convent of Charleville, County Cork; no. 185 is 'Ave Maria! O Maiden, O Mother' by Sister M; no. 190 is 'Lord, for tomorrow and its needs' by Sister M. Xavier, from *In Hymnis et Canticis: Verses Sacred and Profane by a Sister of Notre Dame (S. M. X.)*, (London: Kegan Paul, 1903), p. 28. The *Verses* are said to have been written in Liverpool for the students of the Liverpool Training College: see *Dictionary of Hymnology*, ed. John Julian (London: John Murray, 1925), p. 166.

[97] Thomas E. Muir, '"Full in the Panting Heart of Rome": Roman Catholic Church Music in England: 1850-1962', 2 vols (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Durham, 2004), I, p. 285.

Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon (1707-1791), is one example. Pitman devotes a chapter of *Lady Hymn Writers* to 'Queenly and Noble Hymn Writers', but they are mostly European women rather than British.[98] Gender, class, and 'race' have often been grouped together as classifications by which minority peoples are oppressed. All the women writers of this study were white except for Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, whose ethnicity would now be classified as 'Asian British' having been born in India but brought up in England (see chapter 7).

Due to limitations of space, I have also chosen to focus on hymns originally written in English. I will therefore not be including translators of hymns such as Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878) and Frances Elizabeth Cox (1812-1897) in this study. The translation of hymns by women, especially from modern languages, notably German, was considerable and deserves a separate study of its own. Likewise, I will not be looking at hymns written in other native British languages, such as the Welsh hymns of Ann Griffiths (baptised 1776, died 1805); indeed, Griffiths's work is in many ways unique and set apart from the tradition of women's hymn writing in English.

Geographically, the women of this study are drawn from throughout the British Isles: the South East, the South West, the Midlands, the East Midlands, East Anglia, Yorkshire, the North East, and Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, I have not been able to include women's hymn writing from Scotland, such as that of Elizabeth Cecilia Douglas Clephane (1830-1869). However, it is evident from the selection of writers examined that women's hymn writing was not merely a metropolitan activity confined to those living in the capital or even the South-East. As hymns were sung throughout the land, they were a form accessible to literate women from all ranks in all locations.

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[98] She includes: 'Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia', 'Louisa, Electress of Brandenburg', and 'Jeanne, Queen of Navarre'. She also includes a prayer of Mary Queen of Scots to suggest that she was a hymn writer.

The seven chapters of this thesis will explore the movement of the women's hymns from the early concentration on the inner self and the expression of their internal faith and Evangelical theology (chapters 1 and 2: Anne Steele; Susanna Harrison and Eliza Westbury); the mid-nineteenth-century women's solidarity with human suffering, and their desire for female ministries of activity and usefulness in the face of limited social opportunities, which were sometimes exacerbated by physical restrictions (chapters 3, 4 and 5: Charlotte Elliott, Dora Greenwell and Frances Ridley Havergal); and the increasing opportunities for enterprising, intelligent and adventurous women in the twentieth century, which enabled a movement into active ministry such as missionary work overseas from the final decades of the nineteenth century onwards (chapters 6 and 7: Ellen Lakshmi Goreh and Amy Carmichael).

The Construction of the First Woman Hymn Writer:

Anne Steele (1717-1778)

Although not the first woman to write hymns,[1] Anne Steele, who published under the pseudonym 'Theodosia', is often considered 'the first major woman hymn-writer'.[2] In Pitman's *Lady Hymn Writers* (1892), she is distinguished by being the first to be celebrated out of 121 writers. She is positioned as the forerunner who points the way for other literary Christian women to follow in praise of God. This chapter will consider how Steele came to be constructed as the '"mother" of English women hymn writers', the prototype by and against which women hymn writers came to be measured in the centuries that followed. [3] To this end, it will be necessary not only to examine Steele's writing, but to expound the presentation of her life by her biographers, and to explore the processes by which her work came to be distributed and gained recognition and popularity within the Church.

The Legend of Anne Steele

In spite of her place in British hymnody, Anne Steele's life and work remain relatively unknown, and her hymns are rarely included in modern hymn books.[4] There is no extensive biography of her life and only a handful of memoirs exist, mainly as introductions to the printed editions of her works, which are: *Poems on Subjects*

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[1] Earlier women hymn writers include Anne Dutton (1692-1765), Elizabeth Singer Rowe (1674-1737) and Elizabeth Tollett (1694-1754). However, their work did not survive in circulation or use long after their deaths.

[2] Watson, *English Hymn*, p. 191.

[3] Maison, '"Thine, Only Thine!"', p. 14. See Erik Routley, *Hymns and Human Life* (London: Murray, 1952), p. 206.

[4] *Grace Hymns* (London: Grace Publications Trust, 1977) contains eight hymns by Steele. Her most famous hymn 'Father of Mercies, in Thy Word' (often modernised as 'Father of Mercies, in *Your* Word', my italics) is still included in many hymnals, but is rarely sung by modern congregations.

Chiefly Devotional (1760) printed in two volumes,[5] and reprinted with an additional volume, *Miscellaneous Pieces in Verse and Prose*, in 1780; *Verses for Children* (1778); an American two-volume edition of *Poems* (1808); *Hymns, Psalms and Poems* (1863 and 1882); and, most recently, *Hymns by Anne Steele* (1967).

Born to Ann (née Froude) and William Steele, a timber merchant and Baptist minister, in Broughton, Hampshire, Anne Steele led a provincial life, never travelling out of the south-west of England, and rarely leaving the company of her family. However, her existence was far from uneventful. Her biographers recount how she lost her mother at the age of three, 'had a tendency to consumption' throughout her life, [6] seriously damaged her hip after a riding accident at the age of eighteen, and, most tragically of all, how her fiancé, James Elcombe, drowned on the morning of their wedding when she was only twenty years old. The story that developed was that Steele learnt to surrender to God's will during the most difficult times of her life. This was seen as the process of refinement through which she gained the spiritual wisdom of her hymns. This idea is imbued with constructed cultural assumptions about gender, in particular, about feminine fragility, submission and spirituality. As such, Erik Routley asserts that Steele is 'the mother not only of English women hymn-writers but also of all those who turned their own sorrow to the profit of the singing congregations'.[7]

In contrast, the Steele family papers, which are now deposited at the Angus Library in Regent's Park College, Oxford, reveal that the picture of Steele's life and character handed down to us is in fact a collage constructed from selected fragments of her life. The most heartrending aspects of her history, her physical suffering and emotional hardships, were privileged, cut out, and reconstituted into a new whole, a

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[5] Hereafter referred to as *Poems*.
[6] J. R. B., preface, *Hymns by Anne Steele* (Letchworth: St Christopher's Press, 1967), p. xviii.
[7] Routley, *Hymns and Human Life*, p. 206.

mythologised version of Steele's life moulded for the cultural and ontological needs of her biographers and the audiences for whom they were writing. At the same time, other aspects of her life have been obscured from literary history and forgotten.

The Case of the Single Woman

The most famous story about Steele's life, which survives into modern scholarship, is the sudden death of her fiancé. Margaret Maison writes that:

> Help and release seemed at hand, but all turned to tragedy when her fiancé was drowned while swimming in the River Avon the day before the wedding. After this Anne Steele remained at home, leading a life of peaceful retirement [...]. Outward tranquillity concealed depths of pain, frustration and suffering as she progressed in her 'pathway of affliction' to God. (p. 14)

Primary sources indicate that many of the sensational details of this story are apocryphal.[8] However, this incident was made much of, especially by the Victorians, and Steele's experience of pain was interpreted as integral to the process of her writing:

> At the very time when, according to nuptial arrangements, he would have been uttering the sacred vows, his lifeless body was brought home. The sight of the beloved dead almost made her brain reel, and it was hours and days before she could even think of submission. It was a tempest of sorrow at first; then it subsided, and she penned one of our sweetest hymns on resignation.[9]

Pitman's interpretation that Steele's writing was in response to personal experience is encouraged by the titles of her hymns such as: 'Searching after Happiness'; 'Hope Encouraged in the Contemplation of the Divine Perfections', 'Submission to God in Affliction'; and 'Complaining at the Throne of God'. In contrast, hymns by men, such as Doddridge, were often stimulated by passages from scripture and could therefore

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[8] See J. R. Watson and Nancy Cho, 'Anne Steele's Drowned Fiancé', *British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28 (2005), 117-121.
[9] Pitman, *LHW*, pp. 67-8.

be considered more theologically weighty and authoritative. This has led to the notion that women hymn writers wrote primarily under the influence of feelings. Pitman writes:

> It has been observed that women have not made a trade of hymn-writing, as men have. Hence we have no female Watts, with hundreds, or Wesley, with thousands of hymns; but what hymns they have written have been mostly composed under the pressure or stimulus of very special emotions. We can fairly trace in Anne Steele, in Charlotte Elliott, in Sarah F. Adams, and in many others, the presence of over-mastering emotion, dictating the subject and inspiring the words of their compositions.[10]

The idea that Steele was moved by personal experiences and sensibility has promoted the belief that hymns by women are emotional rather than rational, and of the heart rather than the head.

The story of the untimely death of James Elcombe has led to the assumption that Steele subsequently led a romantically unfulfilled life, and that she had no choice but to accept the undesirable, lonely, and disappointed life of a spinster. The Steele papers reveal that the reality was different. In 1742, five years after the death of Elcombe, Benjamin Beddome, another pioneering Baptist hymn writer, then minister of a Baptist church in Bourton-on-the-Water, sent Steele an ardent love letter:

> Since I had the happiness of seeing you How often have I thought of Milton's beautiful Description of Eve Book 8 Line 471:
>
> *So lovely fair!*
> *That what seem'd fair, in all the World seem'd now*
> *Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her contain'd,*
> *And in her Looks; which from that infus'd*
> *Sweetness into my Heart, unfelt before.*
>
> Mad^{m} m give me leave to tell You that these Words speak the very Experience of my Soul, nor do I find it possible to forbear loving You. Would you but

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[10] Pitman, *LHW*, p. 140.

> suffer me to come I lay before You those Dictates of a confused Mind which cannot be represented by a trembling Hand & Pen.[11]

The fact that the letter survives suggests that it was not met with total displeasure, and that Steele had other romantic options after the death of Elcombe.

It is possible that Steele came to prefer the life of a single woman, especially in her capacity as a writer requiring a room and time of her own. A letter written by Steele to her married half-sister Mary Wakeford in 1757 (when she was forty) suggests that she rejected an offer of marriage:

> No indeed my dear Sister, I have no mind to climb the Stile you point to. --- 'tis true a gentle Swain with many soft intreaties lately offer'd his hand to help me over, but I made him a Curt'sie and declin'd his officious civility, for I look'd over and saw no flowers, but observ'd a great many thorns, and I suppose there are more hid under the leaves [...]; besides I think the path is much smoother on this side the Hedge than the other, and I am too stay'd [staid] to ramble for the sake of novelty.[12]

In a series of poems to Mary, Steele suggests single life is one of greater freedom and less pain:

> [...]
> If Spinsters with beauty must soon lose their sway
> Wives give up their freedom in one fatal day
> But tho' prude love and beauty are equally vain
> And married or single all must have some pain
> Unless I am fated to yield up my heart
> Can I wish to be wretched and double my part. [...][13]

The Victorians' preoccupation with the story of thwarted love perhaps reveals more about contemporary ideologies concerning marriage, such as the notion that a single

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[11] Benjamin Beddome, Letter to Anne Steele, STE 3/13 (i), Regent's Park College, hereafter referred to as 'RPC'.
[12] Anne Steele, 'Silvania' and 'Amira' Letters, STE 3/10 (iii), RPC.
[13] Anne Steele, Copybook of poems in Steele's hand, STE 3/3/1, RPC, p. 40.

woman could not be complete, as suggested by William Rathbone Greg (see pp. 30-34).[14] In fact, Steele had the friendships of many men and women who encouraged her to write and to publish.

Literary Friends and Support for Writing and Publication

The legend of Steele's ill-fated romance has perpetuated the idea that she led a life of isolation and loneliness. In contrast, primary sources indicate that the Steele family was part of a network of prominent Baptists throughout the South of England. Surviving letters in the Angus Library demonstrate that Steele's friendship circle was wide, and made up of educated, often distinguished, persons. For instance, she had the fellowship of many supportive and loving female friends throughout her life. She had a particularly close friendship with her half-sister Mary; they corresponded throughout their lives, under their romantic, classical pseudonyms 'Silvania' (Anne) and 'Amira' (Mary). *Miscellaneous Pieces* (1780) includes numerous poignant poems by Anne to Mary displaying sisterly care, whether in celebration: 'To Amira on her marriage 1749', or in mourning: 'To Amira on the death of her son about 13'. Mary also offered advice and reassurance to Anne about the publication of her work:

> your printing is to be sure a thing of serious importance but you have no reason to be at all uneasy about it, your flowers *have* fragrance for those who are serious & religious & have a taste for poetry by such it will be received with pleasure & profit, and that is all you can desire, the tasteless will not read it, nor those who dislike serious things, indeed those who dislike the sentiments. That is the ladder builders [ambitious, secular literati?] will most likely snarl a little & affect to treat it with contempt as they well may since they condemn the hero of your poetry who said, if the world hated me it would also hate you, but you do not write to please such, their censure will not I imagine give you concern.[15]

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[14] Greg, 'Why are Women Redundant?', p. 441.
[15] Mary Steele Wakeford, Letter to Anne Steele dated 10 Nov 1757, 'Amira' to 'Silvania', STE 3/10 (xiii), RPC.

Miscellaneous Pieces also contains several poems which point to Steele's friendships with other literary women. In addition to numerous poems addressed 'To Amira', other poems are addressed 'To Silvia', 'To Myra', 'To Delia Pensive' and 'To Belinda'. Indeed, Marjorie Reeves has recently demonstrated that, in middle-age, Steele was at the centre of a group of young women writers.[16] This female literary coterie included her niece Mary Steele ('Silvia'), the author of *Danebury or The Power of Friendship: A Tale with Two Odes* (1779); Mary Scott ('Myra'), the author of the early feminist work *The Female Advocate; A Poem. Occasioned by Reading Mr Duncombe's Feminead* (1774);[17] and Hannah More who 'came to visit the Steeles from Bristol'[18] at least once. As a published author, it is likely that she was a literary mother-figure to these younger women writers.[19] That Steele was an influence on Mary Scott is evident in *The Female Advocate*, a work extolling female intellect:

> When THEODOSIA tunes her Heav'n-taught lyre,
> What bosom burns not with seraphic fire?
> Sweet harmonist! in thy extatic [*sic*] lines
> Virtue in all her native graces shines:
> There, each bright hope in tuneful numbers flows,
> And there, fair faith! Thy sacred ardour glows:
> There, resignation smiles on care and pain,
> And rapt'rous joy attunes the grateful strain.
> O yet may Heav'n its healing aid extend,
> And yet to health restore my valued friend:
> Long be it ere her gentle spirit rise,
> To fill some glorious mansion in the skies.[20]

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[16] See Marjorie Reeves, *Sheep Bell and Ploughshare: The Story of Two Village Families* (Bradford-upon-Avon: Moonraker Press, 1978), pp. 33-34; and chapter 5: 'A literary circle of friends and their writings' in Marjorie Reeves, *Pursuing the Muses: Female Educational and Nonconformist Culture, 1700-1900* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), pp. 61-94.

[17] Steele moved into her brother's house, Broughton House, after the death of her father. She helped to raise Mary after the death of her mother, Mary Bullock.

[18] Reeves, *Pursuing the Muses*, p. 28. Hannah More wrote a poem to commemorate this visit: 'Extempore by Miss H. More', September 178[6?]. More's visit is mentioned in William Jay, *Autobiography and Reminiscences: With Reminiscences of Some Distinguished Contemporaries, Selections from his Correspondence, etc*, ed. George Redford and A. Jones (London: [n. pub.], 1854), p. 343.

[19] See Reeves, *Pursuing the Muses*, p. 61.

[20] Mary Scott, *The Female Advocate, A Poem. Occasioned by Reading Mr Duncombe's Feminead (1774)* (Los Angeles: The Augustan Reprint Society, 1984), p. 25.

Steele's education, spirituality and literary precedence were thus profoundly influential on a circle of dissenting women writers in the South of England. This aspect of Steele's life has, however, been omitted from the majority of her biographical sketches. Indeed, *Hymns, Psalms and Poems* (1863) omits several of the poems addressed to female friends, the writing which gives a rare glimpse of Steele's human relationships, thereby constructing a work which focuses more on the spiritual aspect of Steele's character and her devotion to God than the warmth of her earthly friendships.

Male friends who supported Steele's writing and publication included John Lavington (*c.* 1690-1759), a minister from Exeter Baptist Church; James Fanch of Romsey (1707-67); and Philip Furneaux (1736-83) from London.[21] A letter by Steele to her brother William recalls some time spent with her friends discussing the publication of her works: 'we had a great deal of chat intermingled with reading my papers and canvassing the printing affair.'[22] Steele's brother-in-law seems also to have been supportive, as a letter from Mary, dated 10 November 1757, indicates that he was involved in sourcing a publisher in London: 'Mr W[akeford] safely delivered your papers to Mr F[urneaux]'.[23]

The influence and help of Steele's friends can be seen further in her unpublished lines 'On Reviewing my Verses for Publication':

> As o'er the various pages I bend
> Approve dislike or drive to mend
> Chagrin arose & frowning spread
> Her gloomy Pinions o'er my head
> [...]

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[21] Karen Smith writes that the 1760 version was published 'with the help of Philip Furneaux [...]. In 1780, it was reprinted with a third volume of *Miscellaneous Pieces* by Caleb Evans, who served as Furneaux's assistant when at Clapham', quoted in Karen Smith, 'The Community and the Believer: A Study of Calvinistic Baptist Spirituality in Some Towns and Villages of Hampshire and the Borders of Wiltshire, c. 1730-1830' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1986), p. 250.

[22] Anne Steele, Letter to her brother William Steele, STE 3/8, RPC.

[23] Letter from 'Amira', Mary Steele Wakeford, to Anne Steele, 'Silvania', STE 3/10 (xiii), RPC, p. xiii.

How low the line how dull the Page
What Ear can Rhymes like these engage?
The Press Ah! No, suppress the thought
By just Reflection better taught
They write with life who write to please
Let Lines so spiritless as these
To dark Oblivion be consign'd
Be wise and learn a humbler Mind
So spake Chagrin imperious Sprite
And snatch'd the Paper from my sight
But Friendship came with cheerful Air
And smiling stood behind my Chair
Her presence shed a cheering Ray
And drove the Gloomy Power away
In haste she fled & left her prize
Which Friendship view'd with partial Eyes
And shal [*sic*] Chagrin she eager cried
Presume to censure & decide
What Privilege is only mine
I to the Press the Work consign
Come raise your Head & droop no more
If candid Minds the page explore
They will confess that Lines like these
Though far from faultless yet may please
The Lay which Piety approves
Which Virtue guides and Friendship loves
That asks no smile of flattering Fame
Oblivion cannot dares not claim.[24]

Steele is placing herself, and her work, at the centre of a tableau of abstracts such as Piety, Friendship, and Virtue. Christian modesty and propriety require that she is not perceived as indulging in pride by valorising the productions of her (female) self. Instead, she is able to defer judgement and say that it is not her own, lowly, opinion that leads her to think her work should be made public, but the recommendations of others who are better, wiser, and, although she does not specify, male. The poem thus performs as a modesty trope. She is shaping and controlling the way in which her work is to be received, and protecting herself from criticism both for the quality of her

[24] Copybook of poems in Anne Steele's hand, STE 3/3/1, RPC, pp, 1-2. The last line may make more sense with commas.

work and for her presumption in publishing. The poem further indicates that Steele suffered anxiety living in a culture where women writers were not frequently visible in print.

It seems that Steele was involved in a careful project of self-censorship stemming from cultural and religious ideas about the kind of writing suitable for respectable women. An extraordinary letter written to her sister on 10 November 1757 is a work of classicism depicting an ancient (and non-Judeo-Christian) fantasy world:

> In my return home not expecting much entertainment in the conversation of my fellow Traveller nor the variety of the scene [...] I fell into a sort of poetic reverie when some invisible benevolent companion whether one of Mr. Pope[']s goodnatur[e]d Sylphs had taken it into her head to furnish out an entertaining scene or one of the Pierian Sisters having left the laurel shaded summit of Parnassus to taste the humble pleasures of a ramble in the sunny vale and meeting with her lovely votary vouchsaf'd the favour I am about to relate. [...]
>
> Be pleas'd then to imagine before you a Tablet about the size of your parlour chimn[e]y piece. See at the right hand verge near the lowere [*sic*] corner begins a charming walk shaded with trees in all the bloom of vernal beauty and the ground enamell'd with daises. [...] [A] Majestic Temple [...]. At the upper end an Altar [...] stands the Genius of the place a Grave Personage of noble mien [...] a Nymph of cheerful air [...] on her head a wreath of ever blooming Amaranth [...] a scroll on which is this inscription:
>
> > Propitious Hymen at thy awful shrine
> > Behold this youthful proselite of mine
> > Reclaim'd by Love & this engaging Fair
> > Presents his bows beneath thy guardian care
> > [...].
>
> Now take your eyes from this scene a moment and direct them to the bottom of the piece at the left hand corner, there behold a Woman frightful as the Gorgan on Minerva's Shield leaning on a craggy Rock her right hand grasps a scourge with a treble lash of scorpions, & her left a painted mask [...] if this whimsical effort of Fancy diverts you I have my aim, but don't let anybody see it except your Portius [the pseudonym of Mary's husband].[25]

This letter is somewhat incongruous with Steele's published Evangelical writing; however, it corresponds with Mary Poovey's statement that:

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[25] Anne Steele, Letter to Mary Steele Wakeford, STE 3/10(iv), RPC.

> All kinds of writing by women of this period suggest that, even though women may not consciously have acknowledged their own impermissible desires, energies not sanctioned by propriety did exist. Although they celebrated their proper, feminine nature, women found ways to express the energies that were not satisfied or silenced by fulfilling the role of an altogether proper lady.[26]

Steele obviously indulged in fantasy which differed considerably in artistic vision to the 'pious productions of her pen'[27] which came to be distributed to the public. It appears that she was only comfortable about sharing this side of her imaginative life with the most intimate members of her family circle. She seems to have evaluated her audience correctly as in John Fanch's view:

> Her poetical compositions, both of the serious and amusing kind are most inimitable, much beyond anything I have yet seen since those of Dr. Watts. She aims not at the sublime or any high flights of imagination but her productions are admirably correct and delicate. I have several of them in my hands which she desired me to review, all of which are truly delightful.[28]

Authorship, Ambition and Female Humility

Steele's entry into print culture was under the pseudonym 'Theodosia'. The traditional understanding of female pseudonyms is, as Margaret Ezell notes, that they have been 'seen as protective strategies because they effectively hide the author's sex and enable her to simultaneously preserve her "modesty" while receiving a fair hearing'.[29] However, Steele's pseudonym is not a project about erasing female selfhood. 'Theodosia', (feminine) gift from God, pointedly asserts that the author's identity is as a Christian and a woman, while choosing not to disclose full identity to the public.

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[26] Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 15.
[27] Caleb Evans, preface to *Miscellaneous Pieces in Verse and Prose*, vol 3 of *Poems* (Bristol: W. Dent, 1780), p. vi.
[28] In Daniel Turner, *Brief Memoirs of the Revd Mr James Fanch Late Pastor of the Church at Romsey, Hants* (n.d.), p. 29. Quoted in Karen Smith, 'The Community and the Believer', pp. 251-2.
[29] Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, p. 36.

The idea of being a gift of God is intriguing. Rather than highlighting her own literary talents or accomplishments, Steele is declaring that she is God's instrument through which his words flow. Her first hymn in *Poems*, 'Desiring to Praise God', articulates this idea of being a lowly handmaiden making music under his direction:

3. Thy glories, the seraphic lyre
On all its strings attempts in vain;
Then how shall mortals dare aspire
In thought, to try th'unequal strain?

4. Yet the great Sovereign of the skies
To mortals bends a gracious ear;
Nor the mean tribute will despise,
If offer'd with a heart sincere.

5. Great God, accept the humble praise,
And guide my heart, and guide my tongue,
While to thy name I trembling raise
The grateful, though unworthy song.[30]

The choice to remain anonymous therefore seems to have been partially related to cultural and religious assumptions about the necessity for all Christians, but particularly female ones, to remain humble in submission. However, by declaring that she is a channel of God, Steele is both valorising her work and giving it authority as she implicitly states that her work is blessed with divine inspiration. Her pseudonym therefore becomes an act which not only protects her from censure, but more significantly elevates her work as divinely sanctioned. Steele actually used the more pastoral, classical pseudonym, 'Silvania', throughout her life when writing amongst her circle of friends, so by adopting 'Theodosia' for the purposes of publishing, she was shaping and protecting the way in which her authorship would be viewed by the public.

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[30] Anne Steele, *Hymns, Psalms and Poems* (London: Daniel Sedgwick, 1863), p. 1. All further quotations to Steele's works will come from this work, and will be referenced in the text after the quotation unless otherwise specified in a footnote.

In her poem 'Ambition', Steele guards herself again from claims that she might be seeking worldly success by asserting that earthly triumph is worthless because it is fleeting:

1. Let Fame the shining annals spread,
Where she records her mighty dead,
And boasting, promise an immortal name!
Vain is her boast, her proud parade
Sinks in oblivion's dreary shade;
Time, all-destroying time, forbids the claim.

2. Let her employ her utmost power,
With radiance gild the present hour.
('Tis all she can) her fairest wreaths display;
What is the envied prize decreed
The living conqueror's glorious meed
All best, the fading triumph of a day. (pp. 236-7)

Instead, she asserts that the Christian has a nobler ambition:

5. His name, enroll'd among the just,
When sculptur'd monuments are dust,
And mortal glory sinks in endless night;
Shall with immortal lustre shine,
Wrote by the hand of love divine
In life's fair book in characters of light.

6. Such is the Christian's glorious prize;
Thus high, his hopes, his wishes rise
Inspir'd by blest ambition, heaven-born flame!
O thou, the source of bliss divine,
My heart renew, exalt, refine!
Nor let me bear in vain the Christian's name. (p. 237)

Ann Cator Steele's diaries suggest that others were also concerned about the effect that publication might have on Steele's humility:

> 27 November 1759
>
> Mr Wakeford & his wife [Mary, Anne Steele's half-sister] came. He spoke very highly in commendation of Nanny Steele's Books of Poetry that came

> from London last Saturday. I beg God to make it usefull [*sic*] and keep her humble.[31]

Pitman remarks on this entry that, 'The twofold prayer was answered. Anne was certainly kept humble by her sufferings';[32] in biblical terms, Steele's physical suffering, like St Paul's thorn in his side, was interpreted as persisting to keep her from becoming conceited by the divine revelations granted to her.

The Sickly Woman Hymn Writer

In 1780, two years after Steele's death, her friend Caleb Evans reprinted an enlarged version of *Poems.*[33] In his preface to a new third volume, *Miscellaneous Pieces in Verse and Prose*, he informed the readers that 'it was her infelicity, as it has been in many of her kindred spirits, to have a capacious soaring mind enclosed in a very weak and languid body'.[34] He provided an account of greater sensibility in a 120-line verse eulogy following the preface:

> Ah with what resignation, what composure
> Have I beheld her suffer pains unknown!
> Anguish unspeakable!---her faith, her patience
> Still was unsubdu'd! unquench'd the vivid flame,
> Of warm benevolence!---to others woe,
> In agony attentive,---anxious still
> For others happiness, ---how would she strive
> (Her gentle hand all tremulous with pain)
> To please or to instruct! (pp. xiv-xv)

Evans disseminated and popularised a sentimental picture of a suffering but benevolent saint.

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[31] Anne Cator Steele, Diary, STE 2/1/3, RPC.
[32] Pitman, *LHW*, p. 70.
[33] Then president of the Bristol Education Society, which was the only Baptist Academy designed specifically for ministerial education. See J. W. Ashley Smith, *The Birth of Modern Education: The Contribution of the Dissenting Academies, 1660-1800* (London: Independent Press, 1954), pp. 206-210.
[34] Evans, *Miscellaneous Pieces*, p. vii. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

The extensive diaries of Ann Cator Steele (1689-1760), Steele's stepmother, record how Anne was often afflicted with ill health:

> Oct 10 Anne ill with fever
> October 10-21 both girls [Anne and her half-sister, Mary] ill
> November 1 Anne Steele ill
> November 3 Doctor says Anne 'likely to go into the consumption'
> November 4-10 Anne 'ill in a very declining state'
> November 17 Ague.[35]

However, this exhaustive medical history was interpreted along particular historical and cultural lines of understanding about sickness and death. Several later biographers assumed with her contemporaries that that Steele 'had a tendency to consumption'[36] (see 3 November above). Modern science indicates that it was not consumption, but for 200 years it was the accepted diagnosis.[37] The enduring myth that Steele suffered specifically from tuberculosis is rooted in the metaphysical ideas which came to surround death by consumption. As John Mason Neale explained in a note to his hymn 'In Consumption', tuberculosis was interpreted by some as a blessed way to die:

> Consumption is called by French Divines, La mort des élus, on account of the long warning which it gives, the mental vigour which it leaves, and its freedom, for the most part, from intense bodily pain; thus allowing the mind to be its own master.[38]

Steele's physical suffering was thus interpreted as an indication of her saintliness (especially suitable in the context of her Calvinistic Particular Baptist theology), a heroic story of the brave woman who endured great suffering, but who sought God, and underwent a refinement of the soul. Her pain is integrally linked to her spiritual

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[35] Hugh Steele-Smith's research notes, STE 11/1, RPC.
[36] J. R. B., *Hymns by Anne Steele*, p. xvii; and Margaret Maison, '"Thine, Only Thine!"', p. 14.
[37] In 1986, Hugh Steele-Smith sent a chronological list of Anne's illnesses compiled from her stepmother's diaries to a pathologist at the University of Leeds. Dr Michael Dixon, pronounced that, in his opinion, Steele suffered from malaria rather than tuberculosis, 'not unexpectedly living where she did by the Wallop Brook'. Dr Michael Dixon's reply to Hugh Steele-Smith's request, STE 11/1, RPC.
[38] Watson, *English Hymn*, p. 374.

development and to her art. In terms of the Philoctetes fable, as interpreted by Edmund Wilson, it is 'the idea that genius and disease, like strength and mutilation, may be inextricably bound up together'.[39]

Steele's hymns point to God as the only source of peace from affliction whether the attack is physical, spiritual or mental. 'God my only Happiness' tells that the Heavenly Father's consolation is the best and most desired:

1. When fill'd with grief, my anxious heart
To thee, my God, complains,
Sweet pleasure mingles with the smart,
And softens all my pains. (p. 87)

While thinkers including Virginia Woolf and Elaine Scarry have written about the difficulties of verbal language to describe felt pain,[40] it is notable that, here, the language of corporeal suffering (such as 'smart') is used, to describe the unseen internal, and physically unfelt, spiritual attack of sin upon the health of the human soul. This is a trope that was employed by the earlier male hymn writers also; for instance, Charles Wesley writes in 'The Pool of Bethesda':

7. Sin is now my sore disease;
But though I would be free,
When the water troubled is
There is no help for me:
Others find a cure, not I;
In Thee they wash away their sin;
I, alas! have no man nigh,
To put my weakness in.

8. Pain and sickness, at Thy word,
And sin and sorrow flies;
Speak to me, Almighty Lord,
And bid my spirit rise;
Bid me take my burden up,

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[39] Edmund Wilson, *The Wound and the Bow*, rev. edn (London: Alcuin Press, 1952), p. 257.
[40] Virginia Woolf, 'On Being Ill' in *Collected Essays*, 4 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1967), IV, pp. 193-203. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

The bed on which Thyself didst lie,
When on *Calvary's* steep top
My Jesus deign'd to die.[41]

From this point of view, Steele 's hymns express faith in the conventional language of dissenting piety. However, in Steele's case, her use of the conceit may have conveyed an added poignancy to her readers because the story of her sicknesses was well known and understood as having intimately influenced her spirituality.

Earthly solace is despised for being inferior to eternal heavenly bliss:

2. Earth flies with all her soothing charms,
Nor I the loss deplore;
No more, ye phantoms, mock my arms,
Nor tease my spirit more.

3. I languish for superior joy
To all that earth bestows;
For pleasure which can never cloy,
Nor change, nor period knows. (p. 87)

The supremacy of enduring heavenly joy and peace is important to Steele. It is stressed again in 'Lasting Happiness':

2. Can lasting happiness be found
Where seasons roll their hasty round
And days, and hours, with rapid flight,
Sweep cares and pleasures out of sight?

3. Arise my thoughts, my heart arise,
Leave this low world, and seek the skies;
There joys for ever, ever last,
When seasons, days, and hours are past. (p. 63)

The passing of time is equated with inconstancy and loss. Earthly transience is perhaps scorned because loss is a condition of the fall and a result of the entry of sin

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[41] John and Charles Wesley, *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, 13 vols (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office, 1868-72), II, pp. 154-5.

into the world. Steele asserts that it is better and nobler for the Christian not to think about fleeting earthly 'cares and pleasures', but to look forward to the transcendent and eternal blessings of heaven:

4. Come, Lord, thy powerful grace impart,
Thy grace can raise my wandering heart
To pleasure perfect and sublime,
Unmeasur'd by the wings of time.

5. Let those bright worlds of endless joy,
My thoughts, my hopes, my cares employ,
No more, ye restless passions, roam,
God is my bliss, and heaven my home. (p. 64)

If heaven is home, the Christian is an exile whose earthly life is merely the arduous journey home. Indeed, the last two verses (4 and 5) come close to a longing for death. Typologically, the idea is that Christians are like the Israelites of Exodus who wandered through the wilderness on their way to the promised land. This idea was utilised more explicitly by William Williams in 'Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah':

1. Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more.[42]

Steele is thus following an established devotional convention of her times in her hymns. Notably, her desire for heaven means that earthly life takes on a similar trajectory to Williams's male-authored hymn (heaven is the goal of earthly life). This is interesting in the context of June Hadden Hobbs's proposition that, if the Christian

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[42] William Williams, *Songs of Praise: English Hymns and Elegies of William Williams Pantycelyn, 1717-1791* (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1991), p. 108.

life is a voyage, spirituality is expressed in male-authored hymns as a linear journey (with a distinct purpose, a specific length and end, and following a marked path), while female-authored hymns express spirituality as being more like a walk (which is of indeterminate length, with no clearly defined destination, set in cyclical time, the purpose of which is the walk itself).[43] While Hobbs does seem to oversimplify the complexity of individuals' spiritualities regardless of their gender, her theory would suggest that Steele's hymns conform more to a masculine pattern. It would seem that, at this early stage of women's hymn writing, Steele, who had almost no female models to look to, drew from the traditions and examples that had been set down by the earlier male hymn writers with their masculine responses to religion rather than articulate a radically alternative female spirituality. Certainly, she expressed an admiration for Isaac Watts in 'Christ the Christian's Life':

1. O for the animating fire
That tun'd harmonious Watts's lyre
To sweet seraphic strains!
Celestial fire, that bore his mind
(Earth's vain amusements left behind)
To yonder blissful pains. (p. 123)

In another hymn Watts's influence is also particularly evident; one image she may have borrowed from him is that of the lowly worm:[44]

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[43] Hobbs, *'I Sing for I Cannot be Silent'*, p. 38. This idea is built on the theory of Carol Ochs's *Women and Spirituality* (Totowa: Rowman & Allanhead, 1983).

[44] The image of the worm was used by other writers too, but Watts's writing would have been an obvious place where Steele would have encountered it repeatedly. For instance, he uses it in: Psalm 6. 'Complaint in Sickness; or, Diseases healed'; Psalm 8. 'Christ's Condescension and Glorification; or, God made Man'; Psalm 22. v. 1-16. First Part. 'The Sufferings and Death of Christ'; Hymn 20. 'Spiritual Apparel; namely, the Robe of Righteousness, and Garments of Salvation, Isaiah lxi. 10'; Hymn 6. 'A Morning Song'; Hymn 9. 'Godly Sorrow arising from the Sufferings of Christ'; Hymn 46. 'God's Condescension to Human Affairs': Hymn 62. 'God the Thunderer; or, the last Judgment and Hell'; Hymn 90. 'Faith in Christ for Pardon and Sanctification'; Hymn 99. 'The Book of God's Decrees'; hymn 147. 'The Creation of the World, Gen. i.': Hymn 161. 'Christian Virtues; or, the Difficulty of Conversion'; Hymn 170. 'God Incomprehensible and Sovereign'; and Song 22. 'Against Pride in Clothes'.

2. His heart, whence love and pity dwelt
In all their softest forms,
Sustain'd the heavy load of guilt,
For lost rebellious worms:
('Desiring to love Christ without wandering', p. 106)

Steele's verse above is particularly reminiscent of Watts's Hymn 62 'God the Thunderer; Or, The Last Judgement and Hell' declares that 'Tempests of angry fire shall roll / To blast the rebel-worm'.[45] The idea of a worm serves to stress the idea that humanity is lowly and insignificant in comparison to the greatness of God. It probably appealed to Steele because, as J. R. Watson has noted, 'Steele is fond of the sharp contrast between human and divine.'[46] The idea that people are but worms in comparison to God has the theological effect of simultaneously elevating God's magnificence and his humility, for Christ's incarnation is all the more incredible because he 'left his throne above, / To dwell with sinful worms' ('The Incarnate Saviour', p. 53).

In the way that humans are like worms in contrast to God, heaven is a place of surpassing delight far removed from the imperfections of the earth. The consolation afforded by the idea of a place without sickness or suffering was probably potent for Steele, living with ill health before the advent of painkillers and antibiotics. Of sickness, Steele wrote that it not only caused physical incapacity but also made the spirit feel lame:

> The first attacks of a fever have so weakened my nerves and spirits, that every sprightly faculty, and almost every cheerful thought is sunk in a stupid languor, a listless inattention even to common things overspreads me, conversation is tasteless, and reading and thinking most impracticable [...].[47]

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[45] Isaac Watts, *The Psalms and Hymns of the Late Dr. Isaac Watts*, ed. Robert Goodacre, 2 vols (London: Francis Westley, 1821), II, p. 208.
[46] Watson, *English Hymn*, p. 193.
[47] Anne Steele, 'Thoughts on Sickness and on Recovery', *Miscellaneous Pieces*, vol. 3 of *Poems* (1780), p. 217.

For Steele, languor and weariness induced a depressive heaviness of the spirit, and only Christ could lift the soul out of such states of despondency:

1. Come weary souls with sin distrest,
The Saviour offers heavenly rest;
The kind, the gracious call obey,
And cast your gloomy fears away.

2. Oppress'd with guilt, a painful load,
O come, and spread your woes abroad;
Divine compassion, mighty love,
Will all the painful load remove.
('Weary Souls invited to Rest', p. 17)

The idea that Christ can remove burdens comes from his promise in Matthew 11. 28, 'Come unto me, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' However, it is likely that the image of the heavily burdened Christian soul, immortalised by John Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, was especially potent to English Baptists.

Ann Cator Steele's diaries suggest that Steele's prolonged struggle with pain was interpreted as part of her testing and refinement as a Christian even in her own time:

> 13-15th June 1754
>
> Nanny had the fever quite bad-------She was quite lightheaded and had a very painfull [sic] night after which she sweats extremely which brings her very weak and low. Mr W[akeford] and Molly came who is better. We had some agreeable talk, Nanny being bless'd with charming experience which she is willing to communicate according to her strength. May every affliction God sees fit to exercise our family with be bless'd to bring us nearer to himself. [...] [W]hen Nanny speaks of those sublime things, she as Job says is as a tabret,[48]

[48] Job 17. 6: 'He hath made me also a byword of the people; and aforetime I was as a tabret.' According to the *OED Online*, a 'tabret' is 'a small tabor, or timbrel', <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50245907?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=tabret&first=1&max_to_show=10> [accessed 31.10.2006]. A timbrel is generally played by women in the Bible (See Genesis 31. 27; 1 Samuel 10. 5; 18. 6).

> God having bless'd her with Excellent gifts and grace and when that grace is in a lively Exercise (as now) her conversation is delightfully sweet tho' it seems too much for her poor body to support.[49]

The image of Steele as a 'tabret', a small drum, timbrel or tambourine, from Job, the book of the Bible about suffering, suggests that the afflicted woman is an instrument of God beating for and to him. As her suffering is the source of her heavenly wisdom, she is also being beaten for the benefit of his people. In terms of the Calvinist theology of the Steele family's Particular Baptism, it is significant that Ann Cator Steele draws her image from Job (tabrets are mentioned elsewhere in the Bible) as this specific book deals with theodicy; specifically, the problem: 'Do innocent people suffer, or is suffering always deserved?'[50] As David Clines has asserted, the story of Job 'speaks out clearly against the idea that suffering is always a punishment for wrongdoing by insisting that the Job who suffers is a righteous man'.[51] Ann Cator Steele identifies her suffering stepdaughter as an innocent of God whose experience, rather than academic scriptural scholarship, gives her authority to speak of and for Him.

In 'Christ the Physician of Souls', Steele uses the analogy of sin as crippling, terminal disease along the lines of James's epistle which states that 'sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death' (James 1. 15):

1. Deep are the wounds which sin hath made:
Where shall the sinner find a cure?
In vain, alas, is nature's aid
The work exceeds all nature's power.

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[49] Anne Cator Steele, Diary, STE 2/1/3, RPC.
[50] David J. A. Clines, 'Job', *New Bible Commentary*, ed. D. A. Carson and others, 21st century edn (Leicester: IVP, 1994), p. 459.
[51] Clines, 'Job', p. 459.

2. Sin, like a raging fever, reigns
With fatal strength in every part;
With dire contagion fills the veins,
And spreads its poison to the heart. (p. 39)

The conceit of sin as disease potently expresses the debilitating nature of sin on the health of the soul. Although the idea is not original (for instance, Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley made the same connection), as collections of Steele's verse from the second edition of *Poems* (1780) onwards normally contained biographical information which emphasised her ill health, Steele's use of the analogy could convey an added poignancy for readers who were encouraged to make a connection between her painful life and the wisdom of her works.

Her Father's Daughter

While the history of Anne Steele's friendships and their influence on her work and life has been omitted in traditional biographies, much emphasis has been placed on her relationship with her father. In the 'Memoir' of *Hymns, Psalms and Poems* (1863), John Sheppard quotes from a draft letter (*c.* 1759-60) written by Steele dedicating *Poems* to her father. By this act, Sheppard simultaneously highlights the influence of the father and Steele's admirable filial duty:

> As many of these verses have been favoured by your kind approbation, I have now at your desire collected them into a little book, which I beg leave to present to you as a humble acknowledgment of my grateful sense of your parental affection, and the benefit I have received from your instructions. If you should survive me, it will, I doubt not, be preserved by you (however inconsiderable its real value) as a mournfully pleasing remembrance of a departed child who once shared your tender regard.[52]

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[52] In Sheppard's 'Memoir' in *Hymns, Psalms, Poems*, p. xii. Further references to this preface are given after the quotations in the text.

This somewhat morbid extract, written seventeen years before her actual death, presents a picture of Steele as an expiring but most obedient daughter. Indeed, Sheppard follows the passage with the judgement:

> such filial love and reverence for a parent is among the clearest and most pleasing marks of Christian character; and that the temper and habit of not a few young persons, in our more self-sufficient age, might be much improved by the study and earnest imitation of so lovely an example. (p. xiii)

Steele's adherence to the fifth commandment is proof of her suitability as an exemplary (female) Christian. The fact that she was forty years old at the time of this letter, and thus not a 'young person' is ignored. As a single woman, Steele has not made the transition to adult marriage-bed,[53] and, for her Victorian biographers, her special relationship with her father is interpreted as a state of perpetual dependence.

Her attachment to the father is understandable in the context of the early death of her mother. Marjorie Reeves has also deduced from Ann Cator Steele's diaries, entries such as 'Our girls went to school this day I desir'd they might be preserved and kept from learning vain words and other vanitys [*sic*]',[54] that 'it was her father, William Steele the elder, who determined that Anne and her stepsister [Reeves is incorrect here, Mary was a half-sister] should have some schooling as well as Anne's brother, William, junior'.[55] In her examination of the education of nonconformist women in the South, Reeves concluded that to a 'large extent the real education of

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[53] Hélène Cixous writes: '"Bridebed, childbed, bed of death": thus woman's trajectory is traced as she inscribes herself from bed to bed in Joyce's *Ulysses.*' 'Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays', in Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, translated by Betsy Wing, Theory and History of Literature, XXIV (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 63-132 (p. 66).

[54] Ann Cator Steele, Diary entry dated 29 March 1731, STE 2/1/2, RPC. Ann Cator Steele's diaries are first mentioned by Steele's biographers in John Sheppard's 'Memoir' (1863), where three extracts about the publishing of *Poems* are quoted. While she is identified as 'pious', her influence and pedigree is not described, and Sheppard quickly refocuses on her husband. Pitman quotes two of the same diary extracts but attributes them to Steele's father, thereby significantly altering the sexual politics and nuances of meaning, and perpetuating the idea of male/patriarchal commentary on a daughter's writings and the publication of her work. Pitman's error raises questions about women who participated in the perpetuation of patriarchal primacy by sustaining a myth of the need for male permission for women to write. Reeves, ***Pursuing the Muses***, p. 26.

[55] Reeves, *Pursuing the Muses*, p. 27. No records survive from William Steele on the subject.

intellectual young women was fostered by the men in their social environment -- bookish fathers who were in touch with theologians and writers of various types or literary men who became patrons of talented girls'.[56]

Steele's devotion for her earthly father may have informed her reverence of God as Heavenly Father. She promises filial duty to God in her hymn 'Filial Submission':

2. I would submit to all thy will,
For thou art good and wise,
Let every anxious thought be still,
Nor one faint murmur rise.

[...]

4. My father---O permit my heart,
To plead her humble claim,
And ask the bliss those words impart,
In my Redeemer's name. (p. 147)

As the following extract from an unpublished version of Psalm 23 explains, veneration should be given to God in gratitude for his tender, guardian care:

2. On mossy Banks by crystal Streams
Gilt with the Sun's refreshing Beams
Soft my weary head recline
And sleep in arms of Love Divine
His heavenly blessings daily shed
Their chosen influence on my head
How blest am I who always find
Pasture so sweet Shepherd so kind.

3. When like a Silly Sheep I would
Forsake his pasture and his fold
He brings his wandr'er back again
To dwell on his delightful plain.
A willing Captive free to own
That rest remains with him alone
In vain I think elsewhere to find
Pasture so sweet Shepherd so kind.[57]

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[56] Reeves, *Pursuing the Muses*, p. 9.

It is not independence of self but dependence on the goodness and protection of God that Steele promotes.

Steele's hymns teach that God is never less than a benevolent father with the best interests of his children at heart. The poem 'Written in a Painful Illness' affirms the proverb that God is a Father who disciplines his children for their benefit: 'He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes' (Proverbs 13. 24):

1. Indulgent father, ever gracious God,
Low at thy feet submissive I adore
Thy chastening hand, nor murmur at the rod:
Yet thy supporting arm I must implore.

[...]

5. O may the rod, the happy end promote
To humble, cleanse, renew this heart of mine!
And may thy grace assist me to devote
Its powers to thee alone, for they are thine! (pp. 247-8)

This hymn displays again the resignation to God's will which Pitman thought Steele conveyed so well. The title of the hymn suggests that even 'in a painful illness', she was able to trust in God and affirm her belief that the suffering was for her gain. The response is saintly, but also characteristic of Evangelical faith which encourages internal scrutiny in the search for the meaning and purpose of each event.

That she believed filial duty to be psychologically essential is testified in *Verses for Children, By Theodosia*, a collection of poems written to her nieces and nephews collected and published after her death, which again emphasises the fifth commandment:

My dear little boys, I send you no toys,

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[57] Anne Steele. Unpublished poem, transcribed in Josiah Lewis's hand, STE 3/17/2(g), RPC.

For those are for babies you know,

But since to good sense you have some pretence,
Attend to the counsel below.

What papa says is right, observe with delight,
Mamma too with pleasure obey;
If you strive to be good, and behave as you shou'd,
Their praise will be sweeter than play.[58]

The idea that the heavenly parent's word should also be delighted in and obeyed is given in Steele's most famous hymn:

1. Father of mercies, in thy word
What endless glory shines!
For ever be thy name ador'd
For these celestial lines. (p. 36)

In this hymn, the Father's word, the Bible, is described as a luxuriant meeting place where the earth-bound Christian may encounter the abundant joys of heaven:

2. Here mines of heavenly wealth disclose
Their bright, unbounded store:
The glittering gem no longer glows,
And India boasts no more.

3. Here may the wretched sons of want
Exhaustless riches find:
Riches, above what earth can grant,
And lasting as the mind.

4. Here, the fair tree of knowledge grows,
And yields a free repast,
Sublimer sweets than nature knows,
Invite the longing taste.

5. Here may the blind and hungry come,
And light, and food receive;
Here shall the meanest guest have room,
And taste, and see, and live. (pp. 36-7)

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[58] [Anne Steele]. *Verses for Children* (Salisbury: E. Easton, 1788), pp. 6-7. Quoted in Reeves, *Pursuing the Muses*, p. 83. I have not been able to locate a copy as there is no copy listed in the English Short Title Catalogue. Steele is said to have originally written the *Verses* for her nieces and nephews.

The Bible becomes a site for exotic and thrilling adventure. The 'mines' of the first line perhaps call to mind King Solomon's mines and 'India', traditionally associated with rare spices, rich colours and fabulous jewels, gold and silver, is said to be unequal to the riches of the Bible. Heavenly treasure is described not only in terms of plenty, but also in terms of its ability to satisfy the needs of the human soul:

7. Here springs of consolation rise,
To cheer the fainting mind;
And thirsty souls receive supplies,
And sweet refreshment find.

8. When guilt and terror, pain and grief,
United rend the heart,
Here sinners meet divine relief,
And cool the raging smart.

9. Here the Redeemer's welcome voice,
Spreads heavenly peace around;
And life, and everlasting joys
Attend the blissful sound. (p. 37)

This hymn resonates with the gospel values of largesse, hospitality and welcome as seen so often in the life and teachings of Jesus. Several of Christ's parables are implicitly called to mind; in particular, the Parable of the Prodigal Son and the Parable of the Great Banquet. As such, this hymn not only serves to celebrate the Bible; it also functions as a call for lost children to return to the forgiving and loving Father's generous embrace.

Popularity and Influence

For dissenters, hymnody (as opposed to *The Book of Common Prayer*) provided a collective theology and identity. Steele's hymns thus performed the function of imparting a shared doctrine for the unification of the Baptist Church in England. As Karen Smith has noted:

> Because Anne Steele's hymns were not only published on their own but included in hymn collections used by Baptists of her day it may be assumed that they not only indicate some of her own personal conviction, but that they also reflect something of the generally held theological position.[59]

Theologically, Steele's hymns are resolutely Evangelical: word-centred, crucicentric and encouraging a personal relationship with Christ. Her lengthy, thirty-nine verse 'Redeeming Love', which summarises the gospel story, illustrates how a hymn could be used to impart biblical teaching:

4. In our first parent's crime we fell;
Our blood, our vital breath,
Deep ting'd with all the seeds of ill,
Sad heirs to sin and death.

[...]

7. God's only son, (stupendous grace!)
Forsook his throne above;
And swift to save our wretched race,
He flew on wings of love.

[...]

13. Infernal legions trembling fled,
Aw'd by his powerful word;
And winds and seas his voice obey'd,
And own'd their sovereign Lord.

14. But man, vile man, his love abus'd,
Blind to the noblest good;
Blasphem'd his power, his word refus'd,
And sought his sacred blood. (pp. 5-6)

In full, the hymn reads like a creed; specifically, it is a kind of Evangelical creed with particular stress on the atoning work of Christ upon his cross. Almost half the verses

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[59] Karen Smith, 'The Community and the Believer', p. 16.

focus on the Easter story. The dolorous passion of Christ is dramatised by Steele who becomes the narrator of the religious spectacle commenting on and pointing to the events to be played out in the reader's mind's eye:

16. What pain, what soul-oppressing pain,
The great Redeemer bore;
While bloody sweat, like drops of rain,
Distill'd from every pore!

17. And ere the dreadful storm descends
Full on his guiltless head,
See him by his familiar friends
Deserted and betray'd!'

18. While ruffian bands the Lord surround,
Relentless, murderous foes;
Meek, as a lamb for slaughter bound,
The patient sufferer goes.

19. Arraign'd at Pilate's impious bar,
(Unparallel'd disgrace!)
See spotless innocence appear
In guilt's detested place!

[...]

23. Ah! *see* the fatal cross appears,
Heart-wounding, dreadful scene!
His sacred flesh rude iron tears,
With agonizing pain. (My italics, pp. 6-7)

As the repetition of the word 'see' stresses, to behold the suffering Christ in one's mind's eye is to visualise Christ as *Ecce Homo*, the man of sorrows, at the crucifixion. This work clearly owes something to earlier meditative traditions epitomised in Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. As Louis L. Martz notes, Loyola, in additional directions for performing the exercises of the First Week, suggested that one should not:

> desire to think on pleasant and joyful subjects [...] because any consideration of joy and delight hinders the feelings of pain, grief and tears for our sins, but rather to keep before my mind my wish to grieve and to feel pain.[60]

Although Loyola is a Catholic writer seemingly far removed from the Baptist Steele, as Martz has pointed out, 'it is important to remember that the *Exercises* do not stand alone in their kind, but represent a summary and synthesis of efforts since the twelfth century to reach a precise and widely accepted method of meditation.'[61] He has further noted that, by the seventeenth century, 'a large proportion of the English public had taken to its heart the fruits of the Counter Reformation in the realm of inward devotion', and that '[t]hese continental practices of meditation combined with older traditions of primer and prayer, and with the inward surge of Puritanism'.[62] Thus, it seems there had been considerable interdenominational traffic in religious literature by the time Steele was writing.

At the same time, 'Redeeming Love' is expressed in the eighteenth-century language of sensibility. Steele's narrative encourages sympathy towards the suffering figure of Christ; she desires the reader/singer to respond with penitent feeling to Christ's agony in verse 16, and to empathise with the sorrow of his rejection in verse 17. The emotive nature of the hymn is particularly interesting in the context of Horton Davies's point that:

> the great significance of this eighteenth century Dissenting hymnody was that if 'enthusiasm' was banned from the sermon it was reintroduced in the praise, and thus the emotions were not starved, as was so often the case in Established worship during this period.[63]

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[60] Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1954), pp. 209-10.
[61] Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, p. 25.
[62] Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, p. 9.
[63] Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Watts and Wesley to Maurice, 1690-1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 100.

The technique of arousing penitent feeling can be seen again in Hymn CIV: 'Sin the Cause of Death':

2. When bleeding, groaning on the tree,
He breathed such agonizing cries,
What nature suffer'd, Lord, with thee,
And darkness cloth'd the mourning skies.

3. Shall I harbour in my breast,
(Tremble my soul at such a deed)
This dreadful foe, this fatal guest?
'Twas sin that made my saviour bleed. (p. 113)

That Steele admired and emulated contemporary poetry can be seen in her verses 'Occasioned by Reading Mr. Gray's Hymn to Adversity' and 'An Imitation of Mr. Pope's Ode on Solitude'. It is probable that the contemporary popularity of Steele's hymns was partly owing to the fact that they were influenced by and reflected the fashionable poetry of her times.

In terms of the literary tradition of women's hymn writing, it will be seen that the privileging of sympathy was a feature of Steele's hymns which was continued by later women hymn writers. Empathetic feeling may have appealed to women because it was a power available to them when more active responses to the world were not. Furthermore, as compassion was deemed a Christ-like characteristic, to share in others' pain was to strive towards godliness. In Hymn XI, Steele compares 'Divine Compassion' to tender maternal care:

2. Shall the kind mother's gentle breast,
No soft emotion share;
But, every tender thought suppress,
Forget her infant's care?

3. The helpless child, that oft her eyes
Have watch'd with anxious thought,
While her fond breast appeas'd his cries---
And can he be forgot?

4. Strange as it is, yet this may be,
For creature-love is frail;
But thy Creator's love to thee,
O Zion, cannot fail.

5. No, thy dear name engraven stands,
In characters of love,
On thy almighty Father's hands;
And never shall remove. (pp. 50-51)

The thought that God's love is even greater than that of a human mother may have influenced William Cowper, whose hymn 'Lovest Thou Me?', first published in the *Olney Hymns* (1779), contains a similar verse:

3. Can a woman's tender care
Cease, towards the child she bare?
Yes, she may forgetful be,
Yet will I remember thee.[64]

Both Steele and Cowper are paraphrasing scriptural passages. Isaiah 49. 15 asks: 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?', and answers: 'yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee'; while Isaiah 66. 13 asserts: 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.' Even though these texts teach that the earthly mother's care is not as pure as the ideal love of the Heavenly Father, the analogy valorises everyday women's experience and roles.

Another feature of Steele's hymn writing which the later women continued to employ is her use of the language of love:

38. I yield, to thy dear conqu'ring arms
I yield my captive soul:

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[64] William Cowper, 'Lovest Thou Me?', *The Poetical Works of William Cowper*, ed. H. S. Milford, 4th edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 444.

> O let my all-subduing charms
> My inmost pow'rs control! ('Redeeming Love', p. 9)

This verse describes a state akin to sexual surrender; particularly the traditional dynamics of desire where a weaker, more passive woman gives herself up to a stronger and more active man; as Gayle Rubin has observed, 'From the standpoint of the [heterosexual marriage] system, the preferred female sexuality would be one which responded to the desire of others, rather than one which actively desired and sought a response.'[65] Although on one level, Steele is using her own position as a woman to envisage a relationship of love with her saviour, this verse also successfully articulates the relationship of the Church, the Bride (regardless of the gender make-up of the singing congregation) to Christ, the Groom. Any male singers also take on the subjectivity of the passive female. From this point of view, there is a dismantling of expected masculine behaviour, which arguably demonstrates how gender norms are culturally constructed and performed.

The earlier male hymn writers who influenced Steele also used the language of love. Indeed, the Christian's desire for God may be understood within the context of St Paul's statement that 'We now see by means of a mirror in an enigma; but then face to face' (1 Corinthians 13. 12). As Sarah Beckworth has asserted:

> His [Paul's] use of the image describes and accounts for the necessity of meditation and the possibility of partial representation of God accommodated to human capacity, yet at the same time laments the very partiality of that meditation in the lack of (and therefore desire for) the heavenly harmony of face-to-face communion.[66]

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[65] Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex' in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed., Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Maldam, MA; Oxford: Blackwells, 1999), pp. 533-577, (p. 547).

[66] Sarah Beckworth, 'A Very Mystical Mysticism: The Medieval Mysticism of Margery Kempe' in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History*, ed. David Aers (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), pp. 34-57 (p. 42).

However, Steele's language has been described by J. R. Watson as being, in some ways, 'more intense and dramatic' than that of the male writers who influenced her such as Isaac Watts.[67] 'A Dying Saviour' is written in imitation of Watts:

1. Stretch'd on the cross the Saviour dies;
Hark! his expiring groans arise!
See, from his hands, his feet, his side,
Runs down the sacred crimson tide! (p. 111)

Of this verse, Watson writes that:

> where his 'See from his head, his hands, his feet' is the steady gaze of devotional contemplation, 'surveying' the Cross, Anne Steele's verse has a sudden *coup de théâtre* in the first line, and the echo of Watts,[68] in this context, is given an intensity and urgency from the dramatic situation (and the exclamation marks, which are common in her work).[69]

Circulation

The greatest agent of influence on the circulation of Steele's hymns and the shaping of her popularity was Caleb Evans. In 1769, sixty-two hymns by her were published in John Ash and Caleb Evans's *A Collection of Hymns Adapted to Public Worship.* The *Collection*, as it came to be known, was the first Baptist hymn book, and Steele was an inspiration for its inception.[70] The heavy representation of her hymns in the *Collection* means that her hymns were sung extensively throughout England. As

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[67] Watson, *English Hymn*, p. 192.
[68] The reference is to Watts's Hymn 7, 'Crucifixion to the World by the Cross of Christ, Gal. vi. 14', which starts: 'When I survey the wondrous cross / On which the prince of glory dy'd, / My richest gain I count but loss, / And pour contempt on all my pride'. Line 4 of Steele's hymn seems to be alluding to the third verse of Watts's hymn: 'His dying crimson like a robe' / Spreads o'er his body on the tree, / Then am I dead to all the globe, / And all the globe is dead to me.'
[69] Watson, *English Hymn*, p. 192.
[70] Hugh Martin, 'The Baptist Contribution to Early English Hymnody', *The Baptist Quarterly*, 19 (1962), 195-208 (p. 197); Ronald W. Thomson, 'Anne Steele, 1716-1778', *The Baptist Quarterly* 21 (1966), 368-371 (p. 368), Roger Haydon, 'Evangelical Calvinists Among Eighteenth Century Baptists with Particular References to Bernard Foskett, Hugh and Caleb Evans and the British Baptist Academy, 1690-1791', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Keele, 1991), p. 288.

inspiration for the first Baptist hymnbook, Steele's sphere of influence extends beyond women's writing; she may thus be considered a 'mother' of not just women's hymn writing but of Baptist hymnody also.

The *Collection* was widely advertised in the circulation letters of Baptist Associations such as the Western Association. The text was advertised using marketing strategies recognisable today:

> An advertisement for the 1780 edition of Anne Steele's *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional [...]*, was printed on the back of the circular letter when the Western Association met at Frome, May 1780, which read: 'those who take six sets to be allowed the seventh gratis [...] all profits to the benefit of Bristol Education Society'.[71]

The 'Advertisement' inside the hymnal contains a specific reference to the influence of Steele's work:

> The many excellent Hymns, with which our Collection has been enriched, taken from two Volumes of *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional*, and which bear the Signature, T, the Author has been so kind as to revise for this Publication: And has likewise favoured the Editors with several valuable Originals, which bear the same Signature.[72]

As the circulation of the *Collection* became greater than that of *Poems*, it seems that Steele's hymns would have gained wider recognition and public use through the *Collection* than through her own volumes. However, the *Collection* gives no real indication to the true identity of the author. The letter 'T', used to denote 'Theodosia', does not even signify the author's sex. Unless previously familiar with *Poems*, the author would not know that the hymns by 'T' came from the pen of a woman.

Although Steele's full identity was not revealed in the 1769 *Collection*, it was unveiled to the public by Caleb Evans in his republication of *Poems* in 1780, two

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[71] Karen Smith, 'The Community and the Believer', p. 104, n. 176.
[72] *A Collection of Psalms & Hymns, from Various Authors; Adapted Chiefly to Public Worship*, ed. John Ash and Caleb Evans (Lancaster: Henry Walmsley, 1780), p. iv.

years after her death. He writes in his preface to the new volume, *Miscellaneous Pieces*:

> It may be possibly some gratification to those who have hitherto been ignorant of the real name and character of the pious Theodosia, whose whole writings have so often cheered their hours of solitude, warmed their hearts with the love of virtue, and the glow of friendship, and animated their devotions in the closet and congregation; to be informed that she was known to her more intimate friends under the name of Mrs. Anne Steele. (p. vi)

This is supplemented with a lengthy, somewhat hyperbolic, verse eulogy in which he speaks more about his personal interactions with Steele as a benevolent Madonna figure:

> Where the maternal friend, whose watchful care,
> Whose fond, assiduous tenderness sustain'd
> My helpless childhood? whose instructive voice,
> (Sweet as the song of seraphs) mildly taught
> My heedless feet the sacred path of virtue;
> That sacred path of pleasantness and peace
> She long trod. (p. xiii)

Her female authority is therefore located within the gendered role of mother as moral educator.

A landmark publication which played an even greater part in the circulation and popularity of Steele's works was John Rippon's *A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors Intended to be an Appendix to Dr Watts's Psalms and Hymns* (1787). Rippon was influenced by Caleb Evans, who taught him at Bristol. Significantly, he entered the institution in 1769, the year of the publication of Ash and Evans's *Collection*. The first edition of his *Selection* contains fifty-four hymns by Steele which he identifies as being by 'Steele', not 'Theodosia', in the text. It was important for Rippon, who may be considered somewhat of an entrepreneur, to attribute authorship for the market that was curious to know the originators of the hymns:

> To-day, they have asked, 'Who was the Author of it?' and they have been told, it was one of Dr Watts's Lyric Poems; a Month after they have made a similar Enquiry, and have learned that the Hymn was Dr Doddridge's; the next time they have been comforted, by one of President Davies's of America, or else by the united Piety and Poetry of Theodosia.[73]

The only other hymn writer to be better represented than Steele in the first edition of Rippon's *Selection* is Philip Doddridge with 101 hymns. Benjamin Beddome follows Steele with forty-two hymns in the first edition of the *Selection*. Both these dissenting ministers composed their hymns for use after their Sunday morning sermons; they were to serve as a kind of summary. Doddridge and Beddome's hymns are mostly about specific passages of scripture, while Steele's hymns can also be about personal experience and meditation.

Steele's representation in Rippon's *Selection* is particularly important because this hymn book was tremendously popular in Britain and America. The volumes were sold cheap enough to be 'universally available at reasonable prices, the *Selection* was offered at a discount to ministers, who would be encouraged to introduce it to their churches'.[74] In 1792, demand so outstripped supply in America that two unauthorized editions were printed.[75] One Kentucky pastor wrote to Rippon, 'If I had a thousand copies of your *Selection* I could sell them'.[76] Thus, Steele's hymns were exported to and disseminated in America. Their popularity was such that her *Poems* was published in Boston in 1808. In the same year, *Hymns selected from the most approved authors, for the use of Trinity Church, Boston* was published which contained 59 hymns by Steele out of a total of 149.[77] The *Selection* also became

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[73] Preface to *A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors Intended to be an Appendix to Dr Watts's Psalms and Hymns*, ed. John Rippon, 2nd edn (London: L. Wayland, 1790), p iv.
[74] Kenneth Manley, 'John Rippon, D. D., (1751-1863) and the Particular Baptists' (unpublished D. Phil. Thesis, Regent's Park College, Oxford University, 1967), p. 201.
[75] Manley, 'John Rippon', p. 190.
[76] Quoted in Manley, 'John Rippon', p. 197.
[77] According to Candy Gunther Brown: 'American compilers preferred eighteenth-century British texts to newer American compositions. [...] American evangelicals used the old British texts to invoke a pattern of

popular across denominations. T. G. Crippen asserted in an essay about Congregational hymnody that the *Selection* was 'probably the most important of all the supplements to Watts. [...] The compiler was a Baptist, but the book was used in many paedobaptist congregations'.[78]

Some of Steele's hymns not only reflected the theology of Baptists but also reflected the 'generally-held position' of the majority of the Protestant British. Her hymn 'On the Fifth of November' is a firmly Protestant work celebrating the foiling of the Roman Catholic Gunpowder Plot in 1605:

3. When hell and Rome combin'd their power,
And doom'd these isles their certain prey;
Thy hand forbade the fatal hour,
Their impious plots in ruin lay.

4. Again our restless cruel foes
Resum'd, avow'd, their black design;
Again to save us God arose,
And Britain own'd the hand divine.

5. Why, gracious God, is Britain sav'd?
Why blest with liberty and light?
Nor by fell tyranny enslav'd,
Nor lost in superstition's night?

4. Not for our sakes, we conscious own;
A wretched, vile, ungrateful race:
'Tis done to make thy glory known;
To show the wonders of thy grace. (p. 143)

The interpretation reflects the contemporary view that God had graciously saved Britain from error and superstition.

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nondenominational Christian fellowship that they perceived as characterizing this earlier era better than their own. Scholars have identified the hymns printed most frequently in a cross section of American hymnals published from 1830 to 1890. The thirty most reprinted hymns all appeared in at least thirty-nine, or two thirds, of the fifty-nine collections examined': *Word in the World*, p. 234.

[78] T. G. Crippen, 'Congregational Hymnody', *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, vii (1916-1918), p. 227.

The Saintly Death

Soon after the death of Steele, a process akin to canonisation started which presented Steele's life and death to the public as almost a hagiographical *vita*. Caleb Evans started this process in his preface and eulogy in the third volume of the 1780 edition of *Poems*. Considering Evans's Evangelical Calvinism, it is startling that he almost endows her with the supernatural powers of a Catholic saint:

> Methinks I hear that lov'd, that well-known voice,
> Ev'n from the grave, direct my erring mind
> Beyond death's dreary realms to fairer scenes.
> Yes, 'tis her gentle language---'See a friend
> That lives for ever.'---Shall I not obey
> Her last command, her dying admonition? (p. xiii)

The extract says much about the perceived powers of hymnody; even in death, Steele's words continue to be spread by the singing congregations of the land. She is so spiritual and devoted to her Saviour that, even beyond the grave, she impresses the need for Christ on the hearts of living men. Evans also gives an affective description of Steele's death in his preface:

> Having been confined to her chamber some years before her death, she had long waited with christian dignity for the awful hour of her departure. She often spoke, not merely with tranquillity but joy, of her decease. When the interesting hour came, she welcomed its arrival, and though her feeble body was excruciated with pain, her mind was perfectly serene. She uttered not a murmuring word, but it was all resignation, peace and holy joy. She took the most affectionate leave of her weeping friends around her, and at length, the happy moment of her dismission arriving, she closed her eyes, and with these animating words on her dying lips, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth', gently fell asleep in Jesus. (pp. ix-x)

This account diverges from the funeral sermon preached by Josiah Lewis, transcribed and presented to Steele's sister-in-law and nieces, which survives in The Angus Library:

> It was frequently, I am told, the wish of our deceased friend, that [...] she might be able to speak for God in her dying moments. But tho', through extreme weakness, she was not capable of this, yet what an honor [*sic*] does such a death as her's reflect upon the religion of Jesus![79]

Caleb Evans's interpretation of Steele's life is not only reflective of his high regard for her but also serves an economic and political purpose. As president of the Bristol Education Society, he had vested interests for the market success of the 1780 *Poems*, as his preface indicates:

> As Theodosia was placed by providence in a state of independence, and religiously devoted the profits arising from the sale of the former editions of her work, to the purposes of benevolence; so the profits which may arise from this edition are appropriated by her surviving relatives, to the use of the BRISTOL EDUCATION SOCIETY. (pp. x-xi)

During a time when nonconformists were discriminated against by civic laws, Steele was presented by Evans as a peerless example of Christian womanhood. His eulogy may be read as a piece of Baptist propaganda;[80] Steele was painted not only as 'one of the brightest stars of the firmament of Baptist hymnody',[81] but a virtuous representative of an oppressed minority.

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[79] Josiah Lewis, *The Mourner's Consolation: A Discourse Occasioned by the Decease of Mrs Anne Steele of Broughton, Hants* in *A Pious Memorial to Anne Steele (1778) and William Steele (1785): To Mrs Martha Steele and Misses Maria Anne and Martha Steele, Nieces of the Deceased*, STE 3/15, RPC. This process akin to canonisation was not unique to Anne Steele. Marlene R. Hansen writes that Elizabeth Singer Rowe's 'friends and relatives determined that she should join the ranks of the angels, at least as far as the world was concerned'[79] and how '[t]he myth of the pious Mrs Rowe rose like a phoenix fro m the tomb of the mortal woman': Marlene Hansen, The Pious Mrs Rowe', *English Studies*, 1 (1995), 34-51 (p. 35).

[80] Eulogies as propaganda has been explored by Retha Warnicke, who has said of seventeenth-century eulogies for women that they often 'had little more to say about her [the dead woman] beyond lauding her recent conversion to Catholicism to Protestantism. The printing of her eulogy thus lends itself as much to the realm of Protestant propaganda as to gender socialization.' See R. Warnicke, 'Eulogies for Women: Public Testimony of Their Godly Example and Leadership' in *Attending Early Modern Women* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1994), pp. 169-186 (p. 171).

[81] Maison, '"Thine, Only Thine!"', p. 14.

It has been demonstrated that the *vita* of Anne Steele, handed down through the generations, has been a project of selection and a mythologised interpretation of her actual life. Steele has been presented as a pitiful and unfortunate woman whose difficult life was marred by romantic tragedy and ill-health, but who remained faithfully submissive to God, an eighteenth-century, dissenting martyr. This has led to assessments of Steele's work which have concluded that 'Anne Steele's outlook was influenced by her ill-health, and by the sorrows and disappointments that she endured.'[82] In constructing a saintly portrait of Steele, some human aspects of her life have been obscured from history, such as her position at the centre of an ambitious circle of literary women writing in the South of England. Her pioneering influence in Baptist hymnody and, by extension, on the shared theology of the Baptist Church is also not well known. Readers readily accepted the sensational details of the stories of Steele's personal tragedies and did not seek to challenge the truth of the claims made by her biographers. The myth of the sickly, isolated, spinster hymn writer has persisted. The hidden history reveals something else: not only was Anne Steele gregarious and socially popular, but the construction of her life as a suffering, spinster woman hymn writer established a mould for the profession. Margaret Maison writes that: 'Sanctified suffering, resignation to God's will, and trust in God as the great physician and healer are constant themes of her verse, and she set the fashion for women's hymn-writing for invalids that lasted for over a century.'[83] The influence of Steele's writing was tremendously significant in setting trends within hymnody which women continued to follow for several generations. As such, Anne Steele is a powerful matriarch of women's hymn writing.

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[82] Maison, '"Thine, Only Thine!"', p. 16.
[83] Ibid., p. 16.

Two Labouring-Class Women Hymn Writers:

Susanna Harrison (1752-1784) and Eliza Westbury (1808-1828)

The Uncultivated Genius

In 1780, a volume of hymns entitled *Songs in the Night* was published, attributed to 'A Young Woman Under Heavy Afflictions'.[1] The author was Susanna Harrison, an impoverished, labouring-class, Congregationalist woman from Ipswich. The preface to the first edition by an anonymous editor explained that:

> Suffice it to say of this Publication, that the Author of it is a very obscure Young Woman, and quite destitute of the Advantages of Education, as well as under great bodily Affliction. Her Father dying when she was young, and leaving a large Family unprovided for, she went out to Service at sixteen Years of Age; in which Station she continued till *August*, 1772; when Disorders seized her, which ever since have baffled the Power of Medicine and the Skill of Physicians.[2]

The editor's disclosure of the author's humble origins and circumstances explains why she is 'a young woman', and not 'a lady'.[3] His biographical sketch was intended to arouse pathos and sympathy for the poverty-stricken, fatherless invalid. Harrison is established as a pitiful sufferer but as one favoured by God, a remarkable prodigy despite her humble background and mysterious medical constraints:

> God, who is rich in Mercy, was pleased, in Love to her Soul, at the beginning of the Affliction, marvellously to manifest Himself unto her, and has been instructing her from that time in the Things pertaining to His Kingdom and the Righteousness thereof --- as the following poetic Performances, which are printed from the Author's own Hand-writing (who, by the way, LEARNT HERSELF to write) do in some measure witness.[4]

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[1] 'By the 1820s, the work had gone through fifteen British editions and six American editions.' Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance: Labouring Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), p. 9.

[2] Susanna Harrison, *Songs in the Night* (London: Hawes, 1781), p. iii. Hereafter referred to as *Songs*.

[3] This may also explain why Harrison does not appear in Pitman's *LHW*, although it seems more likely Pitman simply had not heard of her.

[4] Harrison, *Songs*, p. iii.

As Donna Landry has noted, 'Poverty exacerbates the ordinary female exclusion from learning and literature'.[5] As such, Harrison's entry into writing is doubly remarkable because of her class as well as her sex.

Of the eighteenth century, Paul Langford has written that, 'Much interest was displayed in the ease with which it was possible to turn the vulgar into the polite, particularly where the language of letters of politeness were available'.[6] Harrison's work was certainly valued as a curiosity. In the second edition, John Conder declared in a new 'Recommendation' that her writings were 'the efforts of uncultivated Genius, connected with a true spirit of Piety' (although it was also added 'that there may be several occasional escapes, as to her Language, Grammar, and her Ornaments of exact Writing').[7] By 1822, it had run to fourteen editions. '[I]n terms of reception and impact on possible readerships', Landry has asserted that *Songs* was 'the most important publication by a plebeian female poet'.[8] Its success does appear to have been in response to the tragic circumstances and unusual authorial beginnings of the 'young woman under heavy afflictions'.

Indeed, Harrison has been 'reclaimed' most recently by literary historians in the context of 'plebeian' or 'labouring-class' writing. For instance, her work is included in the Pickering and Chatto anthology: *Eighteenth-Century English Labouring-Class Poets* (2003). In the introduction to the second volume, in which Harrison is included, the editor Bridget Keegan writes about the importance of the

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[5] Donna Landry, 'The Resignation of Mary Collier', in *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, ed. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 100.
[6] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), p. 121. He quotes Stephen Duck, the thresher poet; James Woodhouse, the shoemaker poet; and Simon Hedges, the labourer poet, as examples.
[7] John Conder, 'The Recommendation' to Harrison, *Songs*, p. iv. John Conder was grandfather of Josiah Conder, editor of *The Congregational Hymn Book*.
[8] Landry, *Muses of Resistance*, p. 9.

'concept of natural or original genius -- of literary or artistic talent arising without the aid of education'[9] to the eighteenth-century vogue for plebeian writing.

Harrison's work was marketed shrewdly by her editors. The preface to the first edition explains carefully the circumstances surrounding the publication of *Songs*. The editor intimates that the author is not self-seeking:

> But, such is her modesty, they would never have appeared to the World in her Life-time, if it had not been that some Months ago she thought she was actually in dying Circumstances; she therefore committed them to the Care of the Editor, charging him to let none see them till after her decease. --- But as she appears now much more likely to live, than at the beginning of her Affliction, (tho' without any Prospect of ever being able to earn her Bread) he could not be easy to let them lay by him any longer, 'hid up in a Napkin;' thinking, that the Talent was given her to profit withal, and that they might, under the Blessing of the Most High, be of some Use to others, more especially to the Sons and Daughters of Affliction.
>
> The reader may depend upon it, If there should be any Profit arise from the Sale thereof, it will be faithfully applied to the Author's Use.[10]

The preface is an apologia for the publication of what the editor promotes as a remarkable literary endeavour in the midst of almost insurmountable odds. The editor acts as an advocate for the author silenced by propriety and humility. His allusion to the Parable of the Talents, the servant who was admonished for hiding his Master's gift in a napkin (Luke 19. 20) makes the analogy that wasting a talent from God is a sin which will incur his wrath, and provides scriptural precedence and authority to justify the publication of Harrison's work.

In this respect, Harrison's entry into print culture may be compared with that of Anne Steele. Harrison's refusal to reveal her name in the first edition of *Songs* arises from the same problems relating to Christian humility and female modesty that existed for Steele. In parallel to the way that Steele promoted herself and her work as

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[9] Bridget Keegan, 'Introduction' to *Eighteenth-Century English Labouring-Class Poets: 1700-1700*, volume II (1740-1780), ed. Bridget Keegan (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003, p. xv.
[10] 'Preface', *Songs* (1781), pp. iii-iv.

'gift of God' under the pseudonym 'Theodosia', Harrison's art is marketed as a talent from God which must be disseminated to others. Although both women's works were published with the aid of male friends and mentors, the prefatory materials suggest that Harrison's work was patronised far more visibly than was Steele's.

Songs was consciously promoted for commercial success by the first editor who proposed that profit would be much-needed bread for the destitute and afflicted author. A sympathetic and supportive reception of the text was thus carefully constructed by the editor who exercised his patriarchal authority as patron. He was acting as 'One who countenances, supports, or protects'.[11] However, the male editor disconcertingly occupied the female author's silence in the narration of her own story. Further, his narrative admits overriding the author's wishes for her work not to be published during her lifetime. As in the case of Hannah More and Ann Yearsley, the relationship between Harrison and her editors appears to be that of 'the middle-class reformist and the working-class prodigy'.[12] The first editor's preface becomes the 'master narrative' which gives the female author patriarchal endorsement and permission to enter print culture.

Her Liminal Identity

When Harrison finally speaks to her readers to reveal her identity, it is in the form of an acrostic in the second edition of *Songs* (1781). John Conder explains:

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[11] Samuel Johnson's definition of 'patron' in his *A Dictionary of the English Language [...]*, 2 vols (London: printed by W. Strahan, for J. and P. Knapton; T. and T. Longman; C. Hitch and L. Hawes; A. Millar; and R. and J. Dodsley, 1755), II.

[12] Landry, 'Resignation', p. 100.

Her *Modesty* has been so remarkable, that the Editor of the first Edition with great difficulty gained her Consent to their seeing the Light, without giving her Name, which he could not obtain. But, as an indulgence to the curiosity of some Readers, to know who is the Writer; in this second Edition, she has gratified her Friends, by drawing up the following *Acrostic*.

"S - hall I presume to tell the World my Name?
U - p to this Hour I glory in my Shame:
S - o great my Weakness, that I boast of Might;
A - Fool in Knowledge, yet in Wisdom right;
N - o Life, and yet I live; I'm sick, and well;
N - ot far fro Heav'n, tho' on the brink of Hell;
A - nd Words, and Oaths, and Blood delight me well.

H - ow strange! I'm deaf and dumb, and lame, and blind,
A - nd hear, and see, and walk, and talk, you find.
R - obb'd by my dearest Friend, I'm truly poor;
R - iches immense I always have in store.
I – 'm fed by Mortals;--- but let Mortals know,
S - uch is my Food, no Mortal can bestow.
O - h! how I long to die, and wish to live!
N - ow, if you can, explain th'Account I give."[13]

In employing another minority verse form to give account of her self, it is as if Harrison is conscious that, as a humble labouring-class woman, it would be incongruous to inscribe her identity into a more established and noble poetic genre, such as an ode. She has chosen a more ignoble form to highlight her lowliness. The acrostic is also a riddle; she suggests that her life is both a paradox and an enigma -- a surprising meeting place of the high and the low. The implication is that this thought both perplexes and delights her.

By persuading Harrison to speak in her own voice, Conder becomes an enabler rather than possessor, as in the case of the first editor. Stuart Curran believes that the revelation of Harrison's name changes the ontological nature of the *Songs* and of their author:

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[13] Harrison, *Songs*, pp iv-v.

This is, after all, a poem written within a recognisably woman's genre about a woman's crossing another line -- 'how I long to die, and wish to live!' -- crossing from anonymity into public scrutiny, from the private sharing of a personal creativity in a circle of family and friends, in which poetry functions on the same level as piecework, to the presumption of public art. To share consolation is what a woman does as a nurse, mother, sustainer of the domestic sphere. Yet to attach a name to that function is to change its nature from the generic to the individuated, from spontaneity to artifice, from the role of comforter to that of the philanthropist, 'philagynist'.[14]

In considering what it might mean to cross these lines, Harrison's poignant acrostic considers dichotomies of highs and lows between the earthly and heavenly, weakness and strength, foolishness and wisdom, the pains of the body and the aspirations of the soul. Harrison views her identity as possessing a dual nature. It is not limited to the earthly, present self, which is underprivileged and in decline, but conjoined with God and his promises for her eternal soul. The immortal soul directs the worldly self. This can be seen in a blank verse meditation 'A Short Dialogue Between Myself and My Soul' in the tradition of these dialogues, the best known of which is Andrew Marvell's 'A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body'.[15]

Harrison's work is a version of Psalm 137, 'By the Rivers of Babylon':

> SOUL.
> *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night!* ---- Jeremiah ix.1
>
> SELF.
> But why, my soul, so much dispos'd to grieve?
> Why would thou spend thy days and nights in tears?
> Why is the harp upon the willow hung,
> And why is ev'ry string to sorrow tun'd?
> [...]

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[14] Stuart Curran, 'Romantic Women Poets: Inscribing the Self' in *Women's Poetry in the Enlightenment: The Making of a Canon, 1730-1820*, ed. Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 145-166 (p. 155).
[15] Andrew Marvell, 'A Dialogue between the Soul and Body', Andrew Marvell, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Elizabeth Story Donno, rev. edn (London: Penguin Books, 2005), pp. 103-4.

SOUL.
Ah, foolish mortal! loth to understand,
And still more loth to share in sacred grief!
Come, learn my meaning and thou shalt confess
'Tis right that I should mourn till life expires![16]

Tears are linked to Christian experience and not just indicative of sadness for loss; during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had there existed what Louis L. Martz has described as a literature of tears.[17] Unlike Marvell's Body and Soul, Harrison's Self and Soul are reconciled as the Soul guides the Self to God:

SELF.
Wretch that I am!--- Where shall I hide my head?
O'ercome with guilt, O whither shall I flee?

SOUL.
To Jesus, as thy Saviour and thy Lord.---
His pow'rful Blood can conquer every sin,
And purify a heart unclean as thine. (p. 163)

In this respect, Harrison's hymn tells of the tension experienced by the Christian soul living on earth but aspiring towards heaven, as in Anne Steele's hymns. It is also comparable with the Evangelical example of Joseph Hart's 'Dialogue between a Believer and his Soul' in which the Believer points his soul to Jesus:

Soul
O I sink beneath the load
Of my nature's evil!
Full enmity to God
Captived by the devil
Restless as the troubled seas;
Feeble, faint, and fearful;
Plagued with every sore disease;
How can I be cheerful?

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[16] Susanna Harrison, *Songs in The Night. By Susanna Harrison, A Young Woman Under Heavy Afflictions* (Derby: Mozley, 1822), pp. 161-162. All quotations hereafter will come from this edition. References will be given in the text after the quotation. This edition contains material not in the edition of 1781.
[17] The tears of Mary Magdalene in particular became the subject of a literary cult. Louis Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, p. 199.

Believer
Think on what thy Saviour bore
In the gloomy garden,
Sweating blood at every pore,
To procure thy pardon!
See Him stretch'd upon the wood
Bleeding, grieving, crying
Suffering all the wrath of God,
Groaning, gasping, dying![18]

As an invalid occupying a liminal status at the brink of death, Harrison interprets her life as a threshold experience, open to the imminent possibility of making the transition into the afterlife. She is caught in the *rites of passage*: 'N - ot far fro[m] Heav'n, th'o [*sic*] on the brink of Hell'.[19] She discusses a similar idea in Hymn C: 'Near to the gate of death I lie, / And fear to enter in' (p. 108). Both lines indicate that she inhabits a space that is both grave and womb. Harrison's sharing of her invalid status in the acrostic means that her private sufferings become a public spectacle. This is in keeping with Hannah Arendt's claim that a shift occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which made the public sphere a 'curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume the public significance that we call "society."'[20] Moreover, as Groth has suggested, 'Self-display and bearing witness are two processes which characterise martyrdom.'[21] By making her identity public and sharing the testimony of her faith, Harrison becomes a living saint of God for her eighteenth-century readers.

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[18] Hymn 780, Part IV: 'Hart's Hymns', in William Gadsby, *A Selection of Hymns for Public Worship* (London: J. Gadsby, 1887), pp. 583-4
[19] Arnold van Gennep defines *rites de passage* as 'rites which accompany every change of p lace, state, social position and age': *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977). Quoted in Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 94.
[20] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 35. She goes on to argue that 'The astonishing flowering of poetry and music from the middle of the eighteenth century until almo st the last third o f the nineteenth, [...] coinciding with a no less striking decline of all the more public arts, especially architecture, is testimony between the social and the intimate' (p. 39).
[21] Helen Groth, 'Defining the Woman Poet, 1837-1896' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1996), p. 153.

Harrison is well fitted to talk about the experience of liminality because she occupies the margins. She is a labouring-class woman, the invisible servant. Her art is an extreme example of Elaine Showalter's suggestion that women's texts lie in a 'no-man's-land' outside dominant (masculinist) culture's boundaries.[22] Indeed, Curran reads Harrison's acrostic as an exploration of the transition from woman to woman writer:

> What is it, the first line asks, to go from being exemplary human sufferer to an articulated individual, from Everywoman shrouded in passive self-abnegation to an active, wilful recorder of experience, even of the experience of self-effacement, of terminal decline? The distanced 'young woman under heavy afflictions' has become a present Susanna Harrison, poet, who created her public self as she lends her self in the sharing of her experience.[23]

Her invalidism is another liminal occupation; as Maria Frawley has noted, 'Although not all invalids believed themselves incurable -- or were believed to be -- they occupied a liminal position vis-à-vis the medical profession and the social world.'[24]

Groth has further suggested that:

> To bear witness to the pain of oneself or another is to claim a testimonial authenticity for the power of identifying with the unmaking and remaking of the tortured subject; it is theoretically to occupy a position on the boundary between interiority and exteriority and between the material and the transcendent.[25]

Victor Turner has said of the process of liminality 'that the high could not be high unless the low existed', and that 'he who is high must experience what it is like to be low'.[26] In the context of Harrison, heaven promises to be a greater reward because of her experience of earthly lowliness. The important dialectic between the

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[22] Elaine Showalter, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', *Critical Inquiry*, 8 (1981), 179-205 (p. 200).
[23] Curran, 'Romantic Women Poets', pp. 154-5.
[24] Maria Frawley, *Invalidism and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), p. 5.
[25] Groth, 'Defining the Woman Poet', p. 151.
[26] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 97.

high and the low, the paradox of finding power in weakness: 'S - o great my Weakness, that I boast of Might', is biblical. It is related to the humility of God revealed in the incarnation; Christ's promise that 'the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen' (Matthew 20. 16); and also to St Paul's experience of the thorn in his flesh:

> And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me [...]. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. (II Corinthians 12. 7-10)

This view of the infinite grace of God and the helplessness of humanity is a common Evangelical trope, as can be seen in Augustus Toplady's 'Rock of Ages':

> 2. Not the Labours of my Hands
> Can fulfil thy Law's demands:
> Could my Zeal no respite know,
> Could my Tears for ever flow,
> All for Sin could not atone:
> Thou must save, and Thou alone!
>
> 3. Nothing in my Hand I bring;
> Simply to thy Cross I cling;
> Naked, come to Thee for Dress;
> Helpless, look to Thee for Grace;
> Foul, I to the Fountain fly:
> Wash me, SAVIOUR, or I die![27]

Emptied of her own strength, Harrison has become a vessel for the workings of God's grace. At the same time, she longs for release. In 'Longing to be Dissolved', she

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[27] Augustus Toplady, *Hymns and Sacred Poems, On a Variety of Divine Subjects, Comprising the Whole of the Poetical Remains of the Rev. Augustus M. Toplady* (London: Daniel Sedgwick, 1860), p. 163.

articulates the common Christian trope of seeing death as desirable because Heaven is eminently more desirable than the dissatisfactions of earth:

1. O what a vain and empty World is this?
And must I travel on this barren ground?
It can afford no true substantial bliss;
Nothing but sin and sorrows to be found.

2. How little do I here enjoy of God!
At dissolution I could now rejoice;
I long to leave this gloomy, dark abode
And bid farewell to earth and all its noise. (p. 94)

Harrison's desire to leave earth to make the passage into heaven may be related to her personal invalidism and physical pain. However, it is also part of the wider Evangelical belief in the importance of free grace and its assurance of salvation. Like Steele's hymns looking heavenward to eternal bliss, it is a reinterpretation of the Exodus journey from exile to the Promised Land.

Evangelical Hymnody

Harrison's hymns display many of the characteristics of eighteenth-century Evangelical hymnody. According to R. Tudur Jones, 'From the middle fifties of the eighteenth century onwards the Evangelical Revival was making its presence felt in the Congregational churches'.[28] One of the effects was an emphasis on literacy: 'As the churches began to recruit members from the working-classes, it soon became obvious that no great progress could be made until they were given some form of education.'[29] This was because Evangelicals saw the Bible as being necessary for the feeding of the soul:

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[28] R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England: 1662-1962* (London: The Independent Press, 1962), p. 152.
[29] Jones, *Congregationalism*, p. 163.

> The Bible alone, John Wesley contended, was the source of his doctrine of salvation. 'Let me be *homo unius libri* [a man of one book]', he declared in the preface to his collected sermons of 1746.[30] His brother Charles was so immersed in scripture that in one of his hymns, 'Lord and is Thine anger gone', twenty-six biblical allusions are crowded into sixty-four lines.[31]

In this context, it is possible that Harrison learnt to read at church (possibly using hymns). The link between literacy and dissent was a tradition that went back to at least the sixteenth century; Margaret Spufford has asserted that

> The association of basic Christian instruction and learning to read was so profoundly intertwined that it is inseparable; the child who had learnt to read learnt to sound out the letters of the alphabet and the words of the Lord's Prayer, and perhaps the Creed, from his or her hornbook. He or she would proceed to the primer, which is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary both as 'a prayerbook or devotional manual for use of the laity' and an 'elementary schoolbook for teaching children to read.' The two functions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were not different, or distinguished from each other, but the same.[32]

Certainly, Harrison's hymns follow the tradition of delighting in the reading of the scriptures because they provide religious edification; hymn CXI 'Renouncing the World' tells that Bible reading is not only a necessity to the Christian soul but also preferable to any other diversions:

1. Tell me no more of earthly toys,
Of sinful mirth, and carnal joys,
The things I lov'd before:
Let me but view my Saviour's face,
And feel His animating grace,
And I desire no more.

[...]

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[30] Quotation from Wesley taken from R. P. Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr Wesley: 1: John Wesley his Own Biographer* (Nashville: Tennessee, 1984), p. 21: quoted in J. Dale, 'The theological and literary qualities of the poetry of Charles Wesley in relation to the standards of his age' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Cambridge University, 1961), p. 145.
[31] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 12.
[32] Margaret Spufford, 'The Importance of Religion in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' in *The World of Rural Dissenters*, ed. Margaret Spufford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1-102 (pp. 72-74).

5. Give me a Bible in my hand,
A heart to read and understand,
And faith to trust the Lord:
I'd sit alone from day to day,
Or urge no company to stay,
Nor wish to rove abroad. (pp. 122-123)

Hymn IX in the supplement 'Opening My New Bible' also privileges the scriptures:

4. Ope thou mine eyes, enlarge my heart,
And make my faith more strong;
So shall the precepts thou hast taught
Be my delightful song.

5. O may this word my thoughts engage
In each perplexing case;
Help me to feed on every page,
And grow in every grace.

6. O let it purify my heart,
And guide me all my days!
Its wonders, Lord, to me impart,
And thou shalt have the praise. (pp. 196-197)

Harrison's primary literary influences seem to have been the Bible and hymns.

This is not unusual of labouring-class writing of this period; Keegan writes that:

> One of the most significant and dominant forms of labouring-class religious writing was the practice of versifying scripture. If any book were to be found in the homes of most labourers, it would probably be a bible. Thus it is not surprising that the bible (rather than the classics) would provide the earliest formal model and source of literary inspiration to most self-taught writers. The piousness of labouring-class poetry in mid-century, while a recurrent feature, had a range of impacts. Perhaps the most extreme case was Susannah Harrison, whose entire output is comprised of meditations upon bible verses.[33]

However, Harrison's versification is not a straightforward case of rewording. Instead, they are shaped by her own experiences of life. Hymn LXXIV, like 'A Short Dialogue' discussed above, is a version of Psalm 137:

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[33] Keegan, *Eighteenth-Century English Labouring-Class Poets*, p. xxvi.

1. Unfertile, intricate, and strange,
Is this world's wilderness,
Where woes unnumber'd take their range,
And sin, and sad distress.

2. My harp is on the willow hung,
My soul oppress'd with fear;
How then can Zion's song be sung,
In strains melodious here? (p. 77)

In its original context, Psalm 137 refers to the slavery of the Israelites in Babylon and to the experience of the homesick and discontented diaspora in a foreign land. In Christian typology, this psalm is often related to a Christian belief in the citizenship of heaven, each individual has 'to decide where his citizenship lies and live accordingly -- in thought [...], in deed [...] and in heart'.[34] It thus expresses the feeling of being an exile on earth separated from the presence of God. However, the question 'How then can Zion's song be sung / In strains melodious here?' possesses added meaning and piquancy in the context of Harrison's own yearning for comfort and peace, and her desire to praise God in spite of her earthly physical infirmities and material poverty:

8. Jesus unloose my stamm'ring tongue,
And then I'll raise my voice---
Glory to God shall be my song,
While all my powers rejoice. (p. 78)

For the idea of the 'stammering tongue', Harrison owes a debt to the Wesleys, who used the phrase numerous times. For instance, John Wesley employed it in his translation of a Moravian hymn, 'I thirst, Thou wounded Lamb of God':

7. O, LORD enlarge our scanty thought
To know the wonders Thou hast wrought;
Unloose our stammering tongues, to tell
Thy love immense, unsearchable.[35]

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[34] Philip P. Jenson, 'Psalms', *New Bible Commentary*, ed. Carson and others, p. 577.
[35] John Wesley, *The Poetical Works*, p. 266.

Bebbington has said that 'Almost the whole Evangelical world read poetry',[36] and Harrison's work displays much influence from the hymnody of men including the Wesleys, Watts, and Cowper. She certainly knew their works intimately and their imagery and language profoundly informed her thoughts and imagination.

Harrison's borrowing from the Wesleys can be seen again in Hymn X:

3. Rejoice, ye sons of God, rejoice,
And doubt his love no more;
Lift up your hearts, lift up your voice,
And his rich grace adore. (pp. 10-11)

It is clearly heavily influenced by Charles Wesley's 'Rejoice, the Lord is King!':[37]

1. Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore,
Mortals, give thanks, and sing,
And triumph evermore:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice,
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice. (p. 140)

The third verse of another hymn, Hymn XXXIV, also echoes Charles Wesley. This time, she borrows from his Advent hymn: 'Lo! He comes with clouds descending, / Once for favoured sinners slain':

3. Lo, in the clouds the Judge descends,
With his illustrious train
Sinners he severs from his friends,
And dooms to endless pain. (p. 34)

Both writers have drawn from the imagery of Revelation 1. 7: 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and all kinds of the earth shall wail because

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[36] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 67.
[37] Of course, the phrase 'lift up your hearts' is a particularly liturgical one.

of him.' Like Steele, who was heavily influenced by Isaac Watts, as an early woman hymn writer, Harrison was looking to and following the examples of the earlier male hymn writers.

Like Wesley and Steele, Harrison also uses the image of the worm to articulate the mystery of the Maker of the universe's sacrificial love for his lowly creation. In Hymn LXII, she asks:

1. LORD, can a helpless worm like me
Attempt to make her way to thee?
Yes, let me raise thy praises high,
In weakness thou canst strength supply. (p. 64)

However, in Harrison's case, her social position and material poverty added to her sense of being a lowly worm. This can be seen in Hymn XCVIII, a response to 'He will regard the prayer of the destitute' (Psalm 102. 17):

1. How suitable this word to me,
A destitute, distressed worm!
Lord, I will make my moan to thee,
Do thou thy promise now perform.

2. Hear me for I am destitute,
Oppress'd with grief and heavy woes;
Do not despise my humble suit,
For I in thee my trust repose.

[...]

4. Regard me in my low estate,
Perplex'd and griev'd on every side;
Helpless and poor, my wants are great,
Let them by thee be all supply'd. (p. 106)

Hidden in this image of the poor and destitute worm is a reminder that Christ's ministry valued the poor and humble; his love was directed to the healing and liberation of the oppressed, downtrodden, outcast and forgotten.

Christ the lover's care is returned by Harrison, the beloved. Hymn XI, which is followed by a quotation from 1 John 4. 10: 'Herein is love', occurs in the traditional romantic setting of the garden of love:

1. Come, view the field of love divine,
Where I delight to rove and glean;
How pleasant to this soul of mine!
What spices blow, what joys are seen!

2. I'm lost in admiration here!
Is this the garden of my God?
What fragrant balm is that so near?
'Tis pardon sprinkled with rich blood. (p. 11)

The pastoral image of the garden and the sensuous language of 'spices' and 'fragrant balm', a mixture of the abstract and concrete, are borrowed from the *Song of Songs*, the book of the Bible about romantic love, intimacy and marriage. This hymn attempts to express what it is to be 'in love' with God. The garden also has associations with Eden, the original home of Man, a place of nurturing, belonging and protection. Within this context, Harrison articulates a desire to be cared for by God like a plant by a gardener's hand:

7. Yet I would fain more fully know,
That thou art mine, more clearly see:
By faith ingrafted, let me grow,
Thou root and spring of life, like thee.

8. Make me a plant of thy right hand:
Thy full salvation let me prove;
In paradise I then shall stand,
And live for ever in thy love. (p. 12)



Harrison uses the biblical images of the garden and the plant, drawn from the Garden of Eden in Genesis, the Songs of Songs and the idea of the vine and the gardener in Matthew 15. 1-15, to describe the workings of her inner faith.[38]

The types of hymns Harrison writes also follow the traditions of evangelical hymnody. The first hymn of *Songs* marks the 'New Year' in the manner of Charles Wesley's Hymn 36 'The Same. For New Year's Day'. This was a tradition which later hymn writers, including Frances Ridley Havergal (see p. 267), followed. The following hymns in *Songs* include: 'A Morning Hymn', 'An Evening Hymn', 'Saturday Night' 'Lord's-Day Morning' and 'Lord's-Day Evening'. Harrison seems to be adopting a pattern not unlike the Divine Offices, though if so, as a Congregationalist, she would have been producing a conscious variant on the Roman Catholic and Anglican patterns. The idea is that each part of the day should be prayerfully dedicated to God. Hymns to mark the day, evening, and the Sabbath were common. The American Evangelist, Henry Alline (1748-1784) wrote numerous hymns for the morning;[39] Isaac Watts wrote Hymn 7, 'An Evening Song'; and Hymn 80, 'An Evening Hymn, Psalm iv. 8. and iii. 5, 6. and cxliii. 8.'; and Anne Steele wrote 'Hymn for the Lord's Day Morning'.

Harrison can also employ the eighteenth-century language of sensibility. As in Steele's 'Redeeming Love', Harrison's Hymn IX 'Thoughts at the Lord's Table' imagines the sight of Christ's crucifixion in order to provoke internal scrutiny and the contrite responses of guilt and shame, suitable feelings for preparing the humble heart necessary for receiving holy communion:

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[38] 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.'

[39] Hymns XLIII, LXIII, XIII, LXXII, and XCVIII.

1. Now let my faith look thro' her fears;
And view my dearest Lord,
Groaning in agonies and tears
That I might be restor'd.

2. Methinks I see the thorny bands
That tore his sacred head,
His pierced side, his wounded hands,
With blood his vesture red!

3. 'Tis with a melting heart I view
His body broke for sin;
That murderer my Saviour slew,
And put his soul to pain. (p. 9)

The visualisation of Christ's passion in this hymn is intended to have a similar evangelistic and thought-provoking effect as that upon the audience of a medieval mystery play. Indeed, while the emotionally-gruelling nature of these verses correspond with that of many other crucicentric hymns of the eighteenth-century Evangelical canon (the bloody hymns of William Cowper for instance), the technique of visually imagining a biblical scene links this work to an older tradition of Christian mysticism, kataphatic contemplation (meditation with image, such as used in Julian of Norwich's *Divine Revelation of Love* and St. Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*).[40] Candy Gunther Brown has suggested that 'Hymns occupied a privileged position in the evangelical canon because of their presumed effectiveness in interfacing biblical doctrine with Christian experience, thereby linking the Word with the world.'[41] However, hymns were also valued because, through their effective techniques of expressing biblical doctrine succinctly, they could provide suitable conditions for enabling Christian experience.

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[40] 'Contemplation is distinguished by some authors into kataphatic and apophatic [...]. Kataphatic contemplation is [...] the affective response to sacred symbols and a disciplined use of reason, imagination, memory, and emotion in order to assimilate the truths of faith and to develop a personal relationship with Christ. It includes such practices as visualization meditation and the veneration of icons.' Thomas Keating, 'Intimacy with God: The Christian Contemplative Tradition', Chapter 4, Part II, <http://www.centeringprayer.com/intimacy/intimacy04b.htm> [accessed 02.10.2006]. Examples of apophatic (imageless) contemplation include the works of St. John of the Cross and Meister Eckhart.

[41] Brown, *Word in the World*, p. 191.

The Poor Servant

In contrast to Anne Steele, whose family was financially comfortable and connected to eminent Baptist families in the South of England,[42] Harrison was described by the first editor to Songs as being destitute with 'no certainty of a tolerable Support, under her state of Health, but from the Donation of her Friends'.[43] Unlike hymns by Evangelical writers like Cowper, Newton, and the Wesleys, who wrote about being poor in the sight of God, Harrison's verses reveal the struggles of real, financial destitution. Hymn CX evokes pathos as Harrison gives thanks for humble bread:

1. I think thy table richly spread
And bless the Lord for wholesome bread,
While nothing more appears;
With this I am not left to starve,
This is far more than I deserve
And better than my fears.

2. I fear'd lest discontent should turn,
And cause my appetite to spurn
Against a meal so dry:
But sanctified by prayer, tis sweet,
More than all the sav'ry meat
That dainty sinners buy. (p. 120)

Bread has important Christian associations. Gratitude for daily bread evokes the Lord's Prayer and reminds the reader of the necessity to be thankful for all the mercies which have made the passing of the day possible. Proverbs 15. 17 may also be recalled: 'Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.' Bread is also related to manna, the supernatural sustenance provided by God. Perhaps most significantly, it is related to Christ's body broken for mankind, the true 'Bread of Heaven'.

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[42] William Steele's will shows that he left considerable property to Anne. See STE 11/7, RPC. See Chapter 1, pp. 63-68, for information on Steele's relationship with her father.
[43] Preface, *Songs*, p. v.

Rather than complain or become bitter about her poverty, Harrison chooses to count her blessings and seeks to alleviate others' suffering through prayer:

5. Humbly for those I'd intercede,
Who suffer poverty and need,
Without contentment given:
O teach them by their wants to pray,
And then do thou thy power display,
And send them bread from heaven.

6. In earnest I would bear in mind,
The poor, the sick, the long-confin'd,
With such I sympathize;
To such I feel compassion move,
To such I would appear in love,
And wipe their weeping eyes. (p. 121)

This hymn is consolatory rather than liberative. She wants to be an advocate for 'The poor, the sick, the long-confin'd'. However, as these conditions sum up her own identity, it is evident that she is not only privileging those in her own situation, and being an advocate for the poor and needy, but that she is, in a sense, praying for herself. She is able to 'sympathize' and minister to others in their suffering and need because of her own experience.

In Hymn LXXXVIII, a reworking of Psalm 55, Harrison movingly articulates the restlessness of the exhausted worker and his/her desire for transcendence and escape from everyday drudgery:

1. Of rest I hear, of rest I talk,
But rest I cannot see;
O how laborious is my work!
Earth has no rest for me. (p. 93)

The image of 'laborious' work poignantly relates to Harrison's own experience as a domestic servant. She has used her familiarity with life as a labouring-class woman to

re-interpret the famous lines: 'Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest' (Psalm 55. 6):

2. Hard do I toil with sins and woes,
With unbelief and fears;
Satan doth all my work oppose,
My couch is wet with tears.

3. Weary with watchfulness I mourn,
And long to be away;
Were I like doves on pinions borne,
I'd fly without delay.

4. I'd mount above this earthly ball,
And makes my way to God;
Fain would I rest my weary soul
In his supreme abode. (p. 93)

Harrison's use of personal experience gives these common Evangelical tropes an authenticity and an urgency -- a hint of 'felt life'. Her version of the famous psalm, inscribed with the difficult experiences of her own existence, speaks with added power and poignancy about the brokenness that exists in humanity in its entirety. It is an example of the creative modification that writers have used to develop their art, as described by J. R. Watson:

> As T. S. Eliot said, 'Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal;'
>
> > Bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it is torn; the bad poet throws it into something which has no cohesion.
>
> This describes exactly what goes on in the best hymns: they take a verse from the Bible, or a line from another poet, and weld the theft into a whole of feeling.[44]

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[44] Watson, 'Hymns and Literature', p. 131. Quotation from T. S. Eliot, 'Philip Massinger' (1920), in T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays, 1917-1932* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), pp. 205-220, (p. 206).

In later editions of *Songs*, a supplement entitled 'A Remarkable Scene in the Author's Life' is included. It tells the story of Harrison's decline, recovery, relapse and eventual death. The anonymous writer includes an account that:

> One who was a fellow-servant in the family she lived in last, and which she left on account of her bad state of health, coming to see her, wept; she said, 'Weep not, I know you are a seeker of Jesus; I have been a witness to your tears, and you of mine, but now my tears are turned into joy, and so I trust will yours sooner or later.[45]

Both this episode and the hymn above give a haunting glimpse of the unhappiness and hardship that could exist in labouring-class work. Indeed, Harrison's mysterious medical condition may have been a result of her occupation.

Poem X in the supplement (which was included after the first two editions) also examines women's work and spirituality. It is sub-headed with the quotation 'But Martha was cumbered, &c -- Luke x. 40', and retells and reflects on the story of Martha and Mary. It is a long single verse work which articulates the difficulty of focussing on Jesus when distracted by the pressures of work:

> But why did Martha take this load
> While Jesus in her house abode?
> His visit never was design'd
> To vex or interrupt her mind.
> 'Twas love that brought him to her door,
> He sought her heart and nothing more [...] (p. 197)

Harrison identifies with the preoccupied sister: 'But Martha's heart was much like mine, / Prone to mistake her Lord's design' (p. 197), and empathises with her feelings of being oppressed by domestic duties:

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[45] Harrison, *Songs* (1822), p. 222.

> Methinks I see her full of care,
> Fond attending here and there;
> But, to suppress her vain desire,
> Her strength and patience equal tire,
> She calls her sister to assist;
> But here her careful aim is miss'd [...] (pp. 197-198)

Harrison is applying the story of Martha to her own condition. In this context, Harrison's re-wording of Martha's words to Jesus is particularly poignant:

> 'My Lord' --- said she --- 'have I a share
> 'In thy compassion and thy care?
> 'Then chide my sister's idleness,
> 'And bid her help me to serve the guest.' (p. 198)

The verse in the King James version is 'Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me' (Luke 10. 40). Harrison has added the word 'compassion' and thus asks Christ if he is with her in her suffering. Although the rest of the poem follows the pattern of the gospel story, Harrison's questioning of whether she has a share in Christ's compassion and care has a different nuance to Martha's original complaint. The question is almost a rhetorical one as the gospels tell that Christ is constantly moved with compassion to feed the hungry, heal the sick and protect the downtrodden: those, significantly, in Harrison's position.[46] At the same time, her rendering of Martha's complaint also resonates with her earlier words: 'O how laborious is my work! / Earth has no rest for me' (p. 93).

At the end of the Martha and Mary hymn, Harrison asserts:

> Let Mary's happy choice be mine;
> Let Jesu's love my heart entwine;
> O let me at his feet be found
> Whatever guest may me surround. (p. 199)

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[46] The word compassion is applied in relation to Christ seven times in Matthew's gospel alone.

One message of this poem is the central Protestant tenet that the soul cannot prove oneself through human labour; salvation cannot be earned through works. That this point was important to Harrison's contemporaries is indicated by an episode recollected in 'A Remarkable Scene in the Author's Life', an appendix to later editions of *Songs* which tells of the end of Harrison's life:

> Once, when she was speaking on justification, a friend said, 'Then you do not expect to be saved by good works.' She replied, 'I cast them all aside, and count them as dung, that I may be found in Christ: nevertheless, I esteem holiness, desire more of it, and long for the time when I shall cease from sin. But,' recollecting herself, 'I do trust in good works, and expect to be saved by them. I do not mean those of my own, but the works of righteousness wrought by Christ Jesus: --- His doing and dying, his obedience and sufferings: these are the works I trust in, and depend upon; and on these any poor broken-hearted sinner may quietly venture his eternal all'. (p. 225)

Harrison's poverty exacerbated by ill health meant that she became patronised in her life as well as in her work by those who wished to help her in her need. A number of works in the supplement suggest that Harrison was often in the position of having to thank others for their charitable gifts to her. 'To Mrs. -----.', a poem of thanks which opens with the words: 'The garment that you gave me I admire', goes on to confess:

> And should uncertain health admit, I'll wear
> This garment to the honour of your care.
> At present I must leave it, and pursue
> A nobler robe which now presents my view [...] (p. 202)

Invalided, and probably confined to the sickroom, Harrison probably had little real use for a new garment. Having to give thanks for a gift which she could not use, and which was a reminder of the opportunities closed to her, may not have been an easy

task. However, Harrison avoids bitterness by turning her thoughts heavenward and transmuting her thoughts from the literal earthly garment to the metaphorical heavenly gift of Christ's atonement:

> When your kind hand to me the favour brought,
> It led my thoughts to Jesus----as it ought.
> First, I survey'd my soul's sad nakedness,
> Then view'd a Saviour's spotless righteousness.
> O boundless love!----O grace!----both rich and free,
> This robe of righteousness was wrought for me:
> 'Tis every way complete, 'tis rich and grand,
> And needs no alteration at my hand.---- (pp. 202-3)

Christ's righteousness, which covers over her sins, is a heavenly garment she can wear despite her infirmity. Furthermore, an unspoken message is that all who wish to enter heaven must prioritise this garment.

'To My Unknown Benefactors at -----' is another poem of thanks for material assistance:

> Thus Ruth receiv'd the kindness of her friend,
> Who met her with a liberal heart and hand,
> And welcom'd her to glean upon his ground,
> Where rich provision she in plenty found.
> [...]
> Meekly she bow'd, and ask'd him, with surprise
> 'Why have I found such favour in thine eyes;
> 'That thou shouldst thus incline to notice me,
> 'Seeing I am a stranger unto thee?'
> [...]
> Then----O my friends!---- permit me to confess
> That I receiv'd your gifts with thankfulness.
> Like Ruth, I would be grateful, and declare
> How much I prize your tenderness and care;
> Your favours have refresh'd me, and I find
> My thoughts, like her's, too warm to be confin'd;
> Thankful, I bow, and wonder at your love,
> I'm all unworthy of the smallest mite,
> Why have I found such favour in your sight?
> Why am I blest with such an ample share
> In your compassion, sympathy, and care? (pp. 207-8)

As with Martha, Harrison identifies with another female role model from the Bible. In this poem, Harrison uses the narrative of Ruth 2. 7-10:

> And she said [to Boaz], I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

In Ruth, she finds a biblical example of a woman in her position -- poor, humble and thankful to those who offer compassionate care. Paul Koshin writes that:

> Support and protection, and their corollaries, economic aid or dependency and obligation to a benefactor, suggest why the parent term, patronage, attracted so much attention. The need for pecuniary advancement and feelings of indebtedness are deeply imprinted upon the consciousness of all persons whose individual wealth is insufficient for their needs, and who must rely upon the generosity of others and their own wits for their livelihood.[47]

Harrison's poem manages to convey dignity and honour with humility. By calling her unknown benefactors 'my friends', her position is changed from an object of charity to that of a friend in need. She also avoids being indebted to people by ultimately redirecting her thanks to God:

> These unexpected favours tend to raise
> My thoughts above in gratitude and praise,
> To him who made my friends, both great and small,
> Who rules, and over-rules the hearts of all.
> At his rich goodness I admiring stand,
> And bless his kind and providential hand;
> O may his free, his condescending grace
> Shine brighter to my view in Jesus' face! (p. 208)

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[47] Paul Koshin, 'Types of Eighteenth-Century Literary Patronage', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 7 (1974), pp. 453-73 (p. 453).

Susanna Harrison died on 3 August 1784 aged thirty-two years old. Posthumous editions of *Songs* inform us that 'she was buried in the cemetery of the Congregational chapel on Tacket Street, Ipswich'.[48] Within fifty years of her death, her work had become, in the words of Stuart Curran, 'a publishing phenomenon of the final decades of the eighteenth century'.[49] Several of her hymns were included *Hymns for Invalids or Spiritual Songs for the Season of Sickness* (1853) published by the Religious Tract Society. Despite this early popularity, her hymns do not appear in any hymn books today, perhaps, as Landry has written, because 'such highly conventional devotional verse' is 'now nearly unreadable according to our post-Romantic critical codes'.[50] However, Harrison's hymns, framed between the introductory information about her life of domestic service, destitution and invalidism and the supplementary story of her saintly Evangelical demise, demonstrate especially clearly J. R. Watson's point about the 'historical condition' in which hymns are written. Referring to Schleiermacher's idea that a work of art is rooted in its own soil, and loses its meaning when removed from its environment, that it is 'like something saved from the fire but [which] still bears the mark of the burning upon it', he says, '[t]his seems to me to describe the condition of hymns very accurately.'[51]

What Harrison's writings do suggest is how hymn-writing could provide textual space for a marginalised, labouring-class woman to articulate her difficult and painful experience of life. The pious example of Anne Steele, whose hymns became so successful, set a precedent which would have helped ensure that Harrison's *Songs* would be received as respectable writing. The choice of her literary medium and highly Evangelical contents were probably related to her personal education and

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[48] *Songs* (1822), p. 229.
[49] Curran, 'Romantic Women Poets', p. 154.
[50] Landry, *Muses of Resistance*, p. 9.
[51] Watson, 'Hymns and Literature', p. 132.

access to reading; as an Evangelical Christian, reading of the Word was essential and she seems to have had access to the hymnody of influential male writers such as Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley and Joseph Hart through her church. She demonstrates in her writings, how these poetic forms could influence the literary imaginations of even those perceived to be lowest in British society. Her use of this body of work for her own language and imagery suggests how powerful and attractive Evangelical hymnody could be.

A Comparative Study: Eliza Westbury (1808-1828)

In 1828, a volume of seventy-two hymns was published entitled *Hymns: by a Northamptonshire Village Female*. It included 'A short Account of the Writer of the following Hymns' which revealed that the author was Eliza Westbury, a young woman who 'During the last two years of her life [...] composed about one hundred and fifty Hymns, besides other poetry, "from which the following are selected and published, under the impression that they will be acceptable to her Christian friends."'[52] The book was published in Northampton; it seems unlikely that it ever gained more than provincial circulation. As C. R. Johnson has noted, *Hymns* is not included in the British Library General Catalogue, the National Union Catalogue or J.R. de J. Jackson's authoritative bibliography of Romantic women's poetry; it has only been rediscovered recently by Sibyl Phillips as a text of literary and historical interest.[53] As 'A Northamptonshire Village Female' intimates, Westbury, like

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[52] Eliza Westbury, *Hymns: by A Northamptonshire Village Female* (Northampton: F. Cordeux, 1828), p. i. There are no page numbers after the introductory 'A Short Account of Her Life'.

[53] *Provincial Poetry 1789-1839: British Verse Printed in the Provinces: The Romantic Background*, ed. C. R. Johnson (Otley: Jed Press, 1992), p. 957. J. R. de J. Jackson, *Romantic Poetry by Women, A Bibliography, 1770-1835* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Sibyl Phillips, *Glorious Hope: Women and Evangelical Religion in Kent and Northamptonshire, 1800-1850* (Northamptonshire: Compton Towers Publishing, 2004), pp. 203-265; and Sibyl Phillips, 'An Introduction to the Life, Hymns and Poetry of a Northampton Lace Maker, Eliza Westbury (1808-1828)', *The Hymn Society Bulletin of Great Britain and Ireland Bulletin*, 17 (2005), 309-318.

Harrison, was not a lady of the genteel classes; indeed, she is included in Nottingham Trent University's 'super list' of British and Irish labouring-class poets from 1700 to 1900.[54] Her hymns are said to have been 'composed while she was earning her living at lace-making and which she used to write at her leisure'.[55] Westbury is therefore another example of a provincial labouring-class woman hymn-writer.

Like Harrison, Westbury also lost her father at a young age (he died in 1811 when she was three years old). She was another dissenter, having been received as a member of the Hackleton Baptist Church, a Particular Baptist church with strong associations with William Carey,[56] after speaking her 'experience' [testimony] at a church meeting on 23 April 1826.[57] Michael R. Watts says that the theology of the Particular Baptists only differed from the Congregationalists (the denomination to which Harrison belonged) on the matter of paedobaptism.[58] Westbury thus shared a similar Evangelical heritage with Harrison.

Hymn 36 'Prepare to meet thy God' is both conversionist and activist:

1. Sinners, prepare thy God to meet,
Their awful warning ne'er forget,
For God himself has said that they
Shall perish who do not obey.

[...]

4. Does not your conscience cry aloud,
When mixing with the giddy croud [*sic*]
And tell you that your end is nigh,
And you are unprepar'd to die?

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[54] http://human.ntu.ac.uk/research/labouringclasswriters/elsie3.htm [accessed 08.12.2006]. Westbury was originally included in the *English Labouring-Class Poets, Set II: Nineteenth-Century English Labouring Class Poets, 1801-1900* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2002), but was removed from the final list.
[55] Westbury, *Hymns*, p. ii.
[56] 'Carey was domiciled in Hackleton for ten years, from the age of fourteen in 1775 to 1785. This was the formative period of his religious development and the most significant events in his progress towards Evangelicalis m had occurred during that time': cited in Phillips, *Glorious Hope*, pp. 214-5.
[57] *Hackleton Baptist Church Book*, 1781-1869 (manuscript, pages unnumbered, most items, dated), Northamptonshire County Records Office, HBC8, in Sibyl Phillips, *Glorious Hope*, p. 204.
[58] Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, 2 vols, *The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity*, II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 2.

5. Does it not tell you that you must
Repent of sin or die accurs'd?
Its warning voice may you obey,
And seek the Lord without delay.

It is in the pattern of Evangelical conversion writing which is both an invitation and a warning. This is much more a warning and is closer to Isaac Watts with his Calvinist theology than to Charles Wesley. Indeed, the line 'When mixing with the giddy croud [*sic*]' suggests that this hymn was intended for people who ignored church or religious meetings, and for churchgoers who were distracted by the pleasures of worldly society.

Hymn 2, entitled 'Value of the Scriptures', celebrates the holiness of the Bible, a topic explored by earlier hymn writers including the Wesleys, William Cowper, and, as we have seen, Steele and Harrison.[59] Indeed, the first couplet, 'How precious is the Book divine, / By inspiration given' is a direct quotation of a hymn by the Yorkshire Baptist pastor John Fawcett (1740-1817) first published in 1782.[60] In the second verse, Westbury draws from the work of another famous dissenting writer, John Bunyan, by alluding to *Pilgrim's Progress*:

2. It guides the Christian in his way,
To the celestial hill;
It does the love of Christ display
And there make known his will.

Westbury thus appears to have been well-read in Christian literature and strongly influenced by the writings of her own Baptist tradition.

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[59] Charles Wesley wrote several hymns on the topic including 'Come, divine Interpreter, / Bring me eyes Thy Book to read', Cowper wrote 'The Spirit breathes upon the word', Steele's most famous hymn is 'Father of Mercies, in thy word' and Harrison's Hymn IX in the supplement to later editions is 'Opening My New Bible'.

[60] John Fawcett, 'Hymn XLI', *Hymns Adapted to the Circumstances of Public Worship and Private Devotion* (Leeds, England: G. Wright & Son, 1782), p. 71.

The further influence of the earlier evangelical male writers can be seen in the fact that several of Westbury's hymns are denoted 'P. M.' (Peculiar Metre, peculiar meaning special and unusual rather than odd here), and are written in the same rare metre as Charles Wesley's 'Lo, He comes with clouds descending'.[61] For instance, her Hymn 7, 'Resurrection of Christ' is written in this pattern:

3. But the Lord who died to save them,
Did divine compassion shew [*sic*],
For he freely all forgave them,
E're he left this world below,
And unto them
Kindly said, "Peace be with you."

4. Then, O may we fear offending
This divine and heavenly friend,
May we live on him depending,
Till we reach his journey's end:
Then he'll bless us,
And we shall to him ascend.

As her message of divine grace emanating from the sacrificial death of Christ is also a crucicentric one, the marriage of the form and content in this hymn by Westbury may be said to produce a hymn steeped in the Evangelical hymnological tradition.

Hymns 4, 5 and 6 explore the 'Sufferings of Christ'. These hymns direct the reader/singer to perceive the dying Christ in their mind's eye:

1. Come, and behold the bleeding Lamb
Nail'd and expiring on the tree:
He from his throne in glory came
And bore the shameful cross for thee.
(Hymn 4)

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[61] 'Lo! He comes with clouds descending, / Once for favour'd sinners slain! / Thousand, thousand saints attending, / Swell the triumph of His train: / Hallelujah, / God appears on earth to reign!' Hymn XXXIX. <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/searchFulltext.do?id=Z400526198&divLevel=4&queryId=../session/1177588156_7014&trailId=111933A7EA2&area=Poetry&forward=textsFT&warn=Yes&size=2Kb>

The phrase 'bleeding Lamb' is commonplace in Evangelical hymnody: Henry Alline, Isaac Watts, John and Charles Wesley all used the phrase several times in their hymns.[62] The second couplet is a reworking of a favourite biblical passage of the Evangelicals:

> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even death of the cross. (Philippians 2. 5-8)

Hymn 5 is a more unusual hymn depicting Christ's struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane:

1. Behold the Saviour on the ground,
   Low in the dust he lies;
   And can no friend on earth be found
   To soothe his agonies?

2. Ah no---he treads the press alone---
   He must sustain the load:
   No one for sinners could atone,
   But Christ, the Son of God.

3. "Father, from thy beloved Son,
   "Remove this bitter cup:
   "But that thy will may now be done,
   "I freely drink it up."

She displays her biblical knowledge with the first line of the second verse which is an allusion to a prophetic passage from Isaiah 63. 3:

> I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

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[62] Henry Alline (1748-1784), hymns LXXXVIII, XIV, LII, XXIV, XXXVI, LVIII, XC, X and LXXIV in *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1802); Isaac Watts, Hymn 135 and LXXV in *The Works* (1810); John and Charles Wesley used the phrase over thirty times in their works: see Poetry Online database, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/searchTexts.do> [accessed 05.08.2004].

In similarly vivid imagery, Westbury renders biblical concepts and incidents in simple couplets in her next hymn:

1. See upon the tree outstretch'd,
Jesus, shedding purple gore,
O why was he thus afflicted?
Why his sacred body tore?
'Twas for sinners
Whose iniquities he bore. (Hymn 6)

In these verses, her intention is for the reader/singer to imagine the sight of Christ's death, perceive its truth, acknowledge guilt, repent of sins and to accept Christ as Saviour. While the images are dramatic, the 'bleeding Lamb' and 'purple gore', they are not so shocking as to be grotesque.[63]

Westbury's family was Evangelical and the culture and language of Evangelicalism became imbedded in her consciousness. Sibyl Phillips has written that William Westbury had been 'The strictest of the strict Churchmen' following his conversion in 1809 and subsequent baptism. He was then one of three men who founded the Baptist Sabbath School in Hackleton as a 'contribution to activism within their own Evangelical community'.[64] Eliza may have accompanied him there on occasion. After his death, Westbury's upbringing continued to be conventionally religious. A long autobiographical poem entitled 'Verses, containing an account of the writer's experience' informs us:

1. I at an early age was taught
That God should be in every thought;
My Mother brought me up with care,
And led me to the house of prayer.

2. Unto a Sabbath School I went,
To gain instruction I was sent;

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[63] See Phillips, *Glorious Hope*, pp. 229-231 and pp. 246-265.
[64] See Anon., *History of Hackleton Sabbath School* (c. 1881). Quoted in Phillips, *Glorious Hope*, pp. 207-208.

And there it was my constant aim,
To strive to gain the greatest name.

3. T'was [*sic*] my desire (the truth I'll tell),
That I in reading might excel:
My chief concern and labour then,
Was how to gain the praise of men.

This is an almost trite piece of spiritual autobiography. However, it is also a piece of literary self-fashioning. Westbury needs to confess her unholy childhood full of pride in order to convey the dramatic nature of her conversion. It is interesting that she is a conventionally 'good girl' made to think of herself as a sinner.

'Verses' does provide some useful background information about Westbury. Her literacy and literariness was most likely a result of the success of her learning at Sabbath school.[65] The lasting impression of Westbury's Sabbath School education is perhaps illustrated in her final hymn, 'On the death of the Author's Mother', which Sibyl Phillips believes to be a reworking of William Cowper's poem, 'To Mary'.[66] While Westbury would have been familiar with Cowper's works as an Evangelical poet especially famous in Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire, I would assert that this poem was actually written in imitation of Ann Taylor's most famous poem 'My Mother', which itself mimics Cowper's 'To Mary', from the *Original Poems for Infant Minds* (1804-5). Cowper's poem begins:

1. The twentieth year is well nigh past,
Since first our sky was overcast;
Ah, would that this might be the last!
My Mary![67]

The verse form is the same in Westbury's hymn:

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[65] The 'Short Account' tells that she 'made pleasing progress in learning': Westbury, *Hymns*, p. i.
[66] Phillips, *Glorious Hope*, p. 229.
[67] William Cowper, 'My Mary', *The Works*, 5 vols (London: Sanders and Otley, 1835), III, p. 151.

1. Who was my counsellor and guide,
In whom I safely might confide,
Whenever sorrows did betide?
My Mother!

However, Westbury's work has more in common with Taylor's poem as she clearly imitates Taylor's form of three questions followed by the answer 'My Mother':

1. Who fed me from her gentle breast,
And hush'd me in her arms to rest,
And on my cheek sweet kisses prest?
My Mother.[68]

Cowper's poem expresses romantic love whereas Taylor's poem celebrates mother love. The sentiment of Westbury's hymn is obviously much closer to Ann Taylor's work.

Ann and Jane Taylor's writings were for the moral education of children. Many of their works were explicitly religious. Their most enduring contribution to hymnody in particular was their *Hymns for Infant Minds* (1808) which was popular throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. 'My Mother' appeared in *Original Poems for Infant Minds* (1804-5) which was not specifically a religious publication. However, Taylor's poem does pointedly recognise the mother's role as a spiritual teacher:

7. Who taught my infant lips to pray,
And love God's holy book and day,
And walk in wisdom's pleasant way?
My Mother.

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[68] Ann Taylor, 'My Mother', *Original Poems* (London: Ward, Lock, and Tyler, 1876), p. 61.

Westbury uses Taylor's hymn of gratitude, which praises mothers' care and love for infants generally, as a model to make her personal tribute to the religious influence of her mother on her faith:

4. Who led me to the house of prayer,
That I might gain instruction there,
And made my good her greatest care?
My Mother!

5. Who lov'd to see me walk the way
That leads to everlasting day,
And check'd me when about to stray?
My Mother!

While Ann and Jane Taylor are not so widely known today, their writings were tremendously popular throughout the nineteenth century and were widely imitated. They influenced a long list of writers including Lewis Carroll, Charles and Mary Lamb, Robert Louis Stevenson and Hilaire Belloc. In 1903, E. V. Lucas claimed that 'As writers of poetry for children the Taylors have never been excelled or equalled.[69] It seems likely that Westbury would have read some of their works while at Sabbath School, especially as some of the Taylors' writings were specifically written for Sunday School children, and as Michael R. Watts has asserted that the theology of the Congregationalists only differed from the Particular Baptists on the matter of paedobaptism.[70]

Although influenced by the Taylors, Westbury's hymns were not written for children. Indeed, she seems to have viewed her own childhood as having been reprobate and distant from God. In an autobiographical poem, she writes that, in

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[69] E. V. Lucas, 'Ann and Jane Taylor' in *A Peculiar Gift: Nineteenth Century Writings on Books for Children*, ed. Lance Salway (Harmondsworth: Kestral, 1976), pp. 216-227, (p. 224).
[70] For instance, *Original Hymns for Sunday Schools* was published in 1812, and *Original Anniversary Hymns for Sabbath School Unions* in 1827: Watts, *The Dissenters*, II, p. 2.

addition to her academic pride and love of earthly glory, she deliberately chose naughty, ungodly, friends when she was a child:

5. I for my companions chose,
Those who religion did oppose,
Who disobey'd each warning voice:
They were the objects of my choice.

6. Thus with the thoughtless, gay, and vain,
God's holy day I did profane;
For oft we in the fields did walk,
To join in vain and trifling talk.

She writes that, at this stage, she believed religion was 'Too gloomy and too dull for me' (verse 8). Furthermore, she was contemptuous of and malicious towards Christians:

13. When those who walk'd in Zion's way
Were by temptations led astray;
Their failings did delight me much,
I thought I was as good as such.

As Sibyl Phillips has noted, 'Eliza was asking for empirical evidence of God's existence':[71]

16. Who hath ascended up, thought I,
And seen a God above the sky?
Who of the dead came back to tell,
That there was either heaven or hell?

When eventually a minister convinced Westbury to seek God, she became so overwhelmed with a sense of her sinfulness that 'No hope of mercy could I see, / For bold transgressors such as me.' [...]

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[71] Phillips, *Glorious Hope*, p. 240.

28. Often indeed, I tryed [*sic*] to pray,
That God would guide me in his way,
But still I thought t'was [*sic*] in vain,
For mercy I should ne'er obtain,

29. Thus was my mind devoid of peace
And fast my misery did increase;
At length I fully did intend
To mine own life to put an end.

A suicide attempt was halted after she recalled the words 'No murderer shall enter heaven' (verse 31). After this, she found peace:

35. All things unto me seemed now,
Jesus was lovely to my view;
I felt he was a friend indeed,
A Saviour suited to my need.

[...]

37. Then with the saints I lov'd to meet
To worship at the Saviour's feet;
I found his ways were pleasantness,
And that his paths indeed were peace.

The place of worship Westbury attended was Hackleton Baptist Church. Its minister was Reverend William Knowles, the minister who had awakened her conscience. He became her spiritual mentor and administered both her baptism and funeral. Sibyl Phillips has written that:

> His role in Eliza's Evangelical development was clearly the most influential and he was probably the greatest encourager in her writing. [...] It can be imagined that Knowles became something of a father-figure to Eliza and he clearly was willing to acknowledge her talent.[72]

Evidence of Knowles's affection for Westbury given by a piece of paper pasted in his diary containing an acrostic by his protégée:

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[72] Phillips, *Glorious Hope*, p. 228.

Eliza in the bloom of youth
Learn to love the more a truth;
If true happiness you'd find
Zealously its precepts mind
All its pleasures are refin'd
With a truly Godly care
Ever read it: and with prayer
So you shall be truly wise,
Turn from vanity and rise,
Blessings, heavenly to secure,
Undefiled, lasting, pure;
Reckon it your greatest treasure
Yea the source of highest pleasure.[73]

Westbury's name, and thus identity, declares the supremacy of the Bible. It illustrates that her ego is married to Evangelical values. Sibyl Phillips notes that 'three minor corrections to her script can be recognized as Knowles's pen strokes'.[74] This would indicate that Westbury consulted Knowles with her writing and that he had some editorial power over her productions. Phillips has asserted that 'It can safely be assumed that William Knowles was behind the publication of Eliza's hymns'.[75] Westbury's entry into print culture thus has parallels with that of Susanna Harrison achieved through the advocacy and patriarchal endorsement of the anonymous editor of the first edition of *Songs in the Night*.

Presuming that the editor of *Hymns* was William Knowles, one of his main reasons for publishing the hymns may be deduced from the final statement of his 'Short Account of the Writer of the following Hymns', 'Reader! prepare to meet thy God!'[76] While he clearly desired to celebrate the life and work of his protégée, it would appear that he hoped that the works could be evangelistic and ministerial. Indeed, a considerable proportion of the hymns are eschatological: seven hymns in the collection are 'On Death', seven 'On Judgement', and four 'On Heaven'. Sibyl

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[73] Quoted in Phillips, *Glorious Hope*, p. 228.
[74] Phillips, *Glorious Hope*, p. 228.
[75] Phillips, *Glorious Hope*, p. 265.
[76] 'A Short Account' in Westbury, *Hymns*, p. ii.

Phillips has noted the frequency with which she predicted her own early death and has written:

> It has been suggested that lace-makers were particularly prone to serious lung diseases through working long hours from childhood sitting with others in cramped, airless cottage rooms. Were these first lines of Eliza's other hymns 'On death' evidence of her own personal, short life-expectancy or where they another reminder for any singer that his or her end could come at any time?
>
> 'Soon I shall be call'd to enter / Into endless bliss or woe;
> (No. 45)
>
> 'Soon I must leave this world below / And to eternity must go;
> (No. 46)
>
> 'When a few more years are come / I must go into the tomb;
> (No. 47)
>
> 'Since I soon must leave for ever / Every thing below the sky;
> (No. 48)[77]

Hymn 43 reminds the reader/singer of the inevitability of death:

4. And death, e're long to us will come,
And drag our bodies to the tomb
Then may we be prepar'd to die
That we may dwell with God on high.

Indeed, Westbury's advice is to be prepared by choosing Christ as Saviour while on earth:

1. Soon I shall be call'd to enter
Into endless bliss or woe;
But my soul on Christ I'll venture,
While I'm in this world below:
Then he'll save me,
And to glory I shall go.
(Hymn 45)

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[77] Phillips, *Glorious Hope*, p. 260.

If this is done, she promises that death can be embraced. It will bring unearthly comfort and peace:

1. By death we're visited again ---
Our brother is no more ---
Now he is freed for every pain
Which in the world he bore.
(Hymn 42)

It is difficult to establish the circulation of Westbury's hymns. The only extant copy of the *Hymns* appears to be in Northamptonshire County Records Office, but as Sibyl Phillips has noted:

> Lace-makers often worked in groups and in fine, warm weather they usually sat outside. There is no indication that Eliza openly tried to convert others, but perhaps in the first instance she repeated her newly-composed verses to her companions as they sat together at their pillows. Maybe they even practised them to well-known hymn tunes for it was not unusual for lace-makers to sing as they worked.[78]

Thus, Westbury's hymns may have survived and spread orally at least in the Northamptonshire area, and it seems likely that some of her hymns may have been sung in Hackleton Baptist Church where William Knowles was minister, especially after her death when the community may have wished to remember her.

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Harrison and Westbury were clearly familiar with the hymn writing of many famous dissenting hymn-writers. Their images and language were drawn from a diverse range of sources. Not only are echoes of Charles Wesley, Ann Taylor, John Fawcett and

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[78] Phillips, *Glorious Hope*, p. 210. See T. Wright, *The Town of Cowper: Or, The Literary and Historical Associations of Olney and its Neighbourhood* (London: Sampson Low, 1893), p. 12, for information on Northamptonshire lace makers.

William Williams evident in her works, but images are also taken from John Bunyan's famous Christian text, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678 and 1684). As such, their hymns are a composite of English puritan experience. They demonstrate particularly well J. R. Watson's observation that hymns are:

> what Mikhail Bakhtin would call 'dialogic': they engage in conversation with the texts that preceded them, speaking to them and using them. They do so in relation to the Bible, obviously, but also in relation to other hymns and other poems.[79]

They are included in this thesis because they are single women hymn writers, but, as labouring-class women, they represent a different kind of spiritual and material experience to the rest of the women of this study. Although there are forty years between Harrison's *Songs* and Westbury's *Hymns*, it is interesting is that hymn-writing was still providing textual space for literate labouring-class Evangelical women to draw from the experiences of their spiritual lives and to take part in a Christian ministry which extended to all those who read and sang their works.

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[79] Watson, 'Hymns and Literature', p. 131.

'Just as I am, without one plea':

Charlotte Elliott (1789-1871)

To be strong in faith, and patient in hope, in long and lingering sickness, is an example of more general use and ordinary application, than even the sublime heroism of the martyr.

Hannah More, *Practical Piety*

Sickly Spinster or Fulfilled Christian?

Charlotte Elliott (1789-1871) was known to her contemporaries as a woman whose 'life was a hidden one'.[1] After a serious illness at the age of thirty-two in 1821, she lived for the rest of her life as an invalid. She never married and devoted the rest of her life to writing Christian verse for the consolation of the sick and sorrowful. The only picture of her published in her works is a photograph of her as an elderly woman (figure 7). She is presented soberly in what appears to be a mournful black dress.



Figure 7

[1] Eleanor Babington, 'Biographical Sketch' in *Selections from the Poems of Charlotte Elliott* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1873), pp. 13-58 (p. 14).

The portrait seems appropriate to the author's reputation as a pupil of the school of suffering. As such, she seems to fit the stereotype of the 'sickly spinster' woman hymn-writer as suggested by Ian Bradley:

> It is tempting to categorize Victorian women hymn-writers into two highly distinct types -- the sickly spinster who pours her frustration into highly-charged verse of an intensely emotional and evangelical hue, and the robust and active wife and mother who writes with more objectivity and control.[2]

However, in the nineteenth century, she was seen as a woman who had discovered usefulness in service to God and peace in resignation to his will. E. Conder Gray wrote in a Christian biography for girls:

> Charlotte Elliott exhibited, in a high degree, the virtues of self-denial, patience, faith, love, and zeal for good works. An invalid, almost always in pain, she was notwithstanding, never idle. If in the last resort she had to realise, with Milton that 'they also serve who only stand and wait'; she even contrived to make her work the sweeter for her song; and she never ceased to shed abroad a fragrance of joy, such as would attract the young to religion as few things will. [...] Never have we come in contact with a more cheerful person. Far from narrow, prejudiced, or irritable, she is exactly the woman you would wish to have beside you either in your happiest or your most sorrowful moments.[3]

The difference between the two interpretations, the recent one suggesting loneliness and restriction, and the earlier one, activity, cheerfulness and purpose, is the nineteenth-century Evangelical response to pain and sickness.

> Submission, obedience to God's will, and trust in his care were the responses to suffering admired by Evangelicals. It is almost as if illness was seen as a God-given opportunity to concentrate the mind and soul on spiritual things, without the distractions of everyday living. Invalidism, which limited physical interaction with the world and encouraged introspection, could be seen as providing suitable conditions

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[2] Bradley, *Abide with Me*, p. 91.
[3] E. Conder Gray, *Wise Words and Loving Deeds: A Book of Biographies for Girls* (London: Marshall, Japp and Co., 1880), pp. 141-142.

for the *vita contemplativa*; a time for spiritual development more into the image of God. While the word 'invalid' could suggest confinement and inertia, Evangelicals promoted the idea that the sick and disabled could still lead useful lives in service of God despite their physical limitations. C. Howard Young articulated this thought in 1897 when he said, 'The word invalid-- in-valid -- means of no use. In God's world, the word is a misnomer; everything has its use'.[4] Elliott's life and work endeavoured to show this idea to be axiomatic.

The Early Years

It was almost inevitable that Elliott should have made her mark on Evangelical culture. She was born on 18 March 1789 of distinguished religious lineage in the prominent Evangelical centre of Clapham. Both her ancestry and the environment she grew up in connected her to the history of British Evangelicalism. Her mother, Eling, was the eldest daughter of the Reverend Henry Venn, an eminent Anglican Evangelical who himself had been resident in Clapham between 1754 until 1759 as a curate, when the area was already becoming a centre of Evangelicalism. His son, Charlotte Elliott's uncle, John Venn (Rector of Clapham from 1792 until his death in 1813) was another celebrated Evangelical and a leading member of the Clapham Sect (c.1790-1830), the influential group of Evangelical social reformers best known for their work towards the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 in Britain and the Empire. Elliott's father, Charles Elliott, a Bond Street merchant, was also a member of the group.[5] Elliott's

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[4] C. Howard Young, *The Sunny Life of an Invalid* (Hartford, CT: Published by the Author at the Press of Case, Lockwood and Brainard, 1897), p. 101.

[5] Charles Elliott was a successful furniture maker and high-class undertaker (he supplied furniture to the Royal family and arranged their funerals. He also arranged Nelson's funeral). See Nicholas Barton, 'Rise of a Royal Furniture Maker [Charles Elliott]', part I, *Country Life*, 10 Feb 1966, 293-295, and part II in 17 Feb 1966, 360-362. He was one of the leading financial supporters of the Clapham Sect after the Thorntons. Nicholas Barton also writes that Charles Elliott was present at a meeting in 1799 which resulted in the

birth in 1789 coincided with the growth of this highly powerful and successful Evangelical fellowship. The fact that her brother was named Henry Venn Elliott suggests that the children were brought up to remember and esteem their heritage. Nature and nurture, heredity and milieu, all helped to develop Charlotte Elliott's own Evangelical outlook and imagination.

Family life appears to have been happy. Elliott wrote in a letter to her youngest sister Ellen (Eleanor)[6] in 1817 that, 'every year's experience convinces me more strongly, that few are favoured with a lot more merciful, a home so comfortable, a family so qualified to make each other happy, and to be happy themselves, as ours.'[7] The same letter illustrates that, by her late twenties, she was speaking the language of Evangelicalism with proficiency. She seems to have started life as a talented and vivacious young individual with wide cultural and literary interests, but with an Evangelical seriousness of purpose:

> As an elder sister, and affectionate friend, let me urge you to be on the watch for gaining intellectual, and above all, spiritual improvement, [...]. *We are sent here for something else, my dear Ellen, than to gather the flowers, and smell them, and then throw them away;* we are to distil from them a precious and powerful essence, which shall shed a perfume not in our own bosom only, but over the home of our happy infancy and sheltered childhood, where it will refresh and gladden our parents and sisters and brothers; *and we should then diffuse it over the chamber of the sick, and drop its balmy influence into the heart of the sorrowful, -- that the fragrance of our flowers may banish, for a time at least, the recollections of their thorns.*[8]

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formation of the Church Missionary Society, and that he later became a member of the CMS committee: p. 295, p. 361.

[6] Later Eleanor Babington (she married into the Babingtons of the Clapham Sect). Elliott lived with this sister from 1845 until her death: from 1845 to 1857 at Mornay Lodge in Torquay, and afterwards at Norfolk Terrace, Brighton.

[7] Dated June 3rd, 1817. Charlotte Elliott, *Leaves from the Unpublished Journals, Letters and Poems of Charlotte Elliott* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1874), pp. 129-130. Elliott seems to have written poems to commemorate the anniversary of her parents' wedding each year. Poems survive in manuscript form, MSS.WHVE. 2, 'On the Wedding Day of My Dear Parents', Tuesday Night Dec 19 1820; and MSS.WHVE. 17, 'Ode to My Dear Papa and Mama's Wedding Day, Dec 20 1808', pp. 18-20. These manuscripts are now owned by a distant relative, William Henry Venn Elliott [hence WHVE].

[8] Elliott, *Leaves*, pp. 129-130.

While she was still a relatively healthy young woman, she was conscious of the needs of others. Notably, her mind had already turned to the alleviation of others' pain and sorrow. Elliott's early desire to console the sick and suffering looks forward to the works of her maturity.

The seeds of Evangelicalism sown in Elliott's youth flowered in her early thirties. The particular direction that her faith took was owing to her experience of affliction. The severe illness she suffered in 1821,[9] which left her a permanent invalid, came to be interpreted by Elliott's family as the work of God's grace rescuing her from the worldly distractions of fashionable literary society. Her sister, Eleanor Babington, wrote that:

> There was a period, before my father's final removal from Clapham to Brighton, when her remarkable talents and accomplishments made her a welcome guest in circles where she met some of the most brilliant wits and writers of the day. To one of her temperament such society as this had an almost irresistible fascination. But there was an absence of religion, if not hostility to it, in many of those with whom she was thus brought into connection, so as to endanger that higher spiritual life, of which even then she was conscious. But He who had loved her with an everlasting love, and who well knew how perilous a snare this would prove to her, was pleased to lay her on a bed of sickness, and thus to withdraw her from the scene of danger and temptation.[10]

The family clearly read this difficult time as being God's ordained will. Her illness was interpreted as an act of providence which saved her from the fatal lures of Vanity Fair.

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[9] The cause of her continued ill health has not been identified. Bonnie Shannon McMullen does note that 'she complained of rheumatism and her brother Henry mentioned "enlargement of the heart" in 1864. (Josiah Bateman, *The Life of the Reverend Henry Venn Elliott* (London: Macmillan, 1868), p. 351).' Bonnie Shannon McMullen, 'Elliott, Charlotte (1789-1871)', *Oxford DNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8672> [accessed 12.02.2005].

[10] Babington, 'Biographical Sketch' in Elliott, *Selections*, pp. 15-6.



Figure 8

A portrait taken by Joseph Slater in 1821 (figure 8),[11] presumably before her illness, depicts Charlotte as a pretty and vivacious young woman with a carefree demeanour. It contrasts considerably from the portrait circulated with Elliott's work after her death. It is easy to see that this attractive and well-connected young woman would have been welcomed by society. However, it seems the experience of the sickness altered her character forever. Initially, it led to a time of darkness, depression, uncertainty and doubt:

> Her views, too, became clouded and confused, through an introduction to religious controversy, and the disturbing influence of various teachers, who held inadequate notions of the efficacy of Divine grace. She became deeply conscious of the evil in her own heart, and having not yet fully realised the fullness and freeness of the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, she suffered much mental distress, under the painful uncertainty whether it were possible that such an one as she felt herself to be could be saved.[12]

It was during this time of inner conflict that Elliott met the Genevan evangelist Dr Cæsar Henri Abraham Malan, a minister of Huguenot descent (1787-1864).[13] Her first

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[11] Possibly on 14 May 1821. A cousin, Emilia Venn, wrote 'My Aunt took me home. Stopped a long time on the way whilst they had their pictures taken.' Nicholas Barton, Feb 17, 1966, p. 362.

[12] Babington, 'Biographical Sketch' in Elliott, *Selections*, p. 16.

[13] Descended from Waldensians, the family originally settled at Mérindol in Provence, but were dispersed owing to religious persecution in 1714. Born and educated in Geneva, Cæsar Malan was at first pastor in the near-Unitarian National Church of Geneva. Around 1820, he became pastor of a separatist group in Geneva. He was one of the founders of a movement for better hymns in The French Reformed Church. His hymns were published in *Songs of Zion* and include 'Non, ce n'est pas mourir' ('It Is Not Death to Die'). See *The*

meeting with Malan on 9 May 1822 was a significant spiritual turning point in her life and was kept thereafter as 'the birthday of her soul to the true spiritual life and peace'.[14]

Malan's considerable influence over Elliott also extended into the cultural realm:

> Previous to the time of Dr. Malan's visit, my sister's reading had been very discursive. The noblest earlier writers in our own language, and especially our poets, were her unceasing delight. All the best specimens of modern literature were devoured with avidity as they appeared. Dr Malan at once perceived the spiritual danger of such pursuits, so eagerly followed, to one of her temperament. Under his advice, she threw aside for a time the authors that she had found most attractive, and confined herself to the exclusive study of Holy Scripture.[15]

We wonder which writers Elliott had read with such avidity. At the time, the most popular poets of the day were Lord Byron and Walter Scott. Byron's *Don Juan* was published in 1822, just after the time of Elliott's illness, and was condemned as being immoral by influential religious figures including James Montgomery and Reginald Heber.[16] It may have been the controversy roused by of this kind of writing that prompted Malan to restrict his young protégée to the Bible.

Juvenilia

It was the movement away from worldly literature to religious study that led to the channelling of Elliott's literary imagination to the writing of devotional verse: 'From this time her poetical talents became consecrated to religion'.[17] Babington informs us

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Life, Labours and Writings of Cæsar Malan, Minister of the Gospel in the Church of Geneva, Doctor of Divinity, and Pastor of 'L'Église du Témoignage' [by one of his sons] (London: James Nisbet, 1869).

[14] Babington, 'Biographical Sketch' in Elliott, *Selections*, p. 17. This was Malan's first visit to England. *Life, Labours and Writings*, p. 281.

[15] Babington, 'Biographical Sketch' in Elliott, *Selections*, pp. 22-23.

[16] See *Byron: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 237-247.

[17] Babington, 'Biographical Sketch' in Elliott, *Selections*, p. 24.

that her sister had written much-admired comic poems prior to this time (which may have been in imitation of writers like Byron). Some of these early works are published as an appendix in *Thoughts in Verse on Sacred Subjects with Some Miscellaneous Poems: Written in Early Years and now first Published* (1871). Her 'Visit to Saturn' is introduced with an explanation about the circumstances of the composition of this poem:

> These verses describe the tragical event which befell a gentleman of our acquaintance, in consequence of his having made the following declaration in the presence of four ladies :---'No woman ever *has* had, or ever *shall* have any influence over me'.[18]

In this lengthy poem (twenty verses long), the misogynist is taken to Saturn because the dull appearance of the planet is supposed to be owing to the absence of women.

The poem tells us not only that Elliott possessed an imaginative wit but also about her feelings of loyalty towards her own sex, a feature not especially evident in her later writings. It seems almost inconceivable that this whimsical story flowed from the pen of the author of *Thoughts in Verse on Sacred Subjects*, a volume which contained poems with such sober titles as: 'Blessed is he whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find watching', 'He sleeps in Jesus', and 'Written for a Widowed Friend'.

The tone of 'The Lady and the Mouse. A True Story', another early composition that is humorous, that seems strikingly different to Elliott's later religious writings:

> The clock had struck twelve and the household reposed,
> All eyes but Eudocia's in slumber were closed---
> She had long been accustomed sad vigils to keep,
> For you know 'tis so vulgar, so common to sleep.
> All pensive and tearful she thought of her woes,

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[18] Charlotte Elliott, *Thoughts in Verse on Sacred Subjects* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1871), p. 224.

Or of some other subject which nobody knows;
[…]
In midst of her musings she suddenly heard
A noise very near her something that stirred,
[…]
Exclaiming---"it's here, it was nibbling my head!"
[…]
The Lady relinquishing both chamber and bed
And left Mr Mouse to enjoy them instead.
It was past one o'clock ere the fair one could creep
To the cold bed where mousey compelled her to sleep;
But she bore her hard fate with a very good grace,
And patience and cheerfulness smiled in her face;
She thought of long nights in the summers gone by,
When no mouse had intruded, or forced her to fly.
And quite wearied out, by the toils of the day,
She at length fell asleep, in the common-place way.
In the morning, the poor little culprit was caught,
And atoned with his life for the mischief he wrought,
And Eudocia was grieved, when she woke, to be told
Of the fate he had suffered for being too bold.[19]

It is likely that such amusing verses would have delighted many audiences, both at home and in society. This light-hearted poem, full of youthful vivacity and good humour, seems almost in opposition to the sober verses of Elliott's maturity including the *Thoughts in Verse on Sacred Subjects* to which the 'Fancy Pieces in Youthful Days' were appended.

These early poems reveal glimpses of the young Elliott's character. 'A Midnight Excursion: Or, the Question Answered, "Why I cannot sleep at Night."', in conjunction with 'The Lady and the Mouse' with its sleepless heroine, suggests that Elliott might have suffered from insomnia in her youth. The poem tells of an out-of-body experience led by a benevolent spirit inside the protagonist's brain. The interior of the brain is depicted as a banqueting room occupied by numerous allegorical figures:

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[19] Elliott, *Thoughts in Verse*, pp. 234-236. Further references will be given in the text after the quotation hereafter. Although it is noteworthy that the moral response of the heroine may be considered Christian: 'But she bore her hard fate with a very good grace, / And patience and cheerfulness smiled in her face […]'.

[...] At one end of a table
Sat some old, wrinkled men, whose wan lips seemed unable
To relax into smiles; their thin backs were all bent,
Their brows were contracted with dark discontent.
And there they sat fretting, and grumbling, and croaking,
And making a noise between groaning and choking [...]
(*Thoughts in Verse*, pp. 221-222)

She is told that each person's name is written upon their apparel. The old men are 'Cares'. Intermingled with these men are 'Some pensive and silent, some pouring along. / Their eloquent breathings in rhetoric or song. [...] On their sleeve was embroidered the epithet "Thought."'(p. 222). There are also beautiful female figures:

Some were soothing the old wrinkled men with their smiles,
Some charming the others with innocent wiles;
Some were fondly caressing a group of young things
With faces like children and bright coloured wings;
Some were talking of friendship, some whispering of love;
And they looked like fair visitants come from above.
I eagerly sought for the letters revealing
Their names, and spangles of silver read, "Feeling."
Then I turned to examine those pretty young creatures,
No two dressed alike, or alike in their features.
One flew like a lark, and one sang like a linnet;
And they changed both their form and their note every minute.
One was making a nosegay of daisies and pansies;
And engraved on its sash I descried the word "Fancies." (pp. 222-3)

The activity of all these characters is understood as the reason for disrupted sleep:

I have frequently wondered before and lamented
That my sleep is so often disturbed or prevented;
But, now I have seen what goes on in my brain,
Methinks I ought never to murmur again;
But deem it a marvel, a blessing, a boon,
If I catch but one wink between midnight and noon.
For, since all these good folks above stairs never tire
Of talking, or sporting, or venting their ire;
Since Cares will be carking, and fearing, and fussing;
And Thoughts will be arguing, planning, discussing;
And Feelings find something to joy or to sigh at;
And Fancies one moment can never keep quiet;
While my brain must afford them both lodging and diet,

'Twould be folly to look for one night's peaceful rest,
'Till these, who sleep never shall be dispossessed. (pp. 223-224)

'A Midnight Excursion' suggests that as a young woman, Elliott was already in the habit of introspective self-analysis.

It seems that Elliott experimented with several kinds of verse writing in her youth. A private collection of her unpublished manuscripts, which include her earliest extant compositions, provides further examples of her poetry written before the sickness of 1821. They also offer some indication of the kind of poetry Elliott may have enjoyed reading before coming under the influence of Malan. The first poem in the collection, 'The Father', is a lyric narrative which appears to be written in imitation of Romantic poetry. It is a dramatic poem in which Elliott borrows her imagery from nature:

1. Yes, I beheld his aged form,
I view'd his reverend face,
Where life's tempestuous angry storm,
Had graven many a trace.

2. The scattered locks that time had spared
Were white as winter's snow
Yet those who knew have oft declared
'Twas less through age than woe.[20]

As the poem overleaf in the manuscript is dated 1810, it seems likely that 'The Father' was written around the same time when the author was about twenty-one years old. Unlike the published works of her maturity, this poem contains no explicitly religious sentiment; the title refers not to God the Father but to a careworn earthly parent. Here, Elliott explores human experience without providing a spiritual or heavenly interpretation. Instead, her descriptions are rooted in the earth:

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[20] MSS.WHVE.1.

3. Deep were the furrows on his cheek
And dim his watery eye
And oft the unnoted tear would speak
That he had cause to sigh.

4. For fierce and weary was the blast,
That on his age had blown;
And tho' the tempest long had past,
With it -- his all was gone.

Both manmade rustic features, such as 'furrows', and the natural elements, like 'the tempest' are alluded to. Such Romantic inspiration from nature supports Babington's recollection that her sister was fond of reading modern literature in her youth. The poem also demonstrates that, as a young woman, Elliott experimented with writing narrative poetry.

'The Father' is a sentimental work written to evoke pathos. The aged man's heart has been broken by the loss of a beloved son:

5. Gone was the son for whose dear sake
He want and toil had scorned;
Who, bright by filial love could make
Each dreary day that dawned.

The poignant story about a rural man who has lost a precious son is reminiscent of Wordsworth's poems which centred on tragic figures, especially old men, including *Michael*, *Simon Lee, the Old Huntsman* and 'Old Man Travelling'. This composition may have been written in imitation of Wordsworth's work. In its surviving form, 'The Father' does not explain how the son came to be lost, and it is unclear whether the five verses of the manuscript are a fragment or the poem in its entirety. What is evident from Elliott's focus on the father's pain and grief is that she was already interested in the subject of human pain and suffering, the preoccupation of her later

writings, prior to her illness of 1821.[21] However, this poem is an exploration of human brokenness without a Christian response to it. No attempt is made to cheer or comfort the sorrowing soul as in her later works. 'The Father' perhaps reveals sympathy with others' pain, but not yet a ministry in response to it.

On the other side of the manuscript page containing 'The Father' is an untitled remnant of a poem which may have been written during a time of melancholy. It is dated 'July 5th 1810' when Elliott was twenty-one years old. Only the final five verses of the poem, numbered from thirteen to eighteen, have survived. It is a mournful address to a bright evening star on a sad and lonely, perhaps also sleepless, night. Elliott looks into the future, first to old age and later to death:

13. Then when on thee I fix my faded eye,
Let thy soft beams fall sweetly on my sight;
Look kind, and sad, and peaceful as tonight;
And check the bursting tear and rising sigh.[22]

The evening star is a loyal, devoted and, in many ways, romantic friend who offers kindness, comfort and companionship. Elliott asks that in the difficult nights of the future, she will not be reminded of the bittersweet memories of past happiness and ease, but be pointed to the future permanence of lasting peace in heaven:

14. Call not my fair and brilliant hours to mind
When skies were cloudless, flowers without a thorn;
But tell of worlds where man shall cease to mourn;
Where are no pangs to cure, no hearts to bind.

It has already been seen in the first two chapters that a consolatory focus on the promises of heaven is a common Evangelical trope. While it was a response that came

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[21] As also evidenced in the letter quoted above addressed to her sister Ellen.
[22] MSS.WHVE.1.

to characterise Elliott's later works, in this early poem, she is still drawn back to earthly grief and pain.

In terms of Elliott's desire for human companionship and care, her early poetry in manuscript form suggests that she might have fallen in love at least once in her youth. 'To [name torn off] (think of me / I will remember thee)', dated 'January 24 1809' when Elliott was nineteen years old, is a joyous love poem full of promise:

1. At the dawn of spring when the garden you tread
When the pure virgin snowdrop deeps forth from its bed
When the hyacinth blooms in its mantle of blue,
O, there let my love be remember'd by you.

2. And when sweet Spring clothes our garden in green
When the violet so fragrant yet lowly is seen
When all things seem lovely, when all things seem new
Then to heighten my bliss I will think upon you.[23]

To the original seven verses of the manuscript, four verses have been added subsequently. The ultimate two verses suggest the beloved may have been lost, possibly in death:

10. Tho' the cold hand of sorrow should often times veil
The bright star of my bliss in a black dewy shroud
Fine memory's sweet aid with delight I will hail
With remembrance of you, she shall gild the dark cloud.

While it is possible that a persona is talking, Elliott is attempting to speak about lost love and bereavement. Another undated poem, 'Monday Night', in a cycle of morning and evening poems, also captures the feelings of loss:

2. How often have I longed to find on earth
A friend who might to every thing let reply
When sad or gay, partake my grief or mirth
And read my every feeling in my eye;

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[23] MSS.WHVE.17.21.

Such have I known (G. R.)
But he is gone!
His loss has left me desolate and lone.[24]

Although it is unknown who 'G. R.' was (or whether he was even a real person), it is evident that Elliott is describing the very human ache of broken-heartedness.

Elliott's acceptance of her invalidism and the road to assurance and consolation in faith is recounted in 'An Allegory', the first poem of the 'Fancy Pieces in Youthful Days' appended to *Thoughts in Verse on Sacred Subjects*. As Elliott does not specifically name the allegory in the course of the poem's twenty-four verses, the title is initially mysterious and puzzling. The first clue to the character of the allegory is given in parenthesis underneath the title. The reader is told that this poem was 'Written many years ago, when health failed'.[25] The first verse states:

1. It is not known that I am married,
But yet, I have a spouse;
Long I refused, resisted, tarried:
At length I paid my vows. (*Thoughts in Verse*, p. 211)

The idea that emerges seems to be that, at the time this poem, she saw herself as being bound in perpetual union to sickness. The description of her invalid condition as marriage seems to have come after reaching a state of reluctant acceptance about living a life harassed incessantly by ill health.

The second verse suggests that the relationship is still not easy. Underneath the almost cheerful acceptance and resignation, a mixture of bitterness and anger is evident:

2. Mine is no fashionable lord,
For months and weeks away.

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[24] Charlotte Elliott, 'Monday Night', MSS.WHVE. 16.4.
[25] Elliott, *Thoughts in Verse*, p. 211.

He seldom, during all the year,
Is absent for a day. (p. 211)

In Freudian terms, her superego is repressing the rebellious anger of her id and is making her conform to the Evangelical ideas with which she has been brought up. However, latent in the verse is resentment and the feeling that that the spouse's perpetual, tenacious presence is tedious, suffocating and odious. Elliott's conceit of invalidism as an unwanted husband, to whom the wife is legally tied, articulates brilliantly the idea of being bound to the condition of prolonged illness. As the Bible commands that the husband has authority over his wife, invalidism also claims rights as a master to be obeyed. As master, invalidism is also a patriarchal teacher:

3. And (which is more) few married dames
Can better lessons learn
Than he imparts, when, duteously,
A willing ear I turn. (p. 211)

The significant words of this verse are 'duteously' and 'willing'. 'Duteously' suggests the necessity for reverence and deference to be given, while 'willing' suggests that lessons cannot be learnt grudgingly; submission must come from free will. This is likely to invoke a mixture of admiration for writing such an extraordinary poem, which articulates so well the frustration of being bound to and by illness, and pity for the young author. It is a poem which almost seems voiced through gritted teeth.

'An Allegory' tells of a maturation gained through initially undesired experience. The following verses evoke pathos for the strong-willed female spirit broken and re-set into a quieter mould:

4. We'er [*sic*] not well suited, I confess,
For he is grave and mild;
And I am full of levity,
And passionate and wild.

5. But, since my marriage, I have been
Much meeker than I was;
And, if improvement may be seen,
His influence is the cause. (p. 212)

The idea that meekness is 'improvement' in females and that strong-minded girls should be restrained was one that Evangelicals advocated. The Clapham Sect member Hannah More wrote in *The Education of Daughters* (1777):

> Bold, enterprising spirit [...] so much admired in boys, should not in the other sex, be encouraged, but suppressed. Girls should be taught not perniciously to carry on a dispute, even if they know themselves to be right [...]. [Girls] should acquire a submissive temper and a forbearing spirit.[26]

At the same time, Evangelical discipline and training tended to see the breaking of the will and denial of the flesh as a resolute means towards spiritual purity for both male and female; all should aspire to being 'grave and mild' rather than carefree, wayward and undisciplined.

Invalidism which rendered the sufferer immobile provided the conditions for solitary contemplation and internal examination. Elliott explains that patience and endurance are the fruits produced:

6. I sit for hours with him alone
Without impatience now;
And view, without dislike or fear,
His melancholy brow. (p. 212)

The poem explains that the experience of protracted illness is like having to endure an odious husband. The following verse attempts to conform with the Evangelical interpretation of suffering as being necessary for personal and spiritual growth:

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[26] Quoted in Marie-Louise Luxemborg, 'Faith & Gender: from Eve the Temptress to Subversive Angel: the Flowering of Feminism', *Proceedings of Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution*, 8 (2004), <http://www.brlsi.org/proceed04/belief200407.htm> [accessed 13.02.2006]. I have not been able to locate the original text in the UK.

7. The maxims I once thought so harsh,
   The rules so strict and sad,
I value now, because I see
   'Twas needful such were made. (p. 212)

This verse echoes Babington's interpretation that her sister's illness was providential and required because it withdrew her from the spiritual dangers and temptations of the world outside the sickroom. Subsequent verses describe how the experience of suffering on earth has led to a consolatory appreciation of heaven:

8. O'er the dark views of life he gives
   I shed no murmuring tear,
Tho' scarcely one bright tint is seen,
   The traveller's heart to cheer.

9. But, while he wraps the world below
   In dreariness and gloom,
What heavenly lustre does he throw
   Upon the world to come!

10. Such glories does he oft unfold,
   Such scenes of bliss portray,
That e'en my earthbound soul would fain
   Take wing, and flee away. (pp. 212-213)

As Elliott reaches the point in her poem which tells how sickness led to faith, she begins to incorporate the imagery and language of the scriptures. The last two lines are drawn from Psalm 55. 6, 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.' Like Harrison, Elliott uses the famous line from Psalm 55 to express her own wish to escape the wretched experience of invalidism (see pp. 105-6).

It seems likely that the pre-Freudian Evangelical readers of the nineteenth century would have read 'An Allegory' as a straightforward story of the author's brave resignation to invalidism. The poem's position as the first of the 'Fancy Pieces in Youthful Days' seems to suggest that the editor of *Thoughts in Verse on Sacred Subjects* read the 'An Allegory' as an admirable and courageous poem rather than one

of bitterness and resentment.[27] On the surface, the poem could be read as a kind of spiritual autobiography about the author's internal transformation from believing the restrictions of invalidism were cruel and objectionable to providential because they led to spiritual growth. Indeed, Elliott's use of allegory links her poem to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, 'the best known allegory in the English language (if not in the world)', the Puritan classic about Christian salvation.[28] Elliott's poem thus seems to demonstrate Isobel Armstrong's point about the 'doubleness' of Victorian women's poetry; the idea that underneath a conventional poem, a more difficult one may exist (see p. 12).[29] 'An Allegory' can seem to conform to the pattern of conversion narratives where the convert regretfully tells of the wilfulness of the past. However, under the surface, bitterness and sardonicism permeate:

11. Had I but known at first what years
Of intercourse have taught,
His worth had gained for him, at once,
The unwilling hand he sought.

12. But when he wooed me, I exclaimed,
"If I become your wife
"You'll never know one happy hour,
"One interval from strife.

13. "I am so foolish---you so wise,
"We never can agree;
"You are so gloomy---I so gay,
"Your look's enough for me.

14. "The things that please and suit me best
"You would at once forbid,
"And shackle me with tiresome rules
"In all I said or did.

15. "I warn you to reflect and pause;
"Beware of what you do!

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[27] As the edition with the 'Miscellaneous Poems Written in Early Years' was published in the same year as Charlotte Elliott's death (1871), it is highly probable that they were added posthumously.
[28] J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 4th edn (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 20.
[29] Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 324.

"I like my character too well
"To alter it for you. (pp. 213-214)

These verses suggest that, when Elliott was first threatened with prolonged ill health, she jealously and stubbornly guarded her freedom and spirited personality. It is difficult to reconcile this colourful portrait of the feisty, wilful and independent young woman with that of the resigned and submissive mature woman painted by biographers such as Eleanor Babington and E. Conder Gray.

On the surface, Elliott is almost pronouncing that invalidism, if not actually a Pauline 'Fruit of the Spirit', can be a facilitator for many including 'patience' and 'self-control', ultimately, perhaps even 'peace'. It thus seems to agree with Evangelical views that sickness could enable the Christian soul to live more fully in the spirit, even if restricted in the body. However, underneath, Elliott rages with hate against the restrictions caused by sickness. In the last section of 'An Allegory', it seems that she has chosen life in resignation over exhaustion in rebellion, but there is an underlying feeling that invalidism as an allegory is a smug husband who insists he knows best:

17. He mildly answered, "Let me try
"The influence of time.
"How oft have sorrowing lovers found
"A faithful friend in him!

18. "I am forbidding; strangers oft
"Receiving me with a frown:
"But I am welcome with a smile
"Where I am fully known.

19. "Besides I have a plea to urge
"None ever urged before;
"For your advantage, not for mine,
"This union I implore.

20. "For your own sake reject me not;
"Let but your friend be tried:

"A kind protector he will prove,
"A counsellor and guide."

21. And, really, he has kept his word;
For, ever since our marriage,
Of all his promises and claims
Not one can I disparage.

22. He shelters me from many a snare,
His counsel ne'er deceives me;
And, tho' he makes me stay at home.
He very seldom leaves me.

23. He's fond of reading, so am I;
We read for hours together.
And, if our sun be seldom bright,
We've calm and tranquil weather.

24. And, on the whole, since many a wife
Her marriage has repented,
I'll think my lot as good as most,
And learn to be contented. (pp. 214-216)

The idea that one must 'learn to be contented' is especially bitter and evokes much pathos for the young woman broken by sickness. The multiple appearance of the word 'seldom', which is used three times in the poem,[30] also has the effect of highlighting the tedium and misery of the invalid married to her despotic husband, sickness.

'An Allegory' not only tells of Elliott's transition from the vivacious young woman of Joseph Slater's rosy-cheeked portrait to the sober old woman of the black and white photograph. It gives valuable insight into Elliott's development as a writer, as it illustrates a movement from the narrative to the didactic. If, on the surface, it is a kind of spiritual autobiography about a conversion to the benefits of sickness, it demonstrates the genre's impulse not only to record experience but to share it with others.

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[30] 'He seldom, during all the year, / Is absent for a day'; 'And, tho' he makes me stay at home. / He very seldom leaves me'; 'And, if our sun be seldom bright, We've calm and tranquil weather.' Elliott, *Thoughts*, pp. 211-216.

Published Works

Eleanor Babington writes that after 1822, under the influence of Cæsar Malan, her sister came to devote 'all the efforts of her pen henceforth to one subject -- the glory of God, and the benefit of others'.[31] The idea of writing for the 'benefit of others' strikes to the heart of Elliott's devotional poetry. The titles to her works such as *The Invalid's Hymn Book* (1834) and *Hours of Sorrow Cheered and Comforted* (first edition, 1836) convey her desire to minister to the sick and suffering. Even works seemingly unrelated to the experience of pain and sorrow such as *Morning and Evening Hymns for a Week* (1836) are punctuated with the language of healing. The first hymn, 'Sunday Morning' opens with the verse:

1. Thou glorious Sun of Righteousness,
   On this day risen to set no more,
   Shine on me now to heal and bless,
   With brighter beams than e'er before.[32]

Elliott's desire for God is, in the vein of Anne Steele, first and foremost for the Great Physician who soothes the pain and heals the wounds of earthly life. Her experience is not only as a sufferer of pain but also of grief:

> It pleased God also about this period (1823), that many family illnesses and bereavements occurred, which deeply affected my beloved sister, and gave occasion to some of her most beautiful poems which appear in the "Hours of Sorrow."[33]

Elliott's Evangelical faith and writing about suffering and pain thus emerged simultaneously and are interconnected. This has led to assertions, such as that by Pitman, that, 'More than most poets, she learnt in suffering what she taught in song' (p. 83), and by James Davidson that, 'Her verse is characterised by tenderness of

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[31] Babington, 'Biographical Sketch' in Elliott, *Selections*, p. 24.
[32] Charlotte Elliott, *Morning and Evening Hymns for a Week. By a Lady* (London: L. Booth, [1863]), p. 3.
[33] Babington, 'Biographical Sketch' in Elliott, *Selections*, p. 25.

feeling, plaintive simplicity, deep devotion, and perfect rhythm. For those in sickness and sorrow she has sung as few others have done.'[34] These statements reflect the Victorian belief, as noted by J. R. Watson, that 'Women writers were thought to be especially sensitive to pain, suffering and the misery of bereavement'.[35]

'S. Matthew V.' from *Hours of Sorrow* (1836) may have been one of the poems written at the time of mourning mentioned above. It is a work offering comfort to those left behind:

> I stood in spirit on that sacred mount,
> Where He who spoke as man could never speak,
> With Godlike power and majesty, though meek,
> Poured words of life from truth's eternal fount.
> A few poor men, plain and of no account,
> Were nearest to Him: then His eye would seek,
> While from its glance love's radiance seemed to break,
> And beam o'er multitudes too vast to count.
> I strove, as from an oracle divine,
> To catch some words to treasure in my heart;
> And though a distant place, alas! was mine,
> And those dear accents reached me but in part,
> One hallowed sentence to my ear was borne:
> The words were there: "*Blessed are they that mourn.*"[36]

Elliott imagines herself spirited away to the Sermon on the Mount and hears Christ speaking personally to her situation of grief. The Petrarchan sonnet form with its octave and sestet suggests that her literary style was influenced by earlier Christian writers, certainly Milton, possibly others including Donne and Herbert.[37] By writing a sonnet in the more difficult Petrarchan form rather than the English one, Elliott is also proving her artistry and skill as a writer. She recognises that the paradoxes in Christ's

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[34] *Dictionary of Hymnology*, p. 328.
[35] Watson, *English Hymn*, p. 425.
[36] Charlotte Elliott, *Hours of Sorrow Cheered and Comforted* (London: RTS, [*c*.1877]), rev. edn, p. 24.
[37] Her books have not survived so we can only surmise. However, Elliott's imaginative placing of herself at the site of the Sermon on the Mount, a Loyolan meditative practice, is a technique that was commonly employed by the metaphysical poets in their own devotional sonnets (see pp. 72-3, and p. 103). See Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, pp. 247-73 for his investigation of the influence of Loyola on Donne and Herbert, and Helen Gardner, *The Divine Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), pp. l-lv for her discussion on the associations between the structure of Donne's *Anniversaries* and *Holy Sonnets* and Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*.

Sermon on the Mount, in particular the promises given in the Beatitudes, are perfectly suited to the condition of the invalid; the poor of spirit, the meek, and the mournful are valorised and attended to. The message is that whosoever has lost their healthy earthly life may find the riches of eternal life through the spirit. This understanding about the comfort offered by such passages in the Bible comes from Elliott's personal experience. She was well-acquainted with the isolation of the sickroom but found consolation in her faith; Octavius Winslow wrote in a posthumous tribute that:

> On Sunday morning, alluding to her detention from the house of God, and those outward ordinances in which she delighted, she remarked, with a beaming look, 'The Bible is my church. It is always open, and there is my High Priest ever waiting to receive me.'[38]

Accordingly, her hymns include, 'On Being Prevented from Going to Church By Illness' and 'Sunday Hymn, in Solitude'.[39]

Elliott invited her readers to share in the consolation she had found. She articulated this desire in her introductory poem 'To the Reader' in *Hours of Sorrow*. She explains that she writes with the hope that those who:

> Feeling the world no balsam can bestow,
> To soothe the aching heart, or medicine woe,
> May, midst their sorrows, lend a listening ear
> To strains whose purpose is their grief to cheer;
> To tell them where another heart found rest,
> Once, like their own, disquieted, unblessed,
> And where, though sought in vain on earthly ground,
> A balm of sovereign virtue may be found. (p. 2)

Elliott's devotional writing is an empathetic ministry of healing; her poem is interspersed with therapeutic terms such as 'balsam', 'soothe', 'medicine' and 'balm'.

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[38] Octavius Winslow, *The King in His Beauty* (London: John F. Shaw, 1871), p. 53.
[39] Published in *The Invalid's Hymn Book*, ed. Charlotte Elliott, 6th edn (Dublin: John Robertson, 1854), p. 258 and p. 257.

It thus seems the suffering of her own experience was the starting point of her own service.

Elliott's entry into publication was the result of a friendship with a kindred spirit, a fellow invalid who shared the desire to alleviate others' pain through Christian consolation. In 1834, the Elliotts met Harriet Kiernan, a consumptive from Dublin who had travelled to England for her health. The tuberculosis could not be arrested but, as a kind of dying legacy, Kiernan asked Elliott to take over her editorship of the *Christian Remembrancer Pocket-Book*. More significant in terms of Elliott's writing was the request made by a mutual friend, the Reverend Hugh White, that she revise a hymn book for invalids arranged by Kiernan. First published in 1834, *The Invalid's Hymn Book* was to become Elliott's greatest contribution to hymnody. It was extremely successful and was expanded in several editions; the first edition contained twenty-three original hymns by Elliott; the second edition (1841) contained an additional fifty; the third (1843) contained twelve new hymns; and the sixth (1854) thirty-four. The advertisement to the sixth edition informs us that of 200 hymns, 112 were original works by Elliott.[40]

The Cult of Invalidism

The publication of *Hymns for Invalids* coincided with the beginning of a growing market of consolation literature for invalids. As Maria Frawley has shown, titles included: *Efforts. By an Invalid* (1835), *Companion for the Sick Bed* (1836), *The Invalid's Book: Pieces in Poetry and Prose* (1838), *Hymns for the Sick* (1843), The *Invalid's Pastime: An Offering to the Weeping and Weary* (1854) and The *Cup of*

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[40] The addition of all Elliott's hymns in the various editions adds up to 119. The discrepancy in the number suggested must be owing to the fact 'a few hymns not so suitable in times of sickness have been omitted.' 'Advertisement to the Sixth Edition', *Hymns for Invalids* (1854), p. viii.

Consolation: Or, Bright Messages for the Sick Bed. By an Invalid (1880).[41] Susanna Spurgeon, another celebrated invalid in the Evangelical world and wife of the famous Baptist preacher C. H. Spurgeon, published *'A Cluster of Camphire;' Or, Words of Cheer and Comfort for the Sick and Sorrowful* in 1898. The Religious Tract Society even published a series entitled *The 'RTS' Invalid Library*. The figure of the invalid became ubiquitous in the Victorian cultural imagination. Fictional invalids included Charlotte M. Yonge's Margaret May in *The Daisy Chain* (1856) and Mr Fairlie in Wilkie Collins's *Woman in White* (1860). At the same time, there was a proliferation of specially designed merchandise for invalids such as cups, spoons, beds, couches, and chairs. Travel books were published about the experiences of invalids who travelled to milder climes in search of health including *A Subaltern's Sick Leave: Or, Rough Notes of a Visit in Search of Health to China and the Cape of Good Hope* (1837), *Letters from Abroad, from a Physician in Search of Health* (1861) and *Among the Boers: Or, Notes of a Trip to South Africa in Search of Health* (1880).[42] Cookbooks also contained information on diets for dilapidated invalids. Isabella Beeton's famous *Book of Household Management* (1861) contained a substantial section on 'Invalid Cookery' with recipes ranging from 'invalid's jelly' and rice-milk to eel broth. The growth of this phenomenon was reflected in the numerous expanded editions of *The Invalid's Hymn Book* published throughout the nineteenth century.

In these later decades, a 'cult of invalidism' was developing in Britain and America. It was especially followed by women; indeed, Antony Harrison has asserted that 'In Victorian England suffering, as a manifestation of emotional and spiritual

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[41] See Maria Frawley, *Invalidism and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), chapter 4 '"Sin-sick Souls": Christian Invalids and the Literature of Consolation', pp. 157-244.
[42] *The Invalid's Hymn Book* contains 'On Leaving Home for a Milder Climate' (p. 267). Elliott herself travelled in summer months when her health was usually better. A Pocket-Book dated 1838 mentions a trip to Switzerland with Eleanor Babington and her husband, the Rev. John Babington, from June to October. During her stay in Geneva, she received regular visits from Dr. Malan: *Leaves*, pp. 15-17.

sensitivity, was accepted as the special province of women and a special mode of female subjectivity in the fallen world.'[43] This led to the social figure of the invalid woman being identified as a spiritual being, a human angel, weak, helpless and ill. Abba Goold Woolson commented with irony in 1873 that:

> To be ladylike is to be lifeless, inane and dawdling. Since people who are ill must necessarily possess these qualities of manner, from a lack of vital energy and spirits, it follows that they are the ones studiously copied as models of female attractiveness.[44]

It has already been seen in the case of Susanna Harrison that a women suffering from long-protracted illness, occupying the threshold space between life and death, could be seen as more spiritual as she was in danger of crossing the margin into the spiritual realms. If the ideal Victorian woman was described by Coventry Patmore as 'The Angel in the House', the invalid woman was perhaps the most extreme manifestation of this form, a liminal (and therefore almost otherworldly) being restricted to a state of passive, childlike dependency confined to the domestic realm who blessed the sanctity of the home. In terms of the confinement caused by illness, her female invalidism could almost be understood as a kind of Protestant cloistered existence (although it seems likely that Elliott would have considered the idea of a conventual life to be popish), one in which the withdrawal into the *vita contemplativa* and self-sacrifice was imposed by God's irresistible divine will for the good of the wayward soul rather than chosen with free will.[45] If the idea of cloistered withdrawal from the world is extended, Elliott becomes almost a head of a sorority of suffering women who seek to strengthen their faith in the face of adversity and pain.

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[43] Antony Harrison, *Victorian Poets and the Politics of Culture: Discourse and Ideology* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), p. 87.
[44] Abba Goold Woolson, *Woman in American Society* (Boston: Roberts Bros, 1873), p. 192.
[45] This was, of course, a time when sisterhoods were being established in the Anglo-Catholic church.

If the invalid woman was esteemed for her spiritual qualities, she was also valorised in association with Veblen's theory of 'conspicuous consumption'. This was because a husband with an invalid wife had to be able to afford the often considerable medical costs, such as for doctors, nurses and extra household fires. Woolson wrote of 'Invalidism as a Pursuit' in America, and in Britain the same pattern was emerging. In 1848, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote in *Mary Barton* about Mrs Carson, the wife of a wealthy mill owner who was:

> (As usual with her, when no particular excitement was going on), very poorly, and sitting up in her dressing room, indulging in the luxury of a head-ache. She was not well, certainly. 'Wind in the head,' the servants called it. But it was but the natural consequence of the state of mental and bodily idleness in which she was placed. Without education enough to value the resources of wealth and leisure, she was so circumstanced as to command both.[46]

For those who aspired to the romantic image of the invalid woman, ethereal in her physical weakness, Elliott could have represented an exemplar to follow. After her death, her family made the decision not to publish a biography of her life and this may have reflected a desire not to produce a cult following.[47]

The most famous female invalid poet of the nineteenth century mythologised for her invalid status and reclusive condition was, of course, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Elizabeth Johnson has contested that the works of Barrett Browning were a source of ambivalence for Victorians: the product of a female body subdued by sickness and yet resisting patriarchal control.[48] She notes how, in 1844, Martha Jones

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[46] Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, ed. Stephen Gill (1848; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 254.
[47] Winslow explains that he wrote his tribute, 'In the absence of a more elaborate and finished Memorial, which the writer understands is not intended by her family to prepare': *The King in his Beauty*, p. vi.
[48] Johnson is referring, for instance, to the remarkable ending of *Aurora Leigh*: Elizabeth Johnson, 'Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Textual Bodies and the Rhetoric of Gender in Nineteenth-Century Critical Discourse', *Thirdspace*, 4 (3004)
<http://www.thirdspace.ca/vol4/4_1_Johnston.htm> [accessed 11.02.2005]

accused Barrett Browning's works of containing 'the stain of earth'.[49] Such a charge, with its implications of spiritual and sexual transgressions, could not be made against Elliott's work because she was understood as a Christian woman in submission to God's will. However, Elliott's work is not entirely complicit with dominant Victorian sexual politics; it also contains the potential to subvert the expected norms of feminine behaviour. For instance, invalidism, accepted as grudgingly as it was, did provide Elliott with a room of her own in which to express her literary talents, and thus provided an alternative female identity to the limited traditional roles of wife and mother. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have explored how Emily Dickinson's agoraphobia (another example of female enclosure in the nineteenth century) and identification with childhood (such as her choice to wear girlish white dresses) meant that she escaped from the traditional responsibilities of women (marriage, motherhood, the running of a household and the care of others rather than the cultivation of the self) and created the suitable conditions for practising her art.[50] Elliott's invalidism could be viewed as having functioned in similar ways. Rather than having to fulfil family responsibilities and social engagements, she could concentrate on her work to serve God and write. Florence Nightingale's illnesses prior to her life as a nurse also offer an interesting parallel:

> In 1844 Florence's plan to study nursing at Salisbury had been vetoed, but by 1847 she was ill enough to win a trip to Rome with sympathetic friends. [...] Nightingale's illnesses were both a means to escape and an escape in themselves. Illnesses permitted a retreat into the self in order to gain the courage and ego strength to break out permanently. [...] Few women had the determination of Florence Nightingale, whose self-confidence was unassailable once she had broken away. She established her own living quarters and used illness [...] to keep all distractions at bay.[51]

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[49] Martha Jones, 'Review of *Poems*', by Elizabeth Barrett, *British Quarterly* 2 (1844), p. 346. Quoted in Johnson, 'Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Textual Bodies',
<http://www.thirdspace.ca/vol4/4_1_Johnston.htm> [accessed 11.02.2005].
[50] Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 592.
[51] Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p. 20.

While I do not suggest that Elliott's experience was the same, 'An Allegory' articulates the real bitterness and rage with which she faced invalidism without any indication that she saw it as a means of getting her own way. It can be seen that once she had found her calling to write for the sick and sorrowing, it enabled her to be active in the public world and to gain recognition for her own talent. Indeed, she makes no apologies for daring to write in the way that Anne Steele ('Theodosia') or Susannah Harrison did, even if her writing, in many respects, follows the traditions of these forebears' works.

Hymns for Invalids

The Invalid's Hymn Book was compiled with the belief that:

> There is one class of sufferers, whose case calls for peculiar tenderness of sympathy, and discrimination of judgment, in providing a suitable selection of hymns, adapted to their peculiar character and circumstances. [...] The bodily languor, which is the almost inevitable consequence of protracted illness, often indisposes the Invalid for enjoying a class of hymns, (to be found in all general collections,) which require a greater energy and vivacity of spirit, than sickness, in most cases, will allow. Hence arises the necessity of selecting such as are more congenial to the spirit---such as embody the pathetic lamentations of resigned grief---or suggest the cheering motives for Christian consolation.[52]

The titles of Elliott's hymns include: 'On the Cessation of Violent Pain', 'Under Depression of Spirits', 'When Prevented by Illness from Going to Church', and 'For a Person Suffering from Nervous Dread of Illness'. A number of hymns are about death-beds: 'To a Mother on the Death of a Child of Great Promise'; 'To a Mother Bereaved of Her Only Daughter' and '[...] for One not Likely to Recover'. While Elliott's works frequently display sensitive empathy for those suffering from grief and sorrow, many of the works of her maturity cannot be considered examples of female

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[52] Hugh White, Introductory Preface, *The Invalid's Hymn Book*, ed. Elliott, pp. ix-x.

passivity or meekness. Instead, her later works display in abundance the 'bold, enterprising spirit' which Hannah More advised should be curbed in girls.

Hymn I of *The Invalid's Hymn Book*, a work by Elliott, teaches, seemingly from experience, that sickness is a time for edification:

1. Sickness is a school severe,
Where the soul, (in childhood here,)
Wayward 'neath a milder sway,
Learns to think, and learns to pray.
Blest and wise its discipline,
There the teacher is divine.[53]

This first verse is Elliott's thesis; as in 'An Allegory', it tells that sickness is holy, 'the teacher is divine'. Illness is ordained by God's will for the development of the soul; it is an instrument of his grace. The remaining verses of the hymn attempt to explain and support this thesis. The second verse explains that the physical constraints imposed by sickness provide the conditions for even the most wayward soul to stop and examine his/her life:

2. Wert thou thoughtless, led away
By each folly of the day?
Cleaving to the things of earth,
Mindless of thy heavenly birth?
Bless the hour which broke their spell,
Made thee sick to make thee well. (p. 37)

The tone of the voice has shifted; the first verse could be read as a generalised statement but the second is a direct rhetorical address to the individual invalid reader. The pattern of each succeeding verse is the same; there are two accusatory questions followed by a didactic lesson:

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[53] *The Invalid's Hymn Book*, ed. Elliott, p. 37.

3. Wert thou selfish, thinking not
On the starving sufferer's lot?
Fed with dainties, gaily dressed,
Wert thou by the poor unblessed?
Now for sufferers thou wilt feel,
God has wounded but to heal. (p. 38)

Elliott asserts that, with sickness, the self-centred person becomes aware of others' pain and develops empathy with sufferers. To experience pain is to share in the brokenness of humanity and to understand the human condition better.

Elliott believed that suffering taught her to be more Christ-like. On 5 May 1839, she wrote, while visiting her brother Henry Venn Elliott in Brighton:

> Have I not become even now sufficiently acquainted with the character of God, and have I not even now had sufficient experience of His goodness and His love, of the riches of His wisdom, His faithfulness, His tender compassion, to feel persuaded that the state He appoints for me, the chastenings He inflicts on me, the sufferings of the body or mind which He calls me to endure, are the very best methods, nay, the only methods by which to carry into effect His one great purpose in my redemption, that I may be 'conformed to the image' of His Son, my Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ?[54]

Elliott thus presents the paradox that the ailing body is a cure for the sick soul.

Sickness is presented as almost a panacea for all unchristian feeling. In the next verse,

Elliott asserts that sickness is also a cure for anxiety, unkindness and restlessness:

4. Wert thou fretful, harsh, unkind,
Finding nothing to thy mind?
Though with countless mercies blest,
Never thankful, ne'er at rest?
Sickness comes to purge thy dross,
Prove thy gain, and not thy loss. (p. 38)

Sickness is an unhappy state which most people wish to avoid, but Elliott is an advocate for its benefits. As with the Sermon on the Mount, this hymn teaches that

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[54] Elliott, *Leaves*, p. 22.

God turns the conventional wisdom of the world upside down. Indeed, she explains in the next verse that sickness is a leveller for those who take pride in their earthly stations:

5. Wert thou proud, exalted high
By affluence, station, ancestry?
Oft with supercilious ken
Glancing at thy fellow-men?
God now strips thee, lays thee low,
All thy nothingness to show. (p. 38)

Elliott's interpretation is that sickness is providential; God allows the mortal body to be broken in order to mend the eternal soul. Her tone throughout the hymn is assertive, authoritative and rousing. There is no room for pity, either for herself as an invalid or for her invalid readers. Indeed, the message of Hymn I, that sickness is given by God for the refinement of the erring soul, is not one that invalids who have not reached a state of Christian resignation could accept easily. The message can seem unsympathetic; lines such as: 'Wert thou fretful, harsh, unkind,' suggest that sickness has been deserved, that it is punishment for living an unChristian life. Indeed, a work like 'An Allegory', which suggests that Elliott also went through the initial and understandable responses of anger, bitterness and frustration, could be more helpful for those seeking consolation and desiring to come to terms with their sickness or disability. Unfortunately, such hymns are not included in *The Invalid's Hymn Book.* The works of Elliott's maturity, written after she had resigned herself to her invalidism, do not reveal signs of rebellion against the bondage of sickness. Instead of questioning and rage, Elliott's message is that:

1. Amidst the various changing scenes,
Which chequer life, or overshade,
My soul on one foundation leans,
On one firm Rock my mind is stayed:

"None, none but Christ," that Rock can be;
Christ, the incarnate Deity. (*The Invalid's Hymn Book*, p. 118)

Elliott came to see prolonged sickness as the catalyst for spiritual development and activity rather than an in-valid state of despair or lethargy. Her Victorian biographers recognised this; Clara Balfour wrote:

> It is however a remarkable and interesting fact, that from the chambers of sickness and the couch of suffering have come not only some of the most beautiful examples of cheerful resignation, but of active mental effort. Lessons have been taught so sweet, unselfish, and holy, that they have strengthened the healthy and braced the strong in their contest with the inevitable cares and trials on life.[55]

One of the means by which all invalid Christians could be useful in service for God was prayer. Elliott stressed the importance of prayer as Christian work in one of her most famous hymns:

1. "Christian! seek not yet repose;"
Hear thy guardian angel say;
Thou art in the midst of foes---
"Watch and pray!"[56]

It was first published in 1836 in her *Morning and Evening Hymns for a Week* as the hymn for Wednesday Morning. As in 'Sickness is a school severe', Elliott speaks with the voice of an admonishing teacher. Her authoritative tone is emphasised by the device of a short final line and the imperative command to 'watch and pray'; Elliott favoured the verse form of three equal length lines followed by a shorter fourth line. Here, the hymn is written in a 7.7.7.3. metre with each verse leading to the words 'Watch and pray'. The command is in quotation marks as they are words spoken by Christ at different points in the gospels; thus, the hymn carries the weight of his

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[55] Clara Balfour, *Women Worth Emulating* (London: Sunday School Union, 1877), pp. 23-24.
[56] Elliott, *Morning and Evening Hymns*, p. 18. Further references given in the text after the quotation hereafter.

teachings. At the same time, it contains several nuances of meaning because the command was given to his disciples at several different times in the Bible.

The most famous utterance of these words by Christ is in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus admonished his disciples for falling asleep:

> And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.
> (Matthew 26. 40-41)

This warning to 'watch and pray' is against the invisible assaults of the devil. To watch is to be a soldier on guard looking for signs of enemy attack. The threat of spiritual attack from demonic forces is one that is frightening but Elliott utilises her metre to counterbalance the threats of attack confidently with Christ's authoritative words of counsel. It is a trumpet blast calling the Christian soul afresh to the battle. Furthermore, the task is not to watch alone. It is to 'watch *with*' Christ. Thus, to follow his commands is not only to participate in his work, but to share fellowship with him. It is an act of camaraderie as well as of devotion, as the Christian soul is called to share the task of watching with Christ faithfully throughout the night. R. T. France has written of the passage from Matthew that:

> They [the disciples] would soon have to face the more serious *temptation* to deny Jesus, of which he had already warned them, and their failure to share now in Jesus's preparation for the coming ordeal would leave them defenceless when the test came.[57]

The hymn therefore points to the necessity for the Christian soul to be prepared to affirm its allegiance to its Saviour constantly and to fight faithfully on his side against

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[57] R. T. France, 'Matthew', *New Bible Commentary*, ed. Carson and others, p. 940.

the powers of darkness. As the hymn is about spiritual warfare, it employs military language to warn about the invisible assaults of the devil:

2. Principalities and powers,
Mustering their unseen array,
Wait for thy unguarded hours---
"Watch and pray!"

3. Gird thy heavenly armour on;
Wear it ever, night and day;
Ambush'd lies the evil one---
"Watch and pray!" (p. 19)

The image of the 'heavenly armour' is from Ephesians 6. 13-18, and is commonly used in Christian literature. To 'wear it ever' is never to be spiritually complacent or weaken in the face of temptation.

The admonition to 'watch and pray' also appears in Luke 21. 34-36 where Christ warns again to be prepared for the last days:

> And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that days come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Jesus is warning against the temptations and distractions of the world which lead the soul away from holiness and the path to heaven. To 'watch and pray' is thus to be prepared for the snares of hell. In Mark 13. 32-37, Christ warns again to be watchful in anticipation of judgement in the last days:

> But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and have authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye

> know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

The passage asserts that each servant is assigned a task which they are responsible to fulfil -- here, it is to watch and pray in preparation for the coming of the master, a concept Christ explained again in the Parable of the Ten Virgins. The second coming of Christ has been anticipated with expectancy since the beginnings of Christianity and Elliott expressed her own millenarian hope in 'Advent Hymn' published as the first work in her *Thoughts in Verse on Sacred Subjects*:

1. The dawn approaches! golden streaks
   Brighten e'en now the kindling sky!
   The long-expected morning breaks!
   The nuptials of the King dawns nigh!
   Soon will the saints with startled ear,
   That sweet and longed-for sentence hear,
   "Behold the Bridegroom cometh!"

   [...]

5. Watch then, and keep thy garments white,
   Thy glorious destiny survey;
   Let earthly objects fade from sight,
   Think only of that blissful day
   When Christ shall come His Bride to claim,
   While voices numberless proclaim
   "Behold the Bridegroom cometh!" (pp. 1-2)[58]

Elliott similarly aims to articulate a sense of urgency for the master's return in 'Christian! seek not yet repose'. The quick pace gathers momentum in the final section of the hymn and succeeds in conveying the feeling of a pressing need:

5. Hear, above all, hear thy Lord,
   Him thou lovest to obey;
   Hide within thy heart his word---
   "Watch and pray!"

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[58] This hymn (which as explained on pages 14-15, makes the reader/singer put on the subjectivity of the ten virgins) valorises the position of the single woman.

6. *Watch*, as if on that alone
Hung the issue of the day;
Pray, that help may be sent down---
"Watch and pray!" (p. 20)

This illustrates the belief in the need to be ever vigilant and occupied in serious activity appealed to the Victorians.[59]

Although 'Christian! seek not yet repose' was not published specifically as a hymn for invalids, it is interesting to consider in terms of Elliott's invalid identity. The tasks of watching and praying through the night are occupations to which the invalid is well suited and perhaps therefore especially called; pain prevents sleep and places the invalid in the rare position of being able to watch and pray through the darkest hours of the night. Indeed, M. Giles wrote, 'But above all, the invalid's work is to pray', and Robert Brett urged in *Devotions for the Sick Room and for Times of Trouble; compiled from Ancient Liturgies and the Writings of Holy Men* (1843) that the invalid pray 'to be fit for the night in which no man can work'.[60] The invalid was thus seen to possess the potential to manifest extraordinary faith. As a hymn by a woman, it is also noteworthy that Elliott is urging women singers/readers of this song to put on the traditionally masculine subjectivity of the soldier. From this point of view, it is a hymn that is empowering to those normally perceived as weak and helpless; it is, therefore, a hymn that is liberating as well as consolatory.

Some Evangelical invalids believed that God called them not only to a life of prayer and Bible study but also to participate in the Great Commission to spread the gospel. Such invalids sought means by which they could serve their fellow sufferers

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[59] An analogue from fiction, which similarly berates the evils of procrastination, is Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Castle Builders, or Deferred Confirmation* (1854).

[60] From *Up the Hill Difficult. Meditations on the Difficulties in the Life of a Chronic Invalid*. Epitaph to chapter on 'Sin-sick Souls', quoted in Frawley, *Invalidism and Identity*, p. 156; and Robert Brett, *Devotions for the Sick Room and for Times of Trouble; compiled from Ancient Liturgies and the Writings of Holy Men* (London: James Burns, 1843), p. 52.

and make their invalidism fruitful. Ian Bradley has said, 'That they may be privileged to live useful lives was the most sincere prayer of all Evangelicals'.[61] Indeed, idleness was repugnant to the Victorian mind; Thomas Carlyle wrote in *Past and Present* (1843) that 'there is perennial nobleness and even sacredness in Work. Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works: in Idleness alone is there despair.'[62] Despite her work, Elliott herself continued to suffer with feelings of uselessness derived from her invalidism throughout her life. In a letter dated March 24th 1860, she wrote, 'I attribute my sorrowful bodily weakness, and long confinement to the house, to my comparative uselessness in a world where so much has to be done, in which I can take no part.'[63]

It was from the desire to be useful that Elliott's most famous work, 'Just as I am, without one plea', came to be written. The story of the composition of this work tells about the author's desire to be active and of service in invalidism. By 1834, the Elliotts had moved to Brighton, Charlotte's brother Henry Venn holding a position as priest there. The family were helping to organise a bazaar to raise funds towards a school for the daughters of impoverished clergymen.[64] Confined to her bedroom, Elliott felt so helpless that she wrote 'Just as I am' in the hope that proceeds might go towards the project. It became immediately popular. It was first printed in pamphlet form and was later published in the second edition of *Hymns for Invalids* (1841). It was also published in the fourth edition of *Hours of Sorrow Cheered and Comforted* (1849) with an additional final verse. By end of the nineteenth century, E. Conder Gray asserted that it had been embalmed in the cultural memory.[65] Its popularity was

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[61] Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), p. 25.
[62] Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 2005), p. 195.
[63] Elliott, *Leaves*, p. 113.
[64] St Mary's Hall, Brighton, is still going strong today.
[65] E. Conder Gray, *Wise Words*, p. 125.

such that as Bradley has noted, in 1887, it was number four in a survey of favourite hymns and, as recently as 1994, it was voted number ten.[66] It also became widespread on the Continent and was translated into French, Italian and German. Several imitations were also made. Marianne Farningham wrote 'Just as I am, thine own to be' in the same metre in imitation of Elliott's hymn, and two Latin versions were also written by admirers of the original: 'Ut ego sum! Nec olia ratione utens' by R. Bingham and H. M. Macgill's 'Tibi, qua lis sum, O Christe!' It has often been quoted that Henry Venn Elliott said of this hymn, 'In the course of a long ministry, I hope I have been permitted to see some fruit by my labours; but I feel more has been done by a single hymn of my sister's.'[67]

The psychological power of 'Just as I am' resides in its central message of the grace of God, his willingness to accept each human in his/her brokenness, imperfections and incompleteness. The idea of coming to God 'Just as I am' is said to have been the advice of Cæsar Malan to Elliott in the days of her spiritual confusion.

Ira Sankey tells the story that:

> Miss Charlotte Elliott was visiting some friends in the West End of London, and there met the eminent minister, Cæsar Malan. While seated at supper, the minister said he hoped that she was a Christian. She took offence at this, and replied that she would rather not discuss that question. Dr. Malan said that he was sorry if had offended her, that he always liked to speak a word for his Master, and that he hoped that the young lady would some day become a worker for Christ. When they met again at the home of a mutual friend, three weeks later, Miss Elliott told the minister that ever since he had spoken to her she had been trying to find her Saviour, and that she now wished him to tell her how to come to Christ. 'Just come to him as you are,' Dr. Malan said. This she did, and went away rejoicing. Shortly afterward she wrote this hymn.[68]

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[66] This was by nearly 3500 readers of *Sunday at Home*: Bradley, *Abide with Me*, p. 193 and p. 231.

[67] *Dictionary of Hymnology*, p. 610. This statement is mostly quoted out of its original context to highlight the power of 'Just as I am'. Josiah Bateman actually writes, 'Of his sister Charlotte's hymns, he best loved "Thy will be done." For he himself, he did not so much admire "Just as I am;" although he often said, "She had done more good by that hymn, than he in all his ministry!" The final clause of the last sentence has been divorced from the more negative prior sentiment about 'Just as I am'. *Life of the Reverend Henry Venn Elliott*, p. 207.

[68] Ira D. Sankey, *My Life and Sacred Song* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), p. 186.

Whether or not Sankey's story is true, it has become a potent myth. The story reveals that even one as saintly and assured in faith as Elliott once felt far from God. It thus speaks powerfully to all who are hindered from entering faith because they feel too lowly and unholy. Indeed, the message of God's accepting and fatherly love is emphasised in the heading to the hymn, Christ's words: 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out' (John 6. 37). This is a compassionate text that tells lonely and disappointed souls that they are wanted and cherished.

The hymn that follows is about the soul's affirmative response to Christ's invitation of welcome. As Routley has stated, the hymn demonstrates the wayward soul's coming to God, '"Just as I am," claiming no rights, but knowing that you want me -- knowing that because of what you have done -- I come.'[69] It speaks not only of God's desire for his lost children but also of the Christian's willingness to surrender his/her trust to him. The promise of each verse is really the same: 'Just I Am [...] O Lamb of God I come!' Everything in between is essentially in parenthesis and secondary:

1. Just as I am--- without one plea,
   But that thy blood was shed for me,
   And that thou bid'st me come to thee --
   O Lamb of God, I come!

2. Just as I am--- and waiting not
   To rid my soul of one dark blot,
   To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
   O Lamb of God, I come!

3. Just as I am--- though tossed about,
   With many a conflict--- many a doubt,
   "Fightings and fears within, without,"
   O Lamb of God, I come![70]

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[69] Erik Routley, *Hymns and the Faith* (London: John Murray, 1956), p. 183.
[70] *The Invalid's Hymn Book*, ed. Elliott (1854), p. 84. Further references given in the text after the quotation.

As J. R. Watson has said:

> Its power lies in the repetition of the initial phrase, and the simplicity of those words, 'Just as I am', with their craving for acceptance, followed by the fulfilment, 'O Lamb of God, I come!' It is the ancestor of many Victorian hymns in which the sinner is accepted, and ends up safe in the arms of Jesus: it is unusual to capture the movement of such a process so vividly and rhythmically---from the initial nakedness of 'Just as I am' to the climax of 'O Lamb of God, I come!'[71]

The hymn has often been used as a communion hymn for communicants to sing in preparation for receiving the Eucharist. Indeed, the sentiments of the hymn echo the feelings of the liturgy spoken at the Anglican communion service: 'We do not presume to come to this, Thy table, trusting in our own righteousness but in Thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs from under Thy table.'[72] The hymn is both about making the decision to seek God, which as the third verse indicates can be tortuous, traumatic, and requiring humility (it is noteworthy here that the monosyllabic words of 'Just as I am [...] O Lamb of God I come' often give emphasis to the polysyllabic words: 'conflict', 'without'), and his willingness to accept each individual completely with unconditional love. The fourth verse speaks of coming to God with nothing to offer but having everything to gain:

4. Just as I am--- poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in thee to find --
O Lamb, of God, I come! (p. 84)

The poverty, wretchedness and blindness Elliott refers to in the fourth verse are primarily spiritual: blindness of the type discussed by Jesus in his explanation of the Parable of the Sower, 'seeing, they see not, and hearing they hear not' (Matthew

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[71] Watson, *English Hymn*, p. 428.
[72] 'The Order of the Administration of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion', *The Book of Common Prayer: The Administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church according to the Use of The Church of England [...]* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [n.d.]), p. 179.

13. 13). However, as a hymn for invalids, it can also refer to actual blindness; *Hymns for Invalids* includes works entitled: 'For One Afflicted with Blindness' and 'Under Depression from Loss of Hearing'. As with 'Christian! seek not yet repose', this hymn is empowering to those who experience life in restriction. It reminds invalids, who probably do not receive many social invitations because they are not healthy enough to leave the house, that they may accept the call of Jesus. Concomitantly, although the invalid cannot ordinarily extend hospitality to many, Elliott the invalid suggests that they may still find ways of offering the kindness, care and salvation of Christ to many.

'Just as I am' is a hymn of tremendous evangelistic power which has been used to great effect in Revivalist traditions. The American evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, once commented that, 'this hymn probably touched more hearts and brought more souls to Christ than any other ever written.'[73] Billy Graham's autobiography is entitled *Just as I am*, alluding to the influence of this hymn upon his life and ministry; the hymn has been used as a call for repentance and acceptance of Christ in his international crusades. In 1931, H. Augustine Smith has speculated that, 'In spite of changes of method and emphasis in evangelism, there is probably no hymn which has been so constantly in use in evangelistic meetings of all sorts as this one.'[74] One of the reasons for the enduring success of this Victorian hymn as a tool for mission is that, as Candy Gunther Brown has commented:

> The hymns canonized by nineteenth-century evangelicals [...] were remarkably non-specific as to time, place, or circumstance of composition, instead expressing sentiments that any Christian could affirm. Unlike temporal narratives such as those found in novels, memoirs, or periodicals in which a

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[73] Ernest Edwin Ryden, *The Story of Christian Hymnody* (Rock Island, Illinois:Augustana Press, 1959), p. 329.

[74] H. Augustine Smith, *Lyric Religion: The Romance of Immortal Hymns* (New York, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell, 1931), p. 215.

> sequence of events produces a different situation at the end than at the beginning, hymns articulated atemporal narrative structures that merged separate events into an overall explanatory pattern.[75]

More specifically, the popularity and relevance of 'Just as I am' in the Revivalist tradition seems to be owing to its affirmation of the most important characteristics of Evangelical theology as identified by Bebbington: conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism. It is a hymn that captures the first step of the conversion process, the decision to come to God, and has called many to make that step. In terms of biblicism, the repeated line 'O Lamb of God, I come' is significant. In the scriptures, it is John the Baptist who points to Jesus and announces, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' (John 1. 29). In terms of the metre, 'O, *Jesus Christ*, I come' would have been equally suitable, but 'Lamb of God' contains more specific connotations about the sacrifice and redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Its fundamental message thus relates to the centrality of the cross in Christian atonement. Coming to Christ as the 'Lamb of God' is coming for cleansing and the forgiveness of sins. In Revelation 7. 13-14, we are told:

> What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

To come to the Lamb is to become one of the privileged who are clothed in white. (As a hymn for invalids, the idea that the elect include 'they which came out of great tribulation' is clearly significant.) 'Just as I am' is thus a hymn which captures the desires and energy of Evangelicalism, and this has probably been a major factor in its longevity and success in this tradition.

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[75] Brown, *Word in the World*, p. 192.

The hymn has also been successful because it speaks of and to the fundamental, deep-seated human desire to be loved. It tells of not only the yearning to be loved but to be accepted and wanted fully for who we really are, and not to be dismissed for our shortcomings. In terms of this desire, J. R. Watson has said:

> The hymn represents a longing that has turned into ecstasy; although I imagine that any conscious sexuality was far from Charlotte Elliott's mind, the unconscious drive towards the Saviour represents a sexual sublimation of the highest order.[76]

Certainly, 'Just as I am' is written in the language of romantic love. In terms of the central message, 'Just as I am [...] O Lamb of God I come!', the 'O' is a cry of yearning; a call for the beloved now within sight and within reach of physical touch. The use of the vocative in this prayer personalises and brings the believer and God into direct relationship. The 'O' is a direct address to God which carries a clear note of longing and need. It also articulates space for God to enter and meet the soul as it comes to him.[77] It articulates the agony of the past, regret for the time lost which was not spent with the lover, and excitement at the final union. While, as J. R. Watson has said, Elliott would probably not have been conscious of her sexual sublimation, it has been seen that she had experienced the tenderness of human love and the pain of its loss. 'Just as I am' speaks of her desire to find a lover for her soul and this is reflected in the eroticism of the language. For instance, union with God is describes in the sixth verse in similar terms to sexual consummation:

6. Just as I am-- thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God I come! (p. 85)

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[76] Watson, *English Hymn*, p. 428.
[77] I am grateful to the Very Reverend the Dean of Lichfield Adrian Dober for insight into the vocative in prayer.

After the barrier is broken, the lover can finally have union with the beloved. Kathryn Burlinson's observation about Christina Rossetti's religious verse may be applied here: 'The conventional tropes and scriptural symbols that constitute the basic lexicon of devotional poetry provide a discursive field whose religious origins and orientation guarantee a defence against associations of impropriety or immorality.'[78]

Elliott is likely to have come across this phrase 'love unknown' from numerous sources. Two seventeenth-century examples are George Herbert's poem of the same name published in *The Temple* (1633) and Samuel Crossman's hymn 'My Song is Love Unknown' (1664). In the eighteenth-century, Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley also used the phrase.[79] The idea comes from Ephesians 3. 19: 'The love of Christ, which passeth knowledge'. It seems that this idea was especially powerful, moving and attractive to female devotional poets, especially to those who were single, in the nineteenth century.[80] It will therefore be useful to consider the meanings of this phrase. 'Love unknown' can refer to the eternal depth and width of God's love; the mysterious/mystical character of God who the Bible declares 'is love' (I John 4. 8); Christ's sacrificial act of love upon the cross; as well as the fact that God's love is often denied in the world. In the context of the single women writers who favoured the phrase, it also resonates poignantly with their lack of soul mates and the absence of romantic love (especially the experience of sexually consummated love) in their lives. It thereby suggests a yearning for that which is denied to them.

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[78] Kathryn Burlinson, *Speaking Silence: Indeterminate Identities in the Writings of Christina Rossetti* (London: University of London, 1994), p. 326.

[79] Watts in 'Ode IV: The Sight of God in Heaven' and Wesley in 'O Love Unknown!', 'Fountain of Good, from Thee alone', 'Soon as the Angel Warning Came', 'Come, Son of Abraham and of God', and 'The Father, Full of Love Unknown'.

[80] The phrase is used by Rose Terry Cooke (1827-1892) in 'SIBI' in *Poems* (1888); Dora Greenwell (1821-1882) in 'Redemption' in *Songs of Salvation* (1873); Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-79) in 'I have no birthday gifts to bring' and 'By Thy Cross and Passion' in *The Poetical Works* (1884); Ann Rebecca Hunt (dates unknown) in 'Mab' in *In Bohemia and Other Studies for Poems: by Mrs. T. Sterry Hunt* (1900); Lydia Jane Peirson (1802-1862) in 'To Mrs S---. A Comment on her Words, "My First-Born Son." In a Letter to the Author' (1838) in *The Forest Minstrel* (1846); and Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894) in 'Like as the Hart desireth the Water Brooks' (1893).

In terms of Evangelical theology, no-one is ever worthy of God's love or his cleansing, but he offers his love liberally and, unlike the mortal lover, eternally to the soul that comes to him:

7. Just as I am-- of that free love
"The breadth, length, depth, and height" to prove,
Here for a season, then above---
O Lamb of God, I come![81]

The quotation in the second line is from Ephesians 3. 18-19 where St Paul prays that the Church in Ephesus '[m]ay be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.' This reminder of the infinite nature of Christ's love is a signal to the healing and freedom that is promised in heaven. Indeed, the liberation theologist Allan Boesak has said that the vision of the Lamb upon his throne in Revelations anticipates heavenly justice and redemption, and therefore promises a joyous future to the weak, weary and oppressed.[82] In this context, Elliott's hymn is offering the comfort and hope of a just and blessed future to her invalid readers.

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That hymns like Charlotte Elliot's offered real consolation to the sick, lonely and sorrowing may be glimpsed in the words of Elizabeth Squirrell, an invalid whose autobiography was published in 1853: 'My feelings were delectable as supported by

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[81] Elliott, *Hours of Sorrow*, p. 177.

[82] He has noted of 'the image of a sweet little lamb -- gentle Jesus, meek and mild' that: 'The word used for "lamb" throughout the Apocalypse is not *amnos*, the word commonly used in the Gospel of John and the First Letter of Peter. In Revelation, John of Patmos speaks of Jesus as the *arnion*. This is not the image of the gentle lamb but rather that of the militant little ram'. Allan A. Boesak, *Comfort and Protest: Reflections in the Apocalypse of John of Patmos* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, *c.*1987), p. 57. Whether Elliott knew this or not, her Lamb of God, who breaks through barriers, is more in keeping with the sexualised ram, the *arnion*, than the undeveloped lamb, *amnos*.

pillows. I would peruse my choice books and write on paper my favourite pieces of hymns. I loved hymns much, especially those descriptive of our weakness, and God's means of affording us consolation.'[83] Indeed, the proliferation of consolatory hymns during the nineteenth century was, as Ian Bradley has observed, 'a lucrative new "niche market"' opened up by Elliott.[84] Her influence seems to have been especially strong on women; those who followed Elliott's example included Caroline Noel who wrote *The Name of Jesus, and Other Verses for the Sick and Lonely* (1861), and Emily Elizabeth Steele Elliott (her niece), who compiled *Under the Pillow: Being Hymn-Thoughts Chiefly for the Sick or Sorrowing* (1880), 'a cheap large type hymn-book [...] for hospitals and infirmaries and the sick generally'.[85] Indeed, hymns of consolation arguably became a special provenance of women.

The power of Elliott's hymns of consolation came from her own lived experience of suffering; her pain was the starting point of her ministry to help others. Rather than resigning herself to an in-valid life of futility, she asserted in her writings that prolonged illness could be a blessed state for the workings of God's grace. Though confined to the sick chamber, she saw herself as a soldier for Christ, actively engaged in the spiritual war against the powers of darkness. As such, Elliott came to be admired by her contemporaries as a formidable and heroic woman writer who, like her more famous Victorian invalid counterpart Elizabeth Barrett Browning, had gained 'victory of the moral and intellectual nature over bodily disease'.[86]

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[83] Elizabeth Squirrell, *The Autobiography of Elizabeth Squirrell of Shottisham* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1853), p. 17.
[84] Bradley, *Abide with Me*, p. 91.
[85] *Dictionary of Hymnology*, p. 328. Emily was the daughter of Charlotte's brother E. B. Elliott.
[86] Charles Wicksteed, 'Review of "Poems", by Elizabeth Barrett', *Prospective Review: A Quarterly Journal of Theology and Literature*, 1 (1845), p. 446. Quoted in Elizabeth Johnson, 'Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Textual Bodies', *Thirdspace*, <http://www.thirdspace.ca/vol4/4_1_Johnston.htm> [accessed 11.02.2005].

'Carmina Crucis':

Dora Greenwell (1821-1882)

The Female Prophet

In 1926, a biography was published of Dora Greenwell subtitled: *A Prophet for our own Times in the Battleground of Faith.* The author of the work, Constance Maynard, a pioneer in women's education and rights,[1] identified Greenwell as being 'of the order of prophets' because, 'true to prophetic tradition, her heart and her thoughts ran in advance of her age.'[2] However, if Greenwell was a prophet, it was not only because of her enlightened thoughts, or because she was recognised by many as 'one who speaks for God [...] as the inspired revealer or interpreter of his will', but also because she experienced the misunderstanding, rejection and loneliness of someone set apart by her visionary perception of the world.[3]

Background

Greenwell, best known in her own time as a 'poetess',[4] was born on 6 December 1821 at Greenwell Ford in Lanchester, County Durham. She was the only daughter of William Thomas Greenwell, a country squire, magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of the county, and Dorothy Smales Greenwell. She was baptised 'Dorothy' but was always known to friends and family as 'Dora'. The family lived in Greenwell Ford until 1848 when the estate had to be sold. She explained in a letter to a friend:

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[1] She was the first Principal of Westfield College, London: see Janet Sondheimer, 'Constance Louisa Maynard (1849–1935), <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/view/article/48459> [accessed 12.04.2005].

[2] Constance Maynard, *Dora Greenwell: A Prophet for our own Times in the Battleground of Faith* (London: H. R. Allenson, 1926), p. 9.

[3] Definition 1a., *OED online*, <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50190165?query_type=word&queryword=prophet&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=KbhJ-tIWXqU-7114&hilite=50190165> [accessed 5.5.2006].

[4] Emma Pitman includes Greenwell in her chapter 11: 'Writers who were also Poetesses'. *LHW*, pp. 272-275.

> My poor father-- partly through the result of a lawsuit, and partly from having allowed himself to be imposed on by designing people [...] was obliged to part with the Ford; where our family have lived since Henry the Eighth's time; and to leave it in old age, and seek a new home.[5]

She always remembered her earliest home and its surrounding landscape with fondness. In *Two Friends*, she described the local stream, the Browney, a tributary of the River Wear, as 'My first companion'.[6] As this comment suggests, she led a lonely childhood, although (or perhaps because) she had four brothers. That she found solace in religion early is indicated by the fact that 'her earliest literary influences included the Bible, George Herbert and Mark Akenside, the poetics of which were each vividly marked by a sense of religious beauty.'[7] In adulthood, she became a misfit in her family owing to her unconventional thoughts and interests. Certainly, if she was a prophet, her life reflected Christ's words that, 'A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house' (Matthew 13. 57).

In particular, her eldest brother, William, and her mother never seem to have understood her. William, who became a Canon of Durham Cathedral and a distinguished archaeologist, made the following unsympathetic remark to Maynard, 'Philosophy, biography, medieval legends, political economy---nothing came amiss, and she read widely. But when she tried to express herself, everything had the same defect; all was so undisciplined, so unfinished!'[8] He further recollected how he had openly accused her of being an unfocused, and by extension incompetent, writer:

> I remember I read one book (I forget which) and said, 'Dora I cannot see your aim. What is it you want to tell people? You seem to be in earnest, but what is

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[5] Henry Bett, *Dora Greenwell* (London: Epworth Press, 1950), p. 13.
[6] Dora Greenwell, *Two Friends* (London: H. R. Allenson, 1862), p. 1. In later life, she also wrote 'To a Remembered Stream, and a Never Forgotten Friend', which was published in Dora Greenwell, *Poems* (London: Alexander Strahan, 1867), p. 191.
[7] Emma Mason, *Women Poets of the Nineteenth Century* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2006), p. 52.
[8] Maynard, *DG*, p. 39.

> the conclusion? You roll your subject over and over, and then you stop. I don't believe you know yourself what you want to teach![9]

It is easy to imagine that such continued lack of support, understanding and respect on one as sensitive as Greenwell would have had the effect of humiliation and a wearing away of self-confidence.

The father, the elder William Greenwell, appears to have been a kind man, but he died in the early 1850s.[10] Afterwards, she lived with her mother from 1854 until 1871 when Mrs Greenwell died. Biographers agree that Mrs Greenwell was a possessive and tyrannical woman who was unsympathetic to her daughter's character. One friend, a Mrs Waite, recalled how:

> [Dora] loved to spend an evening now and then with my father (Canon Evans) to talk over books. Punctually at 9 o'clock there would be the announcement, 'Miss Greenwell's maid, if you please.' A message would be sent by my mother that she would come at 10 o'clock, and that they would certainly see her home, but at half-past nine the ruthless summons would come again, 'Miss Greenwell's maid. And Mrs Greenwell says she *must* come.' She went of course, but there was nothing to go for. The old lady was comfortably wrapped up by the fire, and sometimes her very first words were, 'I think, Dora, I'll go to bed. Would you ring the bell.' You must remember that the daughter was nearer fifty than forty at this time and her bright, free impulsive spirit found the bondage almost intolerably galling.[11]

It seems to have been Dora's religious curiosity and fervour that her mother found unpalatable and wished to discourage (it seems probable that the discussions between Canon Evans and Dora would have turned on spiritual matters). Waite also remembered Mrs Greenwell's resistance to Dora's desire to practise daily family prayers:

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[9] Maynard, *DG*, p. 122.
[10] Henry Bett records that 'It was during the years at Golborne that her father suffered his last illness and died' but does not give a more specific date: *Dora Greenwell*, p. 16. According to William Dorling, the family lived there between 1850-1854: *Memoirs of Dora Greenwell* (London: James Clarke, [1885]), p. 31.
[11] Maynard, *DG*, pp. 103–4.

> I myself have heard her say, 'Prayers, Prayers? Whatever do we want with Prayers?' If only she would have been absent! but no, she sat by and snorted and fidgeted, and once I saw her suddenly snatch her purse from her pocket and count over the money openly, and say in a reflective tone of voice, 'Rabbits are two-and-nine the couple.' Oh Dora's spirit suffered, and went on suffering. Her health was poor indeed, and yet I believe she minded this tyranny a great deal more, and sometimes indeed it was a little short of anguish.[12]

In the context of this history, it seems possible that Greenwell's invalidism was the psychosomatic manifestation of the mental suffering that came from the suffocation of her natural spirits (particularly her desire to cultivate and nourish her inner life), and lack of personal freedom.

Her brother, William, sided with his mother in disapproving of Dora's religiosity:

> I may confess at once that in their long companionship it was my mother I always felt for, for she had an old-fashioned and reserved sort of religion, and lived a straight, just, God-fearing life, and my sister seemed to be always flying out of her reach. [...] My mother's religion was wholly unemotional and had to do only with conduct [...] My sister's religion was strongly emotional and seemed always to be on the point of discovering something, always waiting and listening for something to be communicated to her which should be better than anything she had yet known, and this she looked for on every side, no matter where.[13]

As a Canon of Durham Cathedral, William Greenwell represented respectable, orthodox Anglican religion, but his sister was a kind of liberal, early ecumenist. A friend and admirer of Dora, Elizabeth McChesney, recalled:

> The faith of my friend [...] seemed to be always changing in certain directions, and it was very bewildering. She loved the Quakers very much, and the Methodists even better because they are such a strongly social community, and

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[12] Maynard, *DG*, p. 104.
[13] Quoted in Maynard, *DG*, p. 134.

> always as she used to say 'liked going to heaven in parties'; and yet in a kind of way she loved all the main doctrines of Rome, and would sometimes talk as though she belonged there.[14]

As such, William Greenwell judged his sister an unfaithful Anglican; he declared that 'She was not even a good steady Churchwoman'.[15] Living under the shadow of the ancient cathedral, in a respectable, clerical university town, Greenwell was a misfit who must have been subject to much (even if unspoken) disapproval and criticism.

A glimpse of the hostility and marginalisation Greenwell suffered in Durham society is captured in the following story. It was recalled by a Mrs Shield to Maynard:

> In those days, [...] we were all very bashful, and very correct; we never talked about marriage, it wasn't considered quite modest, but Miss Greenwell did, openly. [...] One of the first times I heard her talk was at an afternoon tea; all ladies [...]. Well, the talk turned on the article she had published about single women, and what they ought to do in the world, and some there disliked it very much. But she only sat and smiled. At last somebody said, 'I suppose the next step is, Miss Greenwell, that you will be advertising for a husband?' It was very rude [...], and we all looked at Miss Greenwell expecting her to be very angry or blushing and covered with shame. Not a bit of it [...]. [S]he just leaned back her chair and said slowly and thoughtfully, 'Well, I have looked pretty well all over Durham, and I don't see one man I should care to marry--- except perhaps that handsome young John Shields, who has lately come.' That's what she said, my dear, and with *me*, his young wife, sitting there close beside her! [...] People were so shocked, and it was all over Durham. But *she* didn't care, and all the little gossiping trifles were nothing to her.[16]

This anecdote tells of Greenwell's unconventional and eccentric character, her willingness to discuss subjects which were not considered respectable for ladies, and her position as a misfit in the conservative circles of Durham. It is evident that her behaviour was not always deemed altogether decent by the standards of polite Victorian society.

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[14] Maynard, *DG*, p. 138.
[15] Maynard, *DG*, p. 133.
[16] Ibid., pp. 130-131. Greenwell's article on unmarried women, 'Our Single Women', will be discussed below.

From this brief outline, it is not difficult to imagine that Greenwell suffered from loneliness, and hungered for affection and understanding. Waite commented incisively that, 'No one can overestimate how lonely she was'.[17] The final years of her life seem to have been most difficult. After the death of her mother, she lived in London, Torquay, and then London again (in Westminster) before moving finally to her brother Alan's residence in Clifton near Bristol. In Westminster, she became addicted to opium:

> Some sort of internal pain, that could not clearly be made out, settled down upon her as a companion by night and by day, and her baleful guardian, Mrs Lawrence, induced her to take a sedative to allow her to sleep. [...] It is strange, but amid all this increasing illness never once in her letters do we hear of a doctor, whose kind vigilance and restraining hand might have set the whole matter at rest, but she was left to the discretion of Mrs Lawrence who, as time went by, became obviously a drunkard, and who could not bear to see her mistress suffer. The result was disastrous. A less exquisitely sensitive conscience might have borne the position with equanimity, but to her it appeared as a temptation from the evil one, as a sin, and her guileless nature was rendered fatally unhappy. She struggled hard against the habit, and at times succeeded, but the success was not permanent.[18]

Solidarity with the Oppressed

Greenwell's experience of oppression by family and society led to a resolute belief in the importance of freedom of the spirit. She particularly desired to fight on behalf of others whom she saw as being misunderstood, unloved and repressed. Her experience of loneliness seems to have led to a profound belief in the brokenness of the human condition and a desire to help alleviate the suffering she saw, especially among the disadvantaged and helpless. While living in Durham between 1854 and 1872, the time of her greatest literary activity, Greenwell was in correspondence with Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Jean Ingelow, William Bell Scott, Thomas

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[17] Ibid., p. 105.
[18] Ibid., pp. 161-162.

Guthrie, William Hanna and William Knight. She became a regular visitor at the prison and the workhouse, and a campaigner for issues related to social justice. including the rights of women, the health conditions of match makers, child agricultural labourers, and the humane treatment of the mentally handicapped. In this respect, as with Charlotte Elliott, Greenwell's own pain was the starting point of her sympathy for others, and it was in the compassionate figure of Christ that she found a model of ministry to follow.

In an essay entitled 'Hardened in Good', Greenwell wrote about the difficulties of philanthropic work for the 'steadfast Christian worker' whose good intentions and hopes are worn down by experience.[19] One of the most important ideas of this essay in terms of Greenwell's personal theological belief is her description of evil in humanity as a "'deep original wound," a wound which philanthropy, by its very nature and office, probes to its very core' (p. 73). Human ill is described in terms of wounding and sores; she recalls of a visit to a house in a manufacturing district of Lancashire:

> The scene which offered itself was one not easily dismissed from the imagination. The room contained next to no furniture [...]. In the midst of it, lying on a settle, was a young man of about twenty, poorly dressed, and evidently dying of some fearful scrofulous disorder. He was literally like Lazurus -- full of sores. In a corner of the room a very old ill-looking woman, palsied and a complete bundle of rags, crouched and shook, and muttered to herself. She appeared insane, but was really idiotic through long-continued habits of drinking. A miserable looking girl of about thirteen, stunted in figure, and deeply marked with small-pox, seemed the only person able to do anything. (p. 81)

As Helen Groth has asserted, 'Wounds, sores and disfigurement provide the material evidence of social and economic oppression to be used by Greenwell as the witness to

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[19] Dora Greenwell, 'Hardened in Good' in *Essays* (London and New York: A. Strahan, 1866), pp. 69-111 (p. 70). Further references will be given hereafter in the text after the quotation.

their suffering and the spokeswoman for the cure offered by philanthropy.'[20] In the end, it is a compassionate ministry of being with and showing consideration to the poor which Greenwell suggests is most helpful and potentially powerful:

> In every class of life there are burdened and breaking hearts, straitened and sorrowful lives, people to whom a cheerful hour, a visit to a pleasant house, a well-timed gift, a kindly letter, is as valuable as are food and raiment to whose who have neither. Who shall tell where the warmth and radiance a generous heart casts round it *stops?* we may as well try to measure a sunbeam, or to mark the place it falls. The best blessing lies
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> > *'Not in that which we give, but that which we share;*
> > *For the gift without the giver is bare.'*[21] (p. 113)

The compassion Greenwell felt for those 'burdened' and suffering with 'broken hearts' seems to have stemmed from her own experience and understanding of these painful conditions.

'Our Single Women' and the 'Redundant' Woman Question

If Greenwell's ministry was in response to her own wounded spirit, one source of sorrow was her singleness, which threatened to render her experience of loneliness and isolation a permanent affliction. However, unlike most women, she articulated this pain publicly in a remarkable essay, 'Our Single Women' (1862), which was first published anonymously as the work of 'an Old Maid'. In it, Greenwell spoke from within the ranks of single women as an advocate qualified with the authority of experience:

> No person obtains a greater experience of life's narrowness and poverty, or gains a clearer insight into the selfishness of our fallen nature, than the lonely and sensitive single woman. Her friends give her their kindness rather than their affection: *that* is fixed elsewhere. They come to tell of their own troubles,

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[20] Helen Groth, 'Defining the Woman Poet', p. 184.
[21] James Russell Lowell, *The Vision of Sir Launfal* in *Poems: The Writings of James Russell Lowell*, 6 vols ([n.p.], Macmillan, 1890), I, p. 303.

> their sorrows, perhaps even of their wrongs: and not without a certain complacency, for these are *their own*. They spread out each item before her for sympathy and commiseration; they lay down their burdens at her feet: she may have her own to bear -- perhaps a heavier one than they think of; but this she knows she is not expected to unlade. She must be content to carry it on her back like Christian.[22]

Greenwell noted how, in contrast to limiting and limited stereotypes of single women such as the 'withered prude' (p. 62) and 'the gentle, dovelike Old Maid' (p. 62), women had demonstrated their capacity for greatness in writing:

> It is surely singular that woman, bound, as she is, no less by the laws of society than by the immutable instincts of her nature, to a certain suppression in all that relates to personal feeling, should attain, in print, to the fearless, uncompromising sincerity she misses in real life; so that in the poem, -- above all, in the novel -- that epic, as it has been truly called, of our modern day, -- a living soul, a living voice, should seem to us; a voice so sad, so truthful, so earnest, that we have felt as if some intimate secret were are once communicated and withheld, -- an Open Secret, free to all who could find its key -- the secret of a woman's heart, with all its needs, its struggles, and its aspirations. (p. 63)

For Greenwell, women's writing provided a glimpse of their real capabilities. The woman who openly revealed the secrets of her heart, her capacity to respond to the world she lived in, was fulfilling her God-given potential.

Greenwell identified expressive feeling as a heroic characteristic of feminine writing:

> We have touched upon what woman has lately done in literature; how a power, a pathos exclusively feminine -- feminine not only in weakness, but in strength has revealed itself among us, so that a woman's best praise can no longer consist, as it has done hitherto, in being told that she has written *like a man*. (pp. 68-69)

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[22] Dora Greenwell, 'Our Single Women', *North British Review*, 36 (1862), 62-87, (p. 62). Further references are hereafter given in the text after quotation.

That power, 'a pathos exclusively feminine', emanates from female suffering, the restrictions and oppression endured by women. She believes that their understanding of suffering gives them a great capacity for sympathy:

> In such a task, the complicated play of sympathies ever at work within her -- the dramatic faculty by means of which she so readily makes the feelings of others her own -- find the full expression. To her, *sympathy* is *power*, because to her it is knowledge; and it is this ability to feel for others, as well as for them, that takes all hardness or ostentation from instruction and counsel -- all implied superiority from pity and consolation. (p. 85)

The single woman who has experienced disappointment, rejection and loneliness can be in solidarity with the broken-hearted. Greenwell views female sympathy as the starting point of women's ministry of healing:

> We have compared our single women to Levites. Who shall say that we have not many among us such as was He of the better covenant, -- true daughters of the consolation, with senses exercised to discern between good and evil, world-wise, if it may be, but above all, heart-wise, -- taught by God Himself out of his two, great books, and skilled to apply the medicines of the Word to the hurts of the soul? (p. 84)

For women to be compared to Levites, the tribe chosen to be priests among the Israelites in the Old Testament, is for them to be elevated to the status of consecrated priest. Women can be likened to Christ, 'He of the better covenant', because they are the 'daughters of consolation'. They can console because their sympathy emanates from a lived understanding of suffering. It was common for Victorian women to see Christ's life of sacrifice and servanthood as corresponding with theirs. Christina Rossetti connected the 'feminine lot' to the 'assumed position of our Lord and Pattern' in *Seek and Find*, a prose devotional work; she wrote, 'Woman must obey and Christ "learned obedience" [...]. She by natural constitution is adapted not to

assert herself, but to be subordinate: and He came not to be ministered unto but to minister'.[23] For Greenwell, sympathy was an especially Christ-like characteristic. She wrote to a friend:

> One point I wish to notice to you [...] is, my feeling about the Cross---that is, Christ's work of labour, and pain, and death, is *not*, as Mr. A. says, 'the deification and exaltation of pain,' in which I personally have never found any deep or true revelation of God; but rather a solemn *witness to God's sympathy* with *man's sorrow*; and enigma, supposing it to be such, cast down by God alongside of the sorrowful problem of human life, not explaining it, but recognizing it.[24]

Greenwell identifies Christian service as the real vocation that single women desire:

> It is evident that we have among us many valuable women, ardently desiring to spend and be spent in Christ's service, whose habits of mind disincline them for the routine which is inseparably connected with organised work; who would not be either so happy or so useful when handed with others, as in following out some equally defined work of a detached kind. (p. 85)

If this passage is placed in the context of contemporary thought about women and service, such as Rossetti's thoughts about feminine nature of 'Christ-likeness',[25] for women to 'spend and be spent in Christ's service' is to embark on a life of *Imitatio Christi*. 'To be spent in Christ's service' is to imitate the sacrifical life of Christ; as Julia Kavanagh wrote in *Women of Christianity. Exemplary Acts of Piety and Charity* (1852):

> The very foundation of our faith rests on an act of self-immolation: the death of Jesus on the cross. The women who have inherited this spirit, who have

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[23] Christina Rossetti, *Seek and Find: A Double Series of Short Studies of the Benedicite* (London: Christian Knowledge Society, 1879), p. 30. Quoted in Groth, 'Defining the Woman Poet', p. 149.
[24] Dorling, *Memoirs*, p. 124.
[25] Christina Rossetti, *The Face of the Deep. A Devotional Commentary on the Apocalypse* (London: SPCK, 1892), pp. 51-3. Quoted in Groth, 'Defining the Woman Poet', p. 150.

> filled their lives with self-denial [...] are those whom I have selected as examples of the women of Christianity.[26]

Greenwell does not call for better education to equip women to enter competitively into 'masculine' professions.[27] Rather, she asks that women should be able to have more defined channels for their vocations of ministerial service. She cites the examples of the Sisters of Mercy and Charity as women who have been trained to be capable of management on a large scale, whether caring for orphans, the poor, or the aged.

Greenwell's thoughts are derived from her Christian theology. Her request for '*a more perfect freedom and expansion* in that which is already their [women's] own' (p. 69) echoes the prayer of *The Book of Common Prayer* which asks: 'O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, *whose service is perfect freedom*; Defend us thy humble servants in all assaults [...]'[28] Her theory on the importance of emotionalism is also related to her belief in the holiness of love. She interprets feeling as an indicator of Christian love and sympathy. Her epigraph to *Songs of Salvation* (1873), a small book of Evangelical hymns, was a quotation from Edward Bouverie Pusey:

> The faintest longing to love, is love; the very dread to miss for ever the face of God is love; the very terror at that dreadful state where none can love, is love. Feelest thou thyself dry, seared, impenitent, bewildered, stupefied, without feeling? -- yea, if here be any who can himself scarcely tell what he believes,

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[26] Julia Kavanagh, *Women of Christianity. Exemplary Acts of Piety and Charity* (London: Smith Elder, 1852), p. iv. Quoted in Groth, 'Defining the Woman Poet', p. 150.

[27] In fact, her essay is less radical than some contemporary feminist works, such as John Stuart Mills's 'On the Subjection of Women' (1869), and takes a traditional, essentialist view of woman's capabilities at several points in her essay. For instance, Greenwell asserts that, 'In imaginative strength she [woman] has been proved deficient [...]. She discovers, invents, creates nothing. In her whole nature we trace a passivity, a tendency to work upon that which she received, to quicken, to foster, to develop'; and that 'Intellect as well as feeling exerts a sort of tyranny over woman. She cannot pass from the region of emotion to that of exertion, or even from one field of exertion to another, as rapidly, as easily as a man does': 'Our Single Women', p. 73.

[28] 'The Second Collect for Peace' from 'The Order for Morning Prayer', *BCP*, p. 51. My italics.

> or whether he believes at all; let him feel himself abandoned to Satan, unable to distinguish whether blasphemous and impure thoughts be of his own mind or the dark of the Evil one driven through him.[29]

To limit or suppress feeling is, thus, to align oneself with the devil. For a woman, normally relegated to silence in society, to articulate the power of her feelings, the power of her sympathy, is for her to fulfil her God-given potential. That a Scottish governess had introduced Greenwell to the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher David Hume, with his thoughts on the power of sympathy is noteworthy here. [30]

Greenwell also understood astutely the economic aspect of the 'redundant woman' problem (see pp. 29-35) when she asserted that there existed many single women, 'ardently desiring to spend and be spent in Christ's service' (p. 85). The desire for Christian service was an impulse felt by many women. Julia Parker has said of the great Victorian women social reformers that:

> Most of the women [...] believed that there was some work or service that God was calling them to. For some, such as Florence Nightingale, it was many years before they were sure about the exact nature of their vocation. But the recognition and acceptance of social obligation was linked to profound religious conviction that gave social service something of the flavour of a moral crusade. It required, first, untiring efforts to discover the will of God and then complete submission to it. Self-sacrifice, humility-- to God not to men-- and great determination were the essential foundation for their work.[31]

These beliefs corresponded with the Victorian cultural idea that women were spiritual regenerators. Also importantly for the middle-class woman, philanthropic service for God avoided the charge that the desire to work was a mercenary impulse to earn money or an ambitious wish to make her mark on the world. Indeed, 'Our Single Women' was a mixture of radical and conservative ideas. Isobel Armstrong has said

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[29] Exact reference not given. Dora Greenwell, *Songs of Salvation* (London: Strahan, 1873).
[30] Mason, 'Women Poets of the Nineteenth Century', p. 52.
[31] Julia Parker, *Women and Welfare: Ten Victorian Women in Public Social Service* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1989), p. 32.

of the essay that, 'The mixture of the conventional and unconventional in this essay is surprising and often unpredictable; it consents to a passive account of women and simultaneously subverts it, seeing the expressive model of femininity as one of the struggle and limit.' [32] Greenwell's promotion of Christian service for women is one that colluded with Victorian ideas about the innate spirituality of women and their greater capacities for altruism.

'On the Education of the Imbecile' and Social Advocacy

> The interest which Miss Greenwell cherished for all her weak, struggling, disadvantaged, and forlorn fellow beings, was always manifest to those, who [...] had the privilege of her acquaintance. Nor could any fail to notice this as a prominent feature of her character, even if they had no other means of observation than those given by a knowledge of her writings [...]. The more peculiar and touchingly difficult the conditions of suffering were, and the farther they were removed from the observation and concern of the great world, the more pertinaciously did she endeavour to discover their origin, and to administer a remedy. As in many other respects, the opposition or misunderstanding which her peculiar philanthropies had to endure, only served to increase the ardour and strengthen the resolutions which she brought to bear upon her exertions.
>
> (William Dorling, *Memoirs*, pp. 143-4)

The subject of 'idiocy', its causes and treatment, stimulated much discussion in the nineteenth century. Specialist asylums established at Bath, Colchester, Highgate, Earlswood, and Lancaster became famous for their progressive work in the treatment and care of the developmentally disabled.[33] Publications included legal works like *A Treatise on the Law Concerning Idiots, Lunatics and Other Persons non compos mentis* (1812); medical explorations such as 'On the Condition of the Mouth in

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[32] Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 344.

[33] The history of these institutions has been explored in: David Wright, *Mental Disability in Victorian England: The Earlswood Asylum 1847-1901* (Oxford: OUP, 2001); David Wright and Mark Jackson, *Mental Disability in Victorian Britain, 1847-1901* (Oxford: OUP, 2001); *From Idiocy to Mental Deficiency: Historical Perspectives on People with Learning Disabilities*, ed. David Wright and Anne Digby (London: Routledge, 1996); and Mark Jackson, *The Borderland of Imbecility: Medicine, Society and the Fabrication of the Feeble Mind in Later Victorian and Edwardian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

Idiocy', in the *Lancet* (1862); sociological works including *Teaching the Idiot* (1854) and *The Idiot and his Helpers, Colchester* (1864); and magazine articles such as Charles Dickens's 'Idiots' in *Household Words* (1853).[34] Wordsworth was another writer fascinated by the condition; he wrote in a letter to John Wilson dated June 1802: 'I have often applied to idiots, in my own mind, that sublime expression of Scripture, that *their life is hidden with God.* They are worshipped, probably from a feeling of this sort, in several parts of the East.'[35]

Unlike Wordsworth, who saw 'idiots' as being closer to God because of their innocence, Greenwell perceived them to be less fortunate because they were not free to fulfil their God-given potential, as is demonstrated in her extraordinary essay publication 'On the Education of the Imbecile' (1868).[36] In an epigraph to her essay, she quoted Johann Gottfried von Herder and asserted that:

> To help when no one helps, to try to effect improvement where no one attempts it; to espouse the cause of Humanity wherever it lies imprisoned, languishing in body or in spirit, *in things of earthly or eternal life,* this is Christianity.[37]

Greenwell interpreted 'idiocy' as a state of being blocked of feeling and intelligence: 'as if a secret finger has been laid upon some hitherto unsuspected *stop* in the great organ' (p. 8). She wrote that, 'An idiot is one who is never strong enough to cast off the swaddling bands of infancy, and who lives bound round with them from head to foot, until he exchanges them for the cerecloths of the grave' (p. 10). For Greenwell, who valued freedom from restriction so highly, 'there is no sight that our world so full

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[34] Murray K. Simpson, 'Pre-1920 References on Idiocy and Mental Deficiency', <http://www.personal.dundee.ac.uk/~mksimpso/refs.htm> [23.09.2006].
[35] Wordsworth, *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, 5 vols (1787-1805), I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967-93), p. 297.
[36] Dora Greenwell, 'On the Education of the Imbecile' (Reprinted from the *North British Review*, 97 (1868); and edited for the Royal Albert Idiot Asylum, Lancaster (London: Strahan, 1869)). Further References given in the text after the quotation unless otherwise stated.
[37] Exact details of source not given. Title page of Greenwell, 'On the Education of the Imbecile'.

of sorrowful ones, can offer, so deeply tragic as that of idiocy' (p. 10). She even concluded that insanity was a better state, saying that 'the poor maniac has at least *lived*; he is one who has suffered the extremity of woe and loss, but who still retains something of the dignity of him "who has had losses," of being once responsible and intelligent, capable of feeling and inspiring love' (p. 10).

Another factor that aroused her sympathy was that the 'imbecile' was someone who was especially susceptible to loneliness and isolation:

> He is now, in the expressive French phrase, [Aliéné] an alien from his kind, cut off from the broad swift-flowing stream of human interests and sympathies, 'he is desolate with all his company;' but the idiot, as his very name implies, is *isolated*, and has ever been so; he is disinherited from his very birth -- even from before it. He is a being disassociated from all around him, without ties, without aims, without resources; his life's history is indeed a blank, summed up and encircled in nonentity. (pp. 10-11)

An analogy between Greenwell's own restricted life as a single woman and that of 'the imbecile' is detectable. The thought that emerges is that the real education of the imbecile is to enable him/her to feel and give love. She quotes Seguin's thoughts on the subject:

> ['']Science, art, literature, education, medicine, philosophy, may each do something for our pupils, but love alone can truly socialise them, *and those alone who love them are their true rescuers*. Moral association, sociability, family affinity, all these have to be *created* in the idiot; his sense of affection stands in need, like all his other senses, of development. *All these poor children may be taught to love by being loved;* and to make the idiot feel that he is loved, and to make him eager to love in his turn, is the end of our teaching, as it has been its beginning.' 'The treatment of idiocy,' adds Seguin, 'is a commentary upon St. Paul's declaration; we may bring skill, even genius, to the task, we may understand all mysteries and all knowledge, we may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and if we have not love it will profit us nothing'.[38] (pp. 39-40)

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[38] Edouard Seguin, *Idiocy: and its Treatment by the Physiological Method* (New York: William Wood, 1866), pp. 39-77; extracts are available at <http://www.personal.dundee.ac.uk/~mksimpso/SegIdio.htm> [10.12.2006].

Greenwell believed that even the developmentally disabled, restricted as s/he is, has an inner propensity to feel which points to his/her capacity to experience human life more fully.

Poetical Works

Political Activism

Greenwell's work as a champion for the helpless seems to have been a projection of her own frustrations with the restrictions of life. She was particularly incensed by the infringement of human liberty. *Poems* (1867) contains a number of political poems relating to the fight for freedom and justice. 'The Cleft' is a work written in support of the North in the American Civil War describing a 'ghastly cleft' (p. 336) that 'Yawns wide from right to left' (p. 336) severing the good North from the evil South. The epigraph to 'The Cleft' is a quotation from *Hamlet* which introduces the idea that the issue of slavery has divided America into two parts:

> "Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.
> . . . .
> "Oh throw away the worser part of it,
> And live the purer with the other half."[39]

It is clear to Greenwell that the North is morally purer than the slave-owning South. She questions how the rift may be mended: 'What voice, what arm uplift / This dire encroaching rift / May close with sovereign spell? and how begin it?' (p. 336). In the end, she appears to conclude that the rift cannot be reconciled and that the better part should separate itself from the corrupted half:

7. Then let it yawn to sever
The Bond and Free for ever:

[39] Greenwell, *Poems* (1867), p. 336. Further references are given in the text after the quotation.

Than Falsehood's hectic flush of vain relying,
On Freedom's cheek more fair
The glow of health, though there
Across it broad and deep a scar be lying!

[...]

9. When life meets life with kiss
Of rapture strong, oh! *this*
Is union, this is strength; then leave the dying
With Death their troth to plight,
In charnel vaults by night,
'Mid dead men's bones and all uncleanness lying.

10. There leave them! let the wide,
Deep chasm still divide
'Twixt Night and Day, 'twixt Light and Darkness,---know
That greater than the whole
Is now the part; the soul
Is nobler than the body,---let them go! (pp. 338-9)

The suggestion that the two parts divide without the necessity of ending slavery in the South is curious because it seems to be at odds with the rest of Greenwell's personal theology about the importance of freedom for the oppressed. Furthermore, that it is strangely incongruent with Greenwell's other writings, which normally advocate compassion and sympathy even for the oppressors in society, will become evident in the further discussion of her works.

Other poems by Greenwell in the 1867 volume are also concerned with freedom: 'The White Crusade -- Italy, 1860' is about the fight for Italian independence; 'The Gang Children' addresses the practice of child labour in agriculture; and 'Fidelity Rewarded' is a poem against vivisection and thus is an example of Greenwell's belief in the importance of freedom for all God's creatures. While poems on these topics were common at the time, Greenwell's collection particularly reflects the work and interests of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Barrett Browning advocated Italian independence in 'Casa Guidi Windows' (1851); opposed

slavery in *The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point* (1849) and in the *Poems before Congress* (1860); and wrote against child labour in 'The Cry of the Children'.

Greenwell acknowledged this debt to Barrett Browning herself in *Poems* (1867), the volume containing 'The Cleft' and 'The White Crusade', by dedicating it to her memory. The Brownings were also anti-vivisectionists; indeed, Robert Browning wrote in a letter, 'I despise and abhor the pleas on behalf of that infamous practice, vivisection. I would rather submit to the worst of deaths, so far as pain goes, than have a single dog or cat tortured on the pretence of sparing me a twinge or two.'[40] Another contemporary woman who may have influenced Greenwell on the issue of vivisection was Frances Power Cobbe who championed the cause of animal welfare.[41] What is evident from the political poems is that Greenwell was concerned with many of the same issues about which contemporary women were thinking.

Social Justice

Along with her belief in freedom, Greenwell possessed a strong sense of the importance of justice for the underprivileged. 'The Mower-Maiden', published in *Stories that Might Come True* (1850), tells of the unfairness of life for the poor and powerless. Young 'Bessie', a mower girl, is told by a wealthy farmer that, if she mows his meadow in three days, she will become his son's bride. The impressionable and innocent country girl is spurred on by the prospect of this reward and works without rest, despite the scorching summer heat, to finish her task:

7. And so from eve till morn, from morn till eve, as at the first
She feeds on love, on happy hope she quenches still her thirst,

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[40] Robert Browning, <http://www.vivisection-absurd.org.uk/quotes.html> [accessed 2.5.2005].
[41] Her publications on the subject include: *The Moral Aspects of Vivisection* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1875); *Mr. Lowe and The Vivisection Act* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1877); *The Modern Rack, Papers on Vivisection* (London: Swan Sonnenschein , 1889); and *Vivisection in America* (London: Swan Sonnenschein , 1889).

> The third time rises up the sun, and now are Bessie's hands
> At rest, as weeping joyful tears upon the field she stands.[42]

When the farmer returns he takes back his promise and retorts, 'But for my son-- in earnest thou didst never take my jest?/ Ah! fond and simple then it seems must be the loving breast!' (p. 39). The patronising combination of 'fond and simple', 'fond' meaning 'Infatuated, foolish, silly' here and simple 'stupid', is not only unfeeling but humiliating to the young woman.[43] The wealthy and powerful male lacks understanding about the girl's tender heart, and is revealed as not only being insensitive but also as being abusive with this power over the poor, weak and vulnerable. He does not keep his promises and is an untrustworthy master. His insincerity crushes young Bessie's spirit and she lives the rest of her days a broken woman:

> 8. He speaks and goes upon his way, but Bessie has grown pale,
> A deathly chill has struck her heart, her knees beneath her fail;
> Her senses swim, her speech is gone, her consciousness gives way,
> And there poor Bessie has sunk down upon her new-mown hay;
>
> 9. And so through stunned and silent years beside the bee that yields
> For her its honey, Bessie still lives on amid the fields,
> A life that is not Life--- Oh, make, and make it quickly there
> A grave for her, the Mower-Maid, among the meadows fair. (pp. 39-40)

This work reflects Greenwell's thought in 'Hardened in Good' that: 'In a saying of Solomon---"The poor is oppressed because he is poor"---lies the key to much that perplexes our dealings with the unfortunate' (p. 78). The poem's inclusion in *Stories that Might be True* is a demand that the poem should be treated as a commentary on perceived injustice.

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[42] Dora Greenwell, *Stories that Might be True* (London: William Pickering, 1850), pp. 37-40.
[43] Definition 2, *OED online*, <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50087484?query_type=word&queryword=fond&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&search_id=bi6r-GAjnCr-3949&result_place=5>, [23.05.2005].

'A Christmas Carol' (1863), published in *Poems* (1867), suggests that the privileged should take responsibility and help the disadvantaged. It articulates a need for practical love, compassion and sharing in society:

> If ye would hear the Angels sing,
> Christians! see ye let each door
> Stand wider than ever it stood before,
> On Christmas-Day in the morning.
>
> *Rise, and open wide the door;*
> *Christians, rise! the world is wide,*
> *And many there be that stand outside,*
> *Yet Christmas comes in the morning.*
>
> If ye would hear the Angels sing,
> Rise and spread your Christmas fare;
> 'Tis merrier still the more that share,
> On Christmas-Day in the morning.
>
> *Rise and bake your Christmas bread;*
> *Christians rise! the world is bare,*
> *And bleak, and dark with want and care,*
> *Yet Christmas comes in the morning.* (pp. 358-359)

Opening the door is a loving act of invitation and welcome for the weary, hungry and burdened. Greenwell's concern is for the 'many there be that stand outside', those who are forgotten, hidden from view outside in the cold and dark world. Her call for activism, for the Christian to rise and open the door, asks that the heart and eyes be also opened to the needs of the poor. She is also alluding to the need for the light of the gospel to be spread to those standing in darkness, hunger and desperation. This carol thus illustrates many Victorian women's 'faith in the basic tenets of Christianity -- a belief in responsibility to others and faith in the power of Christian love' which, Suzanne Rickard reminds us, 'was an empowering credo.'[44]

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[44] Suzanne Rickard, 'Victorian Women with Causes: Writing, Religion and Action' in *Women, Religion, and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900*, ed. Sue Morgan (Basingstoke, Hampshire : Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 139-157 (p. 144).

This idea of Christmas as a time for showing love with kind acts, especially through the sharing of gifts, was one that captured the Victorian imagination. The most obvious example of this phenomenon is Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843). In terms of Victorian hymnody, John Mason Neale's 'Good King Wenceslas' (1853) is another example:

3. "Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
Bring me pine logs hither:
"Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear them thither."
Page and monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together:
Through the rude wind's wild lament
And the bitter weather.

[...]

5. In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the Saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.[45]

Greenwell's carol, with its incarnational focus on Christmas and the nativity, diverges from the majority of the hymns examined so far, which are crucicentric. It centres on Christmas as the time for celebrating God's gift of love, as does Christina Rossetti in her carol:

1. Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love divine;
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.[46]

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[45] John Mason Neale, 'Good King Wenceslas', *The Condensed Vocal Parts to the Carols for Christmas-tide: Set to Ancient Melodies. By T. Helmore etc.* (London and New York: J. A. Novello, 1854), p. 38.
[46] Christina Rossetti, 'Love came down at Christmas', *Complete Poems*, ed. Betty S. Flowers (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 423.

Christmas speaks powerfully to Greenwell because the story of the Nativity privileges the poor and meek. God is born in a manger to humble parents, a carpenter and his young wife, and is revealed first to the lowly shepherds. It tells of God's care and love for those who are often dismissed or forgotten in society as being insignificant.

Greenwell's *Songs of Salvation* (1873) was written for the poor and uneducated. As such, the hymns are written in a language that is deliberately simple. While they are not sophisticated poetical works, they demonstrate her desire to sympathise with the underprivileged and rejected, and tell much about her conviction that the power of God's love can liberate the oppressed. Throughout the *Songs*, Greenwell attempts to imagine herself in the position of an uneducated labouring-class person:

1. I am not skilled to understand
   What God hath willed, what God hath planned;
   I only know at my right hand
   Stands One Who is my Saviour.

2. I take God at His word and deed;
   'Christ died to save me,' this I read,
   And in my heart I find a need
   Of Him to be my Saviour.[47]

The imagined voice of the poor, uneducated adult set in the simple metre of 8887 is reminiscent of those of children in the hymns of Ann and Jane Taylor:

1. Great God, and wilt thou condescend
   To be my Father and my Friend?
   I a poor child, and thou so high,
   The Lord of earth, and air, and sky?[48]

While Greenwell could be accused of being patronising, she is also attempting to take on a humble position which highlights the poverty of human understanding in relation

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[47] 'Redemption', Greenwell, *Songs of Salvation*, p. 4.
[48] 'Our Father Who Art in Heaven', Ann and Jane Taylor, *Hymns for Infant Minds*, 47th edn (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1868), p. 18.

to God's omniscience. Although the narrative of the hymns of *Songs of Salvation* may be deemed didactic, it seems that Greenwell's earnest aim is to help the underprivileged. For her, the balm that can heal the 'primordial wound' and the sores inflicted on the spirits of the poor and oppressed is the gospel of Jesus:

7. One wounded spirit, sore opprest,
One wearied soul that found no rest
Until it found it on the breast
Of Him what was its Saviour [...] (p. 5)

That Greenwell's *Songs of Salvation* was influenced by the people she had encountered in her own philanthropic work is suggested by the fact that some of the works are rooted in the life of the north east. 'Conversion. The Pitman to his Wife' alludes to the mining industry that dominated the locality for so long, while the following work, 'The Wife's Answer', names the Pitman husband as 'Geordie' in the first line (p. 17). Another hymn, 'A Good Confession', is written from the perspective of a woman who has found faith in old age. She describes herself as a strayed sheep rescued by Jesus, the shepherd: 'Eighty years and more astray upon the mountains high, / In a land that's full of pits and snares, and that's desolate and dry.' (p. 23). 'Everlasting Love' takes on the subjectivity of another old woman. 'Nannie' is a spinster who has found comfort in the 'everlasting love' of God:

7. "And He's given a word unto me, Jeanie---a word and a holy thought
Of something I've never found upon earth, and something I've always sought;
Of something I never thought that I'd find till I found it in Heaven above;
It's Love He has given to me, Jeanie, His everlasting love.

8. "I'm old, Jeanie, poor and old, and I've had to work hard for my bread;
It's long since father and mother died, and ye know I was never wed;
And the most of my life's been spent in Place, and in places where I have been.
If I've heard a little talk about love, it's been work I've mostly seen. (p. 34)

This song resonates with Greenwell's insight into the emotional pain and hardship unmarried women suffer in 'Our Single Women'. Although the hymn follows the conventional pattern of a conversion narrative, Greenwell's imagined response of how the discovery of God's love might transform the life of a lonely old woman is extremely moving:

11. "And I used to think, perhaps it [love] was meant for richer people and higher,
Like the little maid that sits at church beside her father the Squire,
For the angels that always live above, or for good folks after they die;
But now it has come to me, I know it is nigh and is very nigh."

12. "It wasn't a voice that spoke in my ear, but a Word that came to my soul,
And it isn't a little love I've got in my heart when I've got the whole;
It is peace, it is joy, that has filled it up as a cup is filled to its brim;
Just to know that Jesus died for me, and that I am one with Him.

[...]

16. "And it isn't little God's given to me, though He's kept it to the end,---
It's wealth that the richest cannot buy, that the poorest can never spend;
And I needn't wait till I go to Heaven, for it's Heaven come down from above;
It's love, Jeanie, God's given to me, His everlasting love!" (pp. 34-6)

It is a consoling message for the ranks of 'redundant' women in the population, including Greenwell herself.

'An Invitation', the penultimate hymn of the collection, is almost the next stage of 'A Christmas Carol'. The carol urged middle-class Christians to enact the hospitality and welcome of Christ by opening their hearts and homes to the downcast, rejected and forgotten. 'An Invitation' shows Greenwell doing exactly this:

1. Come, hearts that are blighted and broken and bruised;
Come, spirits benighted, rejected, refused;
Come, look on your Saviour! Behold Him, He stands
With a wound in His heart, and a world in His hands.

[...]

4. Come, men who are mighty to curse and revile;
Come, women whose lips have forgot how to smile;
Come, bond-slaves, come sin-slaves, come drunkards, come thieves;
Come hither to Jesus; 'tis such He receives.

[...]

8. Come, kneeling before Him, adore Him, and grow
More pure than the sunbeam, more white than the snow;
He chose you, come, choose Him your Saviour, who died;
Fear only to lose Him; fear nothing beside! (pp. 28-9)

In the context of Greenwell's personal history, the second verse is most remarkable and moving as she extends the invitation of Christ's love to oppressors:

2. Come now, ye transgressors through force and through fraud;
Come now, ye oppressors, and look on your Lord;
Oh come, ye deceivers; oh come, ye deceived;
Come slave and come tyrant; come, grieving and grieved. (p. 28)

Despite the misunderstanding and rejection she experienced from family and society, Greenwell believes in the extension of the freedom offered by Christ's salvation to all.

Love and Religion

In a love poem, which Maynard says was '[p]ublished, I believe in some local magazine',[49] Greenwell imagined how a life-long, supportive companion would make the difficult journey of life more bearable:

1. "All through the day, my love, watching thine eye,
Holding thy hand in mine, I will be nigh;
I cannot cheer thee, love, yet I will stay,
I will be near thee, love, all through the day.

2. All through the day, my love, seeking in vain
Wings for the hours that pass weighted with pain;
All things are drear to thee, nothing is gay---
Yet I am dear to thee, so I will stay.

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[49] Maynard, *DG*, pp. 162.

3. All through this day of ours, though it be long,
Open no flowers and wakens no song;
Reddens the autumn leaf, withers the rose,
All through this day of ours, unto its close.

4. Worn is thy frame, my love, wan is thy cheek,
Low are thine accents, and broken and weak
Yet sweet is our silence, the words that we say
Are sweet, as I sit by thee all through the day.'[50]

The words 'all through the day [...] though it be long' suggests that what Greenwell really desired was lasting understanding and companionship. Indeed, the verses of the poem are reminiscent of marriage vows; they promise that 'all through the long day of life, I will stay by you, my beloved'. In her poem 'The Playfellows' (1862) published in *Carmina Crucis* (1869), her most highly regarded volume of poems, it is indicated that Greenwell saw her own childhood innocence as cut short:

Far away and long ago,
Long ago and far away,
Seems it now since in the low
Deep valley, shut from rougher weather,
Love, Hope, Joy and I together
Play'd, ah! many and many a day;
Hid beneath the branching fern,
Hid beneath the blooming heather,
Hiding, seeking, each in turn;
Oh! what games we play'd together!
Till one day, within the dell,
Hope and Joy, together hiding,
Hid so long and hid so well,
We found them not, though keenly chiding;
When we call'd came no replying,
Came a sound of hidden laughter
From the wood's deep heart, and after
Came a sound of secret sighing;
Then a shadow from the hill
Crept, and all grew sudden still;
[...]
We knew that we had seen the last
Of Hope and Joy, no more together
Play we there in summer weather.[51]

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[50] Maynard, *DG*, pp. 167-168.

This simple poem, written in childish tones, is punctuated by the pain of loss, the passing away of childhood joy and security, and the onset of isolation and loneliness in a lapsarian world. The unhappy ending of the poem, the experience of the child in the fallen world in Blakean terms, is all the more disturbing because the childlike narration conjures up emotional memories of the anxiety of abandonment felt in childhood. The bright summer has ended suddenly and cruelly, and the days are now colder and darker. This poem illustrates what J. R. Watson has said of Greenwell's work, that it 'demonstrates, in a particularly acute and poignant form, that love of life which was denied by circumstances'.[52]

If Greenwell found a life-long companion for her soul to sympathise with her pain and help carry her load, it was the figure of Jesus Christ. In the first verses of 'Alone' from *Poems* (1848), distressed feelings of abandonment and isolation are articulated:

1. I am alone---within the world alone---
Shut out from Heaven and Hope my star of life,
I darkling stem Time's whirling tides alone,
Alone within our Being's troubled strife---
Alone! the surges of a shoreless main
Give back the sound to dreary life again.

2. Alone! so soon the smiling Heaven obscured,
That shone unclouded on an earlier day,
So short a while, kind joys, have ye endured,
That wreathed Spring's roses round my youthful way;
Oh sad and fearful word! alone! alone!
What boding echoes lurk within thy tone. (p. 167)

The imagery of being tossed about in the fourth and fifth lines indicates the mental torment of enduring the troubles of life without a helper or guide. '[T]he surges of a shoreless main' is a peculiar but effective statement which seems to refer to the

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[51] Dora Greenwell, *Carmina Crucis*, reprint (London: H. R. Allenson, 1906), p. 9. Further references to poems from this collection will be given in the text after the quotation.
[52] Watson, *English Hymn*, p. 438.

exhaustion and distress experienced when living with an emotional pain that does not seem to fade; the phrase suggests that it is like stumbling in an endless desert with no sign of refreshment or company. The idea that smiling Heaven was 'so soon [...] obscured, / That shone unclouded on an earlier day' echoes the sentiment of losing childhood love, hope and joy in 'The Playfellows'.

However, in 'Alone', there is a sudden shift from anguish to hope. The persona urges the reader to see that humanity has never been alone from the very beginning of time:

3. Is Man alone? oh dull and thankless thought!
Still flings the sunbeam its unchanging gold,
Still blooms the meadow with the hues inwrought,
That Eden knew ere yet our Earth was old;
Still God hath oracles in leaf and stream,
In the flower's glory, and night's starry gleam. (p. 167)

The idea of messages about creation in the natural world appears in the Bible; Psalm 19. 1-4 tells that:

> The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

The idea of such correspondences between the natural world and the heavens was also popular in the literature of the Renaissance period, as famously exemplified in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, when the banished Duke talks of 'sermons in stones'.[53] It seems Greenwell is alluding to both these biblical and literary traditions.

In the following verses, Greenwell always combines God and love together:

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[53] William Shakespeare, *As You Like It* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1993), Act II, scene I, p. 32.

4. Doth not God speak in thee? Yes, when the night
Of doubt would bid each happier ray depart,
When faithless murmurs wing each arrow's flight,
Thy foe would scatter rankling in thy heart,
Then God and Love would say, "we are thine own,"
With God and Love Thou art no more alone!

5. With God and Love---oh words of hopeful cheer!
They hover round, unnumbered spirits blest,
To chase away each evil dream of fear---
No sullen shadow lingers o'er our rest,
To mar the blissful light around us thrown,
With God and Love we are no more alone. (p. 168)

It is almost as if God and Love are one, co-existing and interdependent. This seems to relate back to Greenwell's belief in the holiness of love and even the desire to love as she asserted in her epigraph to *Songs of Salvation.* Humanity is not alone because God's love, embodied in Jesus Christ, the Emmanuel, has shared the human experience:

6. Oh God and Love! oh Thou, Love's source and stay!
Thou Soother of all woes the heart hath borne,
Thou that didst rise with Healing on our day,
Thou that for me did'st wear the cruel thorn---
Oh lamp of Love! within my Being shine,
And all on Earth and all in Heaven is mine! (p. 168)

God has experienced human brokenness and is therefore capable of perfect sympathy and understanding.

Although the idea of love (particularly at Christmas) was important to Greenwell's theology, her faith centred more specifically on the cross, and frequently its relation to love. As such, J. R. Watson has said that, 'Dora Greenwell's poetry is a perpetual dialogue between the heart and the cross---the cross which gives life, but which is an emblem of suffering.'[54] The complexity of the idea is explored in the

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[54] Watson, *English Hymn*, p. 439.

poem 'The Cross' which was published in *Carmina Crucis* (1869). It is a dialogue between a main speaker and a chorus, and is, therefore, reminiscent of the *Song of Solomon*, and the dialogue tradition in early modern religious verse, which was followed by Joseph Hart and Susanna Harrison, as we have seen earlier. The chorus opens by asking for what the protagonist is looking, whether she has come to see or hear a prophet. She answers, that she does not look for a prophet 'for unto me / The Lord hath show'd a Tree' (p. 57). The chorus asks why she chooses a dead tree, '*Bare, leafless, gaunt?*' (p. 57) and suggests that the solid Lebanon oak is preferable. She explains:

> "Yet hence I will not stir;
> What healing gums distil
> From out this tree! Of myrrh
> The mount is this, of frankincense the hill,
> And all around are fair
> Broad meads, with shepherds there
> That feed and guard their flocks contented still. (p. 59)

The cross becomes the site where all biblical drama unfolds and the poem becomes a visionary work which travels from the Old Testament to the New. She makes a tripartite journey, starting at Mount Sinai where Moses encountered God, then to Mount Tabor and finally moving to Golgotha, although, this time, the name of the place is not given:

> "At length another place
> I reach'd at noon; the trodden ground was bare;
> Of a great multitude I saw the trace,
> But all was silent now; no marvel there
> My eyes beheld, no law
> I heard, no vision saw,
> Save Jesus only, Him, the Crucified.
> I saw my Lord that look'd on me and died.
>
> "Here will I see the day
> Pass by, the shadows creep

Around me; here I pray,
And here I sing and weep;
Here only will I sleep
And wake again; I keep
My watch beneath this tree
The Lord hath show'd to me." (p. 61)

The dead tree has become the focal point of her life; it has become her home. While the idea of the cross as a tree is by no means unusual in Christian theology, there is an added poignancy in Greenwell's poem as plants are always a source of joy for her and symbols of hope and growth. Maynard recalled that, 'She took more pleasure in plants than in flowers, and would say earnestly, "The only joy is in growth."' [55] Indeed, for Greenwell, the Cross is also the Tree of Life which brings personal growth, and she is a delicate vine that clings to it; her 'A Song of Joy and Pain' reads:

And many a leaf on me
Hath fall'n from off this tree
Of healing power! I know
Not yet how near the skies
Its lofty stem will rise;
Nor guess how deep below
To what drear vaults if woe
Its roots will pierce; I see
Its boughs spread wide and free,
And fowls of every wing
Beneath them build and cling.
Hail, blessed Cross! I see
My life grow green in thee!
My life that hidden, mute
Lives ever in thy root,
When life fails utterly;
All hail, thou blessed Tree! (*Carmina Crucis*, p. 65)

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[55] Maynard, *DG*, p. 167.

In this passage, Greenwell is using the common Victorian metaphor of marriage, particularly used to describe the wife who depends on her husband, to describe her relationship with God.[56]

Greenwell was overwhelmed by Christ's sacrifice of love on the cross. She wrote in a letter dated 6 June 1868 to her friend Professor Knight of St Andrews University:

> The death of the Saviour remains for me just what it is, a fact; the one great fact; in itself doubtless an enigma -- Heaven's unexplained enigma -- but the one which alone to my heart meets and touches all life's direst needs. It is more real than anything in the world, or out of it; that which brings the pitying, sympathising element into the whirl and awful chaos of creation; it makes of God a Being to be loved, because it proves that there is a necessity (of nature unknown to us) for the loss, anguish, and death that presses on the whole world, *and that God Himself has stooped to it*. How different from the old gods of Greece, careless and cruel in their continual serenity -- *a God upon a Cross*. This, as Lacordaire says, IS my theology: 'Summa Theologæ.' [*sic*] The aspect in which I see the Cross (since I saw it at all) never varies. It has saved the world, and it will save me."[57]

Greenwell's emblem and motto, which came to be printed on the title pages of her works, became a cross held by a hand with the words, 'Et teneo et teneor' [meaning 'I hold and am held'] (figure 9). She endured the difficulties of life believing that she was held and cherished by her Saviour. Not only did she choose her motto about the power of the cross but in *Carmina Crucis*, she also added a quotation from Luther:

> 'I took,' said Luther, 'for the symbol of my theology a seal on which I had engraven a cross, with a heart in its centre. The cross is black, to indicate the

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[56] For instance, one of Ignatious Donnelley's heroines, Estella, says to her lover: 'woman never shrinks from dependence upon the man she loves, any more than the ivy regrets that it is clinging to the oak and cannot stand alone? A true woman must weave the tendrils of her being around some loved object; she cannot stand alone any more than the ivy. *Caesar's Column: A Story of the Twentieth Century* [1890] (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 1960), p. 197. For a discussion on this idea see chapter 7 'Clinging Vines and the Dangers of Degeneration' in Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 210-234.

[57] Original reference quoted in Maynard, *DG*, pp. 212-213.

sorrows, even unto death, through which the Christian must pass; *but the heart preserves its natural colour*, for the cross does not extinguish nature, it does not kill, but give life.



Figure 9

Greenwell's belief in the profound significance of Christ as 'the man of sorrows', one who understands human pain and suffering, was something to which she returned repeatedly. In *The Two Friends* (1862) she asserted through her character Philip: 'Christ is the *light of the world*, as well as the light of His Church. He is a Man, one to whom nothing that Humanity endures or achieves can be alien'.[58] Again, in *Colloquia Crucis*, a prose theological work, she wrote, 'I feel only that it [the Cross] consoles, as Love itself consoles, by the mere presence of its sympathy. It is man's desolation met by the desolation of God'.[59] Greenwell's appreciation of the pain endured by Christ as the source of his divine sympathy is a privileging of her own suffering. In a way, it is an act of self-compassion; as Luce Irigaray has asserted of the female mystics: 'she never ceases to look upon his nakedness, open for all to see, upon the gashes in his virgin flesh, at the wounds from the nails that pierce his body as he hangs there, in his passion and abandonment. And is overwhelmed with love of him/herself'.[60]

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[58] Greenwell, *Two Friends*, p. 172.
[59] Dora Greenwell, *Colloquia Crucis: A Sequel to 'Two Friends'* (London: Gibbings, 1899), p. 49 .
[60] Irigaray, *Speculum*, p. 199.

The sacrificial love of Christ heals the primordial wound inflicted at the fall.

In Greenwell's case, it convinces her that she is most precious and infinitely loved:

6. And had there been in all this wide
Wide world no other soul beside
But only mine, then He had died
That He might be its Saviour [...][61]

This idea would have been exceptionally powerful and moving to Greenwell who had experienced much loneliness and antipathy in her life. Christ is not only Emmanuel who understands and shares the difficulties of her life but he is also the lover and comforter of her soul.

'Veni, Veni, Emmanuel'

Much of Greenwell's personal theology is summed up in her visionary poem 'Veni, veni, Emmanuel', some verses of which were later adopted as an Advent hymn. It was first published in *Carmina Crucis* (1869) and is written in Long Metre, 88.88. As the title indicates, the poem looks towards Christ's second coming. In the first section, Greenwell explores what it means for God to leave heaven to be Emmanuel, 'God with us', on earth. She emphasises the loneliness that God had to endure to make the journey from heaven to earth, 'Alone, upon Thy way, alone / Thou comest from the hills of pride' (p. 127). For Greenwell, the loneliness that God chose willingly in order to enter into life with man is crucial to his understanding of the human experience. Furthermore, God is able to move beyond empathy, he not only identifies with pain but also responds to it:

3. Thou sawest there was none to aid,
No Saviour for our race beheld;

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[61] 'Redemption', Greenwell, *Songs of Salvation*, p. 5.

Thy vengeance then its pathway made,
And Thine own fury Thee upheld. (p. 128)

As the poem develops, it is clear that it is a prophetic work that looks forward to the vanquishing of evil. Christ will trample over Satan and bring about the restitution of justice and peace:

11. The ancient Dragon in the sea
Thy sharp and biting sword shall feel;
And on the serpent's head shall be
The vengeance of Thy bruised heel. (p. 129)

The ancient Dragon, the devil, symbolises all that is bad in the world: oppression, misunderstanding, physical and emotional pain, and unfairness. For Greenwell, a crucial part of Emmanuel's justice is to bring healing:

13. Then come to heal Thy people's smart,
And with Thee bring Thy captive train;
Come Saviour of the world and heart,
Come, mighty Victor over pain! (p. 130)

Emmanuel comes to heal emotional, psychological and physical pain; internal and external afflictions. He is not only the saviour of the world but of each individual heart. Christ understands and his return promises to restore all that is good which has been lost: 'Come, Lord of Salem, Prince of Peace, / And bring again our vanish'd years!' (p. 130). The request for the return of 'vanish'd years' points to Greenwell's personal regret for stifled potential and stunted growth. The idea that life has often been blocked is superbly articulated in a following verse when she describes the frustrations and confusion of life as 'Life's labyrinth' (p. 131). Emmanuel, the God who understands human suffering, offers the 'guiding help' which pierces through the dark maze.

The subsequent verses of the poem continue to hint at Greenwell's own experience:

19. Thou wearest on Thy kingly breast
A little flower that faded soon,
A flower unwooed and uncaress'd
By summer in its golden noon.

20. A flower beside a stream that grew
In mossy wood-walks, dank and wild,---
The first of all the flowers I knew,
The treasure of a lonely child. (p. 131)

One interpretation is that the 'little flower that faded soon [...] unwooed and uncaress'd' is the author herself, the 'stream' being a reference to the Browney of Greenwell's childhood. To her, it is astonishing that she, a lowly individual 'unwooed and uncaress'd' in the fallen world, is cherished and held close by the King of kings.

For Greenwell, the story of the incarnation and the life of Christ means that God understands the pains of human life, the disappointment, loneliness and frustration that each heart has had to endure:

21. Within Thine eye divine I read
A love exact, a pity sure,
Minute and tender, taking heed
Of all that human hearts endure.

22. That blends within its mighty scope
Thy vast design, our feeble plan,
And brings again each faded hope,
In giving back his God to Man. (pp. 131-2)

God's compassion and love bring hope. Emmanuel, God with us, is not a distant God, but an intimate and empathetic parent who understands fully the pains of his children's hearts. Moreover, he is a source of renewal and hope capable of bringing back fullness of life to even the withered, fading plant.

For Greenwell, the good news is that God as Emmanuel participated with fullness in the human struggle. He came 'with us to dwell' and is 'God present with his world restored' (p. 132). Since no human experience is alien to him (except sin according to the Epistle to the Hebrews), Emmanuel is the compassionate high priest and is committed to living in solidarity with his creation. There will be no more loneliness and misunderstanding, and this is a source of great joy:

24. The world is glad for Thee! the rude
Wild moor, the city's crowded pen;
Each waste, each peopled solitude,
Becomes a home for happy men. (p. 133)

The 'city's crowed pen' and 'peopled solitude' refers to the anonymity of urban life, of cities full of people who do not know or care who their neighbours are. In contrast, Christ's restored world is a 'home for happy men', a place where people may live again in innocence with love, hope and joy. With the reign of Emmanuel, there will be individual healing and peace, as well as brotherly love which will bring an end to social frustration. The fallen world is a restricted and claustrophobic one but, with Christ's return and the world restored, she prophesies that there will be freedom and space in which to grow and expand:

25. The heart is glad for Thee! it knows
None now shall bid it err or mourn;
And o'er its desert breaks the rose
In triumph o'er the grieving thorn. (p. 132)

The third line is alluding to Isaiah 35. 2: 'The Desert Shall Rejoice and Bloom as the Rose', which is itself an Advent text that looks forward to the coming of the Kingdom

of heaven upon earth. The image of the rose is of further significance as Greenwell's visionary writings have been described as 'flower mysticism'.[62]

The love of God, personified in Emmanuel, brings freedom and space in which to enjoy fullness of life:

26. Thou bringest all again; with Thee
Is light, is space, is breadth and room
For each thing fair, beloved, and free,
To have its hour of life and bloom.

27. Each heart's deep instinct unconfess'd;
Each lowly wish, each daring claim;
All, all that life hath long repress'd,
Unfolds, undreading blight or blame.

28. Thy reign eternal will not cease;
Thy years are sure, and glad, and slow;
Within Thy mighty world of peace
The humblest flower hath leave to blow,

29. And spread its leaves to meet the sun,
And drink within its soul the dew;
The child's sweet laugh like light may run
Through life's long day, and still be true [...] (p. 133)

Here, Greenwell goes back to the idea of 'blooming' as an indication of life, hope and growth. For Greenwell, who identifies herself as a stunted plant, Emmanuel's care, love and understanding heals her spirit and waters her soul. Her desire for space, light and room to bloom indicates that she felt confined and claustrophobic in her life. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have noted claustrophobia was a condition of dis-ease which many Victorian women writers explored in their work: 'agoraphobia and its complementary opposite, claustrophobia, are by definition associated with the spatial imagery through which these poets and novelists express their feelings of

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[62] Berendina M. J. Piets Saunders, Acadia University, 'Flower Mysticism in Dora Greenwell: The Inward Journal', conference paper for *The Eighth Annual Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century British Women Writers Conference*, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 24-26 September 1999. I have not been able to get hold of this paper to read. Saunders is probably referring to poems such as 'The Sun-flower' and 'Christ's Garland', both of which were published in *Carmina Crucis* (1869).

social confinement and their yearning for spiritual escape.'[63] They have noted that, while male writers also employed images of confinement and imprisonment, 'The distinction between male and female images of imprisonment is -- and always has been -- a distinction between, on the one hand, that which is both metaphysical and metaphorical, and on the other hand, that which is social and actual.'[64] Gilbert and Gubar describe how women have often been described or imagined as houses. It is thus striking that Greenwell envisages herself as a wild flower. She does not imagine herself as a house enclosed by walls; instead, she desires the freedom of the outdoors. Her privileging of the outdoors over indoors is perhaps related to the thought, as articulated by Simone de Beauvoir, 'that spiritual transcendence of the body [...] is what makes humanity distinctively human.'[65] At the same time, the idea of finding freedom and fulfilment with Christ echoes one of the verses of Steele's 'Redeeming Love' written a century earlier:

4. Here may the blind and hungry come,
And light and food receive;
Here shall the meanest guest have room,
And taste, and see, and live.[66]

Although Steele's hymns are not explicitly preoccupied with social justice and the lot of the underprivileged in the way that Greenwell's are, the verse above reminds us that the idea that Christ can bring release to the oppressed is a potent gospel hope that has existed since the life of Christ.

The coming of Christ brings freedom and growth. All good things will be fulfilled and there will be no more misunderstanding:

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[63] Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 86.
[64] Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 86.
[65] Ibid., p. 88.
[66] Steele, *Hymns, Psalms and Poems* (London: Daniel Sedgewick, 1863), p. 37.

30. The maid's fond sigh, the lover's kiss,
The firm warm clasp of constant friend;
And nought shall fail, and nought shall miss
Its blissful aim, its blissful end.

31. The world is glad for Thee! the heart
Is glad for Thee! and all is well,
And fixed, and sure, because Thou art,
Whose name is call'd Emmanuel. (pp.133-4)

As with Elliott's phrase 'thy love unknown' in 'Just as I am', verse 30 contains within it a poignant longing for the romantic and sexual love that has been denied to Greenwell as a single woman. Love is food that makes the human heart and spirit grow, and, although she has lacked human love and understanding, she gains comfort and healing from her belief in Emmanuel as the 'God with us' who cares and knows her fully. This knowledge makes her heart swell and spirit bloom (the metaphor occurs repeatedly). In *Two Friends*, she wrote:

> "I sometimes wonder," said Philip, "if heaven will be the resurrection of our life, *of our whole life*, if it will be the bloom-time and expansion, not only of our spiritual being, but all those germs of natural delight which seem unable to unfold here. How much there is in life to which life itself is unfriendly!" "Yet how fair and exalted a thing, under its happier conditions, is natural life! In its illusions, which are but truths anticipated in the clear second-sight of the soul; in its elations, when the heart dilates and lifts up the whole of life along with it!"[67]

For Greenwell, to live life fully would be to bring about heaven on earth

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Dora Greenwell's identification of a sympathetic Christ was not unusual among Victorian women. F. K. Prochaska has said that Victorian philanthropic women:

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[67] Greenwell, *Two Friends*, p. 221.

> sought and discovered a Christ who was sympathetic to their condition. [...] To women, Christ was, above all, a martyr to love. If there was a conviction peculiar to nineteenth-century philanthropic women it was their belief, inspired by Christ, that love could transform society.[68]

However, Greenwell's personal theology was refined by the experiences of her life.

The observations she made were ahead of her age; her belief in the necessity of freedom of the spirit for mental health displayed an enlightened understanding of human psychology. Ultimately, her prophecy pointed to the reign of Christ's love on earth as the condition under which the soul could fully expand and the heart be completely free. She believed this time, the coming of God's Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, could be hastened if society adopted Christ-like attitudes of sympathy and loving-kindness in the present world. Although her brother, William, was unable to see the message of his sister's writings, this was her gospel. Later in life she wrote, 'In one of my very few congratulatory letters I have had, the lady who writes tells me that all the books give her a feeling of *freedom*. This pleased me greatly.'[69] It is not surprising that the comment pleased her; to help human souls to feel freer was the work of her life.

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[68] F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 15.
[69] Dorling, *Memoirs*, pp. 69-70.

'Take my Life, and Let it Be':

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-79)

The Legacy

It has been said that, 'Havergal might be best described as an Evangelical or even as an evangelist, since most of her life and energy was devoted to bringing the unconverted to an acceptance of Christ as her Saviour.'[1] Her striving to dedicate herself to the furtherance of God's Kingdom was so determined that she came to be seen as a heroine of the Victorian church. It was for her poetical works that Frances Ridley Havergal was most admired by her contemporaries; G. Tennyson-Turner, himself a published poet and brother of Alfred Lord Tennyson, wrote in a letter that, 'Miss Havergal, Sappho and Mrs Browning constitute my present female trio. There may be others lying "Perdues" to me in foreign languages or in my own, but I know at present of none equal to these.'[2] The extraordinary exultation of this praise may be fully grasped in the context that, in Victorian England, 'Sappho emerge[d] as the proper name for the Poetess', and that Barrett Browning became celebrated as the 'Great Poetess of our own day' after her death.[3] That Havergal's conventionally religious verse, marked by intensity of feeling and single-minded devotion, was held in such high regard by Tennyson-Turner was probably related to his vocation as a priest. However, his elevation of her particular poetical powers may also be related to Emma Mason's point that, during the Victorian era, 'If women were considered the moral and religious guardians of a rapidly changing society, the female poet had even

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[1] Vincent A. Lenti, '"Take My Life and Let it Be": The Life and Legacy of Frances Ridley Havergal', *The Hymn*, 53 (2002), 27-32 (p. 27).
[2] Extracts from a letter from G. Tennyson-Turner. 14 November 1870: Worcestershire County Records, 705:825, Bulk Accession 7520, Parcel 2.
[3] Yopie Prins, *Victorian Sappho* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 14; and Christina Rossetti, 'Monna Innominata: A Sonnet of Sonnets', in *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, ed. Betty S. Flowers (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 294.

more power, poetry being considered the holiest of genres throughout the period, as critics from John Dennis to John Keble suggested.'[4] It would follow that a poetess writing religious verse would be a figure of tremendous cultural importance. Isobel Armstrong's assertion elucidates further:

> It is probably no exaggeration to say that an account of women's writing as occupying a particular sphere of influence, and as working inside defined moral and religious conventions, helped to make women's poetry and the 'poetess' [...] respected in the nineteenth century as they can never have been since.[5]

Havergal wrote about 100 hymns out of a total of over 400 verse compositions. Many of these became immediately popular; they were printed as texts on picture postcards printed by Parlane (modestly denoted as the work of 'F. R. H.'), and figured prominently in Victorian hymnals. Pitman wrote that:

> Her hymns have found their way into stately cathedrals, roadside coventicles, mission-rooms, and camp-meetings alike. They are sung everywhere, and by Christians of all sects, because they so beautifully express the power of religion upon the heart and life.[6]

In the second edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1875), she was the eleventh most represented writer with six hymns in the volume. [7] This was an immense achievement considering that her debut collection of hymns and poetry, *The Ministry of Song*, was published only six years earlier. Her contribution is even more impressive when it is considered that many of the hymns by the better-represented

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[4] Emma Mason, *Women Poets of the Nineteenth Century* (Tavistock, Devon: Northcote House Publishers, 2006), p. 2.
[5] Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 321.
[6] Pitman, *LHW*, p. 73.
[7] Ian Bradley has shown that the most represented writers in the second edition were: 1. J. M. Neale (48 appearances), 2. Henry Baker (31), 3. John Chandler (25), 4. Edward Caswall (21), 5= John Ellerton (11) and Mrs C. F. Alexander (11), 7. Isaac Williams (10), 8.= John Keble (9) and Christopher Wordsworth (9), 10. F. W. Faber (7). *Abide with Me*, p. 79. So, Havergal whose hymns appeared six times must have been the eleventh most represented writer in this work. This is especially impressive considering the high church leanings of the hymnal.

writers, such as Neale, Baker and Keble, would have been translations of ancient hymns; she would have been among the most represented writers of new hymns in English. The 1889 version with supplement included two more of her works; and, as Ian Bradley has shown, she was also the fifth most represented writer in the 1898 edition of the *Church Hymnary*, another major hymn book of the period.[8] Consequently, in the final decades of the nineteenth century, Havergal was probably one of the most influential Christian women in Britain.

Within three decades of Havergal's death, the *Memorials of Frances Ridley Havergal* compiled by her sister, Maria V. G. Havergal (1821-1887), reached circulation of almost a quarter of a million. Accounts of her life and work also appeared regularly in books about inspirational Christian women with such titles as *The World's Workers* (1885); *Women who have Worked and Won* (1904); and *The King's Daughters: The Life Stories of Three Noble Women* (1930). She became for Evangelicals (especially Anglican ones) a true 'Saint of God'.[9] In a sermon preached as one in a series on 'Some Good Women', S. B. James, a former curate to William Henry Havergal, explained:

> I have quoted none of F. R. H.'s beautiful and devout poetry to you this afternoon, [...] I prefer to dwell on the sweet and holy poem of her life. She was a poet and a singer, a preacher and a prophet [...]. But [... w]e cannot all be poets and singers, preachers and prophets. And so I am commissioned to put her bright example before you as one of God's saints, a burning and shining light of righteousness.[10]

With this process akin to canonisation, the example of her holy life (her whole-hearted dedication, fruitful service, chaste singleness and early death) became a pattern for Christian womanhood, especially in organisations such as the Young

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[8] Bradley, *Abide with Me*, p. 79. Twelve of her hymns were included.
[9] T. H. Darlow, *Frances Ridley Havergal: A Saint of God* (London: Nisbet, 1927).
[10] S. B. James, The Havergal Family: Some Lingering Memories', Worcester Records Office County Hall, Ref: 705:825, Bulk Accession 7520, Parcel 2.

Women's Christian Association (of which she was an early member and supporter), and, after her death, the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society.[11] Her life came to be seen by some as an even greater legacy to the Church than her widely-circulated and popular hymns.

A Dutiful Child

Frances Ridley Havergal was born in Astley, Worcestershire, on 14 December 1836. She was the youngest child of William Henry Havergal (1793-1870), the rector of Astley at the time of her birth, and his first wife Jane Havergal (neé Head; d. 1848).[12] Seven years before her birth, her father had been thrown from a carriage on the way to collect his eldest daughter, Miriam, from school. The accident had caused severe damage to the spine and William Henry Havergal had become susceptible to bouts of paralysis. As this must have affected his ability to be sexually active, Frances's arrival was received almost as a miracle, and she came to enjoy a special place in her father's affections. In turn, 'Little Fan' was devoted to her father throughout her life; her poem 'Our Father' contains the following lines: 'A home to me it cannot be / Without my father's face' (p. 64). After his death, Havergal wrote, 'I need not tell anybody what he was to me---I have said that once and for all in the *Ministry of Song*---(Our Father), and I am so glad I did.'[13]

A serious-minded Evangelical, William Henry Havergal led by example in the high moral tone of his household. However, Frances never seems to have felt her father was unduly strict or oppressively authoritarian. Rather, she seems to have

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[11] She supported the work of women missionaries, as her poem 'Sisters' suggests. After her death, a special CMS memorial fund was started in her name (see footnote 21) and the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society was established after her death in 1880, but benefited from the fund.

[12] The other children were Jane Miriam, Henry East, Maria Vernon Graham, Ellen Prestage, and Francis Tebbs.

[13] *Letters by the Late Frances Ridley Havergal*, ed. her sister M. V. G. H. (London: James Nisbet, 1885), p. 171. From a letter to her friend Elizabeth Clay, written on 22 April 1870.

adored him and aspired to be like him. In 1864, she wrote with admiration and pride, in a letter to her friend Elizabeth Clay, that her father's 'Churchism' consisted of:

> 1. *Evangelical Doctrine, i.e.* Christ and His Atonement are above and before all things: Conversion, whether taking place in Baptism or subsequently, sudden or imperceptibly gradual, to be an absolute necessity; that good works follow out of and are not any means of justification, which is only by faith in Christ; that outward forms and ceremonies have no merit or virtue in themselves whatever.
>
> 2. *Loyal Church Practice, i.e.* that all things should be done decently and in order, to uphold the Church in every way, to hold fast her Articles and Liturgy, interpreting each by the other.[14]

The first point relates to her father's Evangelical Protestantism. The stress placed upon conversion is, as discussed before, one of the four main characteristics of Evangelicalism (see p. 7). The thought that 'good works follow out of and are not any means of justification' is a firmly Protestant tenet which was being championed vigorously by Evangelical Anglicans at mid-century, in opposition to the Anglo-Catholic party in the Church of England. For Anglicans of this period, one's 'Churchism', the kind of theology held and the practices maintained, was extremely important in indicating where one's allegiance lay, and whether you identified with the low, high or broad church. These tensions form a background to Havergal's comments about her father's religion.

Her second point relates more specifically to William Henry Havergal's Anglicanism. The 'Articles' are the thirty-nine articles of religion, the doctrinal foundations of the Church of England, to which all Anglican clergymen must adhere at ordination. That Havergal strove to live up to the same standards throughout her life is indicated by her poem 'My Name'; as J. R. Watson has noted:

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[14] Havergal, *Letters*, pp. 26-7. To Elizabeth Clay. Dated 5th March 1864.

In the poem 'My Name', she writes of discovering, as a child, that she was not just 'little Fan' but also 'Ridley', after the bishop and martyr:

> A diamond clasp it seems to be
> On golden chains enlinking me
> In loyal love to England's hope,
> Bulwark 'gainst infidel and Pope,
> The Church I hold so dear.

Ridley stood for Protestantism and the Church of England, and this was Havergal's side.[15]

Although the Havergal Watson is referring to in the last sentence is Frances, the statement would be equally true of her father. In many ways, Frances Ridley Havergal was a woman who created herself in her father's image; his 'Churchism' became her own. Unlike Greenwell, who explored many different Christian traditions and developed her own hybridised type of theology, Havergal remained a steadfast Evangelical Anglican in the pattern of her father throughout her life.

Havergal also inherited a love of music from her father, who was an accomplished composer of church music. Her own musicality was evident from the earliest stages of infancy; her sister Maria remembered that, before she could talk, Frances would coo along to nursery rhymes in time and soon picked up simple tunes written for her by her father, as well as popular nursery songs such as Jane Taylor's 'Thank you pretty cow' and 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star'.[16] Indeed, as her eldest sibling Miriam recalled, Frances proved to be a precocious infant:

> By the time she had reached two years of age, [...] she spoke with perfect distinctness, and with greater fluency and variety of language than is usual in so young a child. She comprehended and enjoyed any little stories that were told her. [...] When three years old, she could read easy books [...]. At four years old, Frances could read the Bible and any ordinary book correctly, and

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[15] Watson, *English Hymn*, p. 442.
[16] Janet Grierson, *Frances Ridley Havergal: Worcestershire Hymn Writer* (Bromsgrove: The Havergal Society, 1979), p. 3.

> had learned to write in round hand. French and music were gradually added: but great care was always taken not to tire her or excite the precocity of her mind, and she never had a regular governess.[17]

Astley Rectory was a scholarly environment as well as a religious one. William Henry Havergal tutored young men for their university entrance examinations during his ministry there (as was often the practice of clergymen during the period). The father's personal belief in the high value of education is further corroborated by a promise made to his children that 'I cannot give you fortunes but I can give you good educations.'[18] As a clever child, Frances responded well to her father's wishes in the supportive and encouraging family home. Another anecdote in the memorials recalls that, by the age of seven, she had already demonstrated her potential as a linguist:

> Frances always took care to be in the drawing room while a professor was giving German lessons. Without any one knowing of it, she was listening and acquiring the language. When discovered she had made such progress that Mr. Lorentz begged he might instruct her.[19]

A small copybook, now in the Worcestershire County Records Office collections, indicates that Frances was also experimenting with writing poetry at the same age. The first entry is a work written when she was seven years old:

1. SUNDAY is a pleasant day,
   When we to church do go;
   For there we sing and read and pray,
   And hear the sermon too.

2. On Sunday hear the village bells;
   It seems as if they said,
   Go to the church where the pastor tells
   How Christ for man has bled.

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[17] Maria Vernon Graham Havergal, *The Memorials of Frances Ridley Havergal* (London: James Nisbet, 1881), pp. 4-6.
[18] Grierson, *FRH*, p. 29.
[19] MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 9. That this early acquisition of the German language was beneficial to her in later years will become evident later.

3. And if we love to pray and read
While we are in our youth,
The lord will help us in our need
And keep us in His truth.[20]

Although this is a conventionally Christian poem, it predates her sense of commitment and conversion. It is more the hymn of a dutiful child; indeed, it tells of what Frances was taught about the special nature of the Sabbath and the delights of churchgoing, as well as about the crucifixion, by members of her family who were keen to nurture an Evangelical faith in their youngest charge. The poem's place as the first entry to be copied carefully into the little book suggests that the Havergals celebrated and encouraged this kind of writing. It perhaps also intimates that she was a child who was eager to please, and who desired praise and affection; she must have known that her religious parents would respond especially well to a poem about church.

As well as attending church, Havergal took part in many of the family's other religious activities from early childhood. Her upbringing was intended to nurture a good Christian child. She started accompanying her mother on parochial visits while still an infant in Astley. In 1845, when her father was appointed the rector of St Nicholas's, Worcester, it became her job to collect weekly subscriptions from the parishioners for the Church Missionary Society. Her father was an early supporter of the CMS, and, with his encouragement, Frances also formed a lasting attachment to the society.[21] She took seriously the Great Commission given by Christ in Mark 16.

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[20] Frances Ridley Havergal, 'Sunday is a Pleasant Day' in her first copybook of poems, Worcestershire County Records, Ref: 705:825, Bulk Accession 7520, Parcel 2, pp. 70-72.This work may be compared with Mrs Alexander's hymn on 'The Holy Catholick Church' (1848), 'Little children must be quiet'. Havergal's poem is less psychologically frightening than Alexander's which warns: 'For the Church is God's own Temple / Where men go for praise and prayer, / And the Great God will not love them / Who forget His presence there': C. F. Alexander, *Hymns for Children* (London: Novello, 1905), p. 18.

[21] In July 1879, Charles Bullock wrote a letter to *The Record* suggesting that a fund for the CMS be established in Havergal's memory. It was established and, by February 1880, 'The Frances Ridley Havergal Church Missionary Fund' had received money in excess of £1,900. MVGH, *Memorials*, pp. 364-366.

15: 'And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature', and continued to raise money for organisations such as the CMS and the Irish Society throughout her life. That she was a seasoned collector can be glimpsed in the shrewd advice she gave in a letter to the members of her 'Bruey Branch', a kind of junior branch of the Irish Society which she established:[22]

> Unless very sure of your ground, ask for a 'contribution' rather than a 'subscription' or 'donation.' The former is alarming, because it implies continuance; the latter is objectionable, because it precludes asking next year. 'Contribution' neither frightens the contributor nor hinders the collector, and nearly always results in a 'subscription' in course of time.[23]

Indeed, as a child in Worcester, Havergal's interest in fundraising had led to the formation of her own charity with a friend, Sophie Sadler, the daughter of an MP.[24] The Flannel Petticoat Society was set up with the aim to clothe the poor children of the parish. Society members collected subscriptions from August to October, and, on 5 November (in likelihood a festive day for the anti-Roman Catholic Havergal family) up to thirty children would arrive at the rectory to receive and put on their new clothes. This would be followed by celebratory cake and hymn-singing. The story of the Flannel Petticoat Society provides a glimpse of life in the Havergal household: their commitment to Christian duty of care, support of their children's ideas, and service to the community, as well as their sense of fun. It also tells of the family's appreciation of hymn-singing, and their use of it as a ministerial tool.

Even though hymns were much loved in general during the Victorian era, Havergal, with her musical father, who composed his own hymn tunes, grew up particularly aware of the power of hymnody. William Henry Havergal was an

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[22] It was officially joined to the Irish Society in 1877.
[23] Grierson, *FRH*, pp. 72-3.
[24] The exact dates of the society cannot be established but it was prior to the death of her mother in 1848, so must have been before the age of eleven.

influential Church musician: in 1847, he published a compilation of traditional ecclesiastical English tunes entitled *Old Church Psalmody*:[25] the impact of this work was substantial enough for Erik Routley to describe him as: 'A pioneer in the new archaism'.[26] In 1859, William Henry Havergal's original compositions also appeared in *A Hundred Psalm and Hymn Tunes*. Frances, who grew up singing her father's music at home and at church, seems to have been profoundly influenced in her understanding of, and taste for, Church music by her father.[27]

The most traumatic event of Havergal's childhood was the death of her mother on 5 July 1848 when she was not yet twelve years old. She wrote at the age of twenty-two in her autobiography (published posthumously by her sister Maria in the *Memorials of Frances Ridley Havergal*) that, 'A mother's death must be childhood's greatest grief.'[28] She had already articulated this thought in a poem entitled 'A Mother's Loss' dated April 1852 in her first copybook of poems:

1. A mother's loss! Oh who may tell
   Its anguish, or what power can quell
   That deepest grief, most heartfelt woe,
   Which childhood's sunny hours may know.

2. Ah children's happy days are past
   In mirth and glee, no shades are cast
   Upon their bright and happy way,
   Whose sunbeams e'er around them play.

   [...]

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[25] Charles Bullock, one time curate under the Revd Havergal at Worcester, wrote that William Henry Havergal had 'declined the professorial chair of music in the University of Oxford because he preferred the pastor's ministry of the Gospel'. Charles Bullock, *Within the Palace Gates: A Tribute to the Memory of Frances Ridley Havergal* (London: 'Hand and Heart' Publishing Office, [n. d.]), p. 38. It was partly for his services to music that he was later made an honorary Canon of Worcester Cathedral.

[26] Erik Routley, *The Music of Christian Hymnody: a Study of the Development of the Hymn Tune since the Reformation, with Special Reference to English Protestantism* (London: Independent Press, 1957), p. 117. The aim of archaism was to 'extend the repertory of the singing congregation over the heritage of Germany and Geneva and ancient English psalmody, and to resist firmly any incursion of the florid style associated with everything in eighteenth century English piety': Routley, *Music of Christian Hymnody*, p. 116.

[27] William Henry Havergal also encouraged Frances's own talents, both as a performer (she sang and played the piano) and as a composer.

[28] MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 18.

4. Even if a cloud appears awhile
To stain their merry gleeful smile
A rainbow will be painted there
In colours bright and passing fair.

[...]

7. But brightest of the blossoms there
And fairest of those flowrets fair
That precious gift, from God above
In mercy sent, a mother's love.

8. That flower from childhood's bosom sever
Its sweetest joy is gone for ever
In wreaths of joy! Oh how defaced
How can that loss be e'er replaced.

9. Torn is that young and tender heart
When called from such a friend to part
Ah! manhood stern can never know
The depth of this its bitterest woe.[29]

The sixteen-year-old author's understanding that a mother's death brings the end of innocence for her children probably originated from her own experience of loss.

Despite having grown up in a devout Christian household, Havergal had not committed herself as a Christian at the time of her mother's death. However, this distressing event was to be a turning point in her coming to faith. In a heavily autobiographical story published in 1874 entitled *The Four Happy Days*, Havergal recounted her feelings of brokenness during this time through the story of Annie, a child whose position exactly corresponded with hers. The story suggests that after her mother's death, she had avoided sharing her feelings with anyone:

> Most people thought Annie's grief soon wore off, or rather that it had never been very deep at all. For, just because it was deep, and did not wear off very soon, Annie did her utmost from the very first to conceal it. [... S]he dreaded

[29] Frances Ridley Havergal, 'A Mother's Loss' in her first copybook of poems, Worcestershire County Records, Ref: 705:825, Bulk Accession 7520, Parcel 2, pp. 70-72.

> hearing of her beloved mother spoken of [...] chiefly because it brought up such a terrible flood of sorrow that she could not control herself. [...] No one ever saw her cry after the first few days. But God did.[30]

This story was published several decades after the event when Havergal was nearly forty. In an earlier spiritual autobiography written at the age of twenty-two, she recalled, 'My dear mamma's illness and death (July 5th,1848) did not make the impression on me which might have been expected; I mean as regards my spiritual state'.[31] In retrospect, it was recognised that the loss was more immediately felt than any religious effect that it might have had. However, Havergal never forgot her mother's anxieties for her soul at that time: 'You are my youngest little girl, and I feel more anxious about you than the rest. I do pray for the Holy Spirit to lead you and guide you'; in particular, Havergal always remembered her mother's final advice, 'Fanny, dear, pray to God to prepare you for all that he is preparing for you.'[32] The words of a dying person have a particular power, and her dying mother's concerns for her spiritual welfare seem to have permeated Havergal's consciousness for the rest of her life; near the time of her own death, she informed her sister Maria, '"O Lord, prepare me for all Thou art preparing for me"; that has been my life prayer.'[33]

Challenged by the reality and inevitability of mortality, Havergal started to confront emotionally gruelling questions about faith, doubt, life and death. On New Year's Day of 1850, looking ahead to the coming decade, she wondered anxiously, 'If I lived, should I be a Christian?'[34] Living among the deeply religious members of her family, there must have been times when she felt an outsider and yearned to become one of the faithful. However, she felt unable to share her doubts with anyone; it may

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[30] Frances Ridley Havergal, *The Four Happy Days* (London: James Nisbet, 1874), pp. 36-38.
[31] Frances Ridley Havergal, Autobiography published in MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 18.
[32] Ibid, p. 19 and p. 21.
[33] Original reference quoted in Ibid., p. 272.
[34] Havergal, Autobiography published in MVGH, *Memorials*, pp. 27-28.

be that, participating in the family's religious observances, there was little outward sign that she had not yet committed her soul to Christ, and she did not know how to broach the subject.

In February 1851, at the age of fourteen, Havergal finally laid aside her doubts and committed herself as a Christian. During her time at school (Campden House, Belmont), she had managed to speak with a few trusted friends about her agonising uncertainties; indeed, the period at Campden House seems to have been an important turning point in Havergal's struggle with faith. Although she was sent to the same school her sisters had attended, by the time she started, the headmistress, a Mrs Teed, had experienced an Evangelical conversion, and the school had become an expectant environment where rigorous soul-searching was encouraged, and the pressing need for salvation was stressed. At first, Havergal seems to have become progressively more emotionally distressed and burdened by a powerful sense of guilt at her inability to believe wholeheartedly that Christ could forgive and save her soul:

> I prayed despairingly, as a drowning man cries for help who sees no help near. I had prayed and sought so long, and yet I was farther off than these girls, many of whom had only begun to think of religion a few weeks before. [...] They spoke of His power and willingness to save, but I could find nothing to prove that He was willing to save *me*, and I wanted some special personal evidence about it. To *know*, surely, that *my* sins were forgiven, and to have all my doubts taken away, was what I prayed and waited for.[35]

Frances finally confided in a trusted adult, a Miss Caroline Cooke (*c.* 1813- 1878, from 1851 her stepmother), about her desire to know that she was really forgiven, and

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[35] Ibid, p. 31. Such accounts of dark nights of the soul abound in spiritual autobiographies. Even Havergal's young age at the time of her spiritual crisis is not without exception; many Evangelicals believed their primary tasks as parents was to ensure the salvation of their children's souls. Many books were published about the saintly lives of children who had come early to faith. See Georgiana, Lady Bloomfield, ed., *Memoirs of Lord Bloomfield*, 2 vols (London: [n.pub.], 1884) for the story of Charlotte Bloomfield who died a lingering but saintly death at the age of thirteen in 1828.

this conversation ended with the happy realisation that she was ready and able to commit herself to Christ.

Her Achievements

In November 1852, Havergal travelled with her father and new stepmother to Germany. The purpose of the trip was to seek specialist treatment for her father's failing eyesight. The following year, she attended a German school in Düsseldorf. In this 'gymnasium', a far more academically taxing environment than the school she had attended in England, Frances proved herself to be an accomplished and conscientious pupil by being awarded first place in the whole school's final examinations. She explained in a letter to her friend, Elizabeth Clay:

> In the Louisendale, when a girl has not learnt everything (as you know I did not), she receives merely her testimony but *no number*. This half-year, however, it seems that all the masters, in council assembled, were so very well pleased with the *Engländerin*'s (English girl's) papers and conduct that they agreed to break their rule for once, and honour me with *Numero I.*, a thing which they had never done before![36]

Frances was understandably proud of her achievement: at the age of sixteen, she had mastered a second language so well that she came top at an educationally rigorous foreign school. She clearly possessed a competitive streak and a thirst for learning; when she left school, she lamented to Clay 'What a suffocating feeling it is, leaving school *for ever*'.[37]

Havergal kept up her studies in adulthood and continued to nurture her intellectual, musical and athletic abilities. Her discipline and diligence are evidenced in a notebook which records that she memorised: Hebrews, James, I Peter, II Peter, I

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[36] Original reference quoted in MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 48.
[37] Original reference quoted in *Memorials*, p. 46.

John, II John, and Jude (and re-learnt Romans) between October and December 1857. She also maintained her study of languages; with her father's help, she learnt Latin and Greek, and, later, was introduced to the rudiments of Hebrew by her twelve year old nephew, John Shaw. With determined and sustained efforts of private study, she came to be able to read the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. In the modern languages, she was fluent in German, French and Italian, the last of which she learnt during spare moments while working as a governess to her sister Miriam Crane's children from 1861 to 1867; she wrote in a letter to her niece Cecilia Havergal:

> I know, by my own teaching days, how very much might be learnt in all the odds and ends of time, how (*e.g.*) I learnt all the Italian verbs while my nieces were washing their hands for dinner after our walk, because I could be ready in five minutes less time than they could.[38]

The Crane family nurse also remembered 'vexing over Miss Frances's hard studying, and [... finding] her at those Latin books long before breakfast.'[39] Her diligence seems illustrative of the Protestant work ethic against sloth as illustrated in Isaac Watts's hymn for children 'Against Idleness and Mischief': 'How doth the little busy Bee / Improve each shining Hour'.[40]

Frances's early musical ability also matured into accomplished talent in adulthood. She became both an energetic performer and a capable composer. She was much in demand as a soloist in local drawing rooms and Philharmonic concerts. Her sister Maria also remembered with pride that Frances could 'play through Handel, much of Beethoven and Mendelssohn [on the piano], without any notes [music]. A

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[38] Ibid., p. 72.
[39] Ibid., p. 72.
[40] Isaac Watts, *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language, for the Use of Children, with Some Additional Composures. Facsimile Reproductions of the first edition 1715* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 177.

pupil of Beethoven thought her rendering of the Moonlight Sonata perfect'.[41] During a trip to Germany in 1866, she visited Professor Ferdinand Hiller of the Musical Academy of Cologne to seek his advice about her compositions. His verdict was, as she relayed in a letter to her sister Miriam, that, although he considered her melodies to be ordinary, 'as for your harmonies, I must say I am astonished.'[42] Within this context, it is evident that Havergal is the most musically conscious of all the hymn-writers examined so far in this thesis; indeed the title of her first publication, *The Ministry of Song*, intimates that her poetical verses are vehicles for music.

Havergal also excelled in leisure activities; her sister Miriam Crane recalled how, as governess to her children:

> She entered with zest into the recreations of her young companions, riding, scrambling, swimming and skating, croquet and chess, each in its turn, and excelled in them all. Her needlework was exquisite, from the often despised darning to the most delicate lace work and embroidery.[43]

Although possibly an account coloured by family affection, this indicates that at this time, Havergal was evidently a healthy and physically capable young woman. After her first trip to the Swiss Alps in May 1869 with the Cranes, she returned on several subsequent occasions for alpine mountaineering; five summer visits in total were made from 1869 to 1876 usually lasting for six to eight weeks. Their appeal to Havergal can be glimpsed in the following extract which indicates that she found the landscape both delightful and inspirational:

> It was fascinating to look down at the wild rapids, sheets of glass-like transparency, flowing below water, which might go down to any depth, only that you are not looking down into darkness, but into emerald and snow mingled and transfused marvellously. [...] The next day it was great luxury to sit on the terrace overlooking the falls. I jotted some verses ('He hath spoken

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[41] MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 79-80.
[42] Quoted in MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 77.
[43] Quoted in MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 70.

> in the darkness'), which have been haunting me for two or three days. The text was sent me lately, 'What I tell you in darkness that speak ye in light.' I never noticed it before.[44]

Havergal proved to be a fearless climber; she may even be considered a female pioneer in the sport as it was only in 1865 that the Whymper's climb of the Matterhorn made front page news in the English press.[45] She wrote in a letter during her second visit to Switzerland in 1871 made with her friend Elizabeth Clay that:

> Going up the Aeggischhorn [a 9,649 feet climb] [...], an Alpine Clubbist with the guide Fischer was before us, and he afterwards told our guide, Alexander, that he watched us from above, and that I 'went up like a chamois!' and he was quite astonished how quickly I got up a difficult climb; but I always had an instinct I should find myself a rather extra good climber. The glissades down are simply delicious.[46]

As the final sentence indicates, the joy Havergal derived from her Swiss experiences was related to a feeling of freedom. At this time, Havergal was thirty-four years old and living the restricted life of a spinster still residing in the family home. On the same climb, she felt able, owing to the lack of English gentlemen, to make the expedition in a state of half-undress: 'We thought we were excellently got up for the work by wearing waterproof dresses with a flannel jacket underneath, but we soon found it necessary to *peel*, and actually went up in our petticoats!'[47] At a time when it was still rare for women to travel without male escorts, the sight of these two English eccentrics must have caused their onlookers some amusement if not shock. The climb up the Col de St Theodule glacier (11,000 feet) required even more drastic measures. She wrote to her sister Miriam:

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[44] Ibid., p. 97.
[45] On her third visit to Switzerland, with Charles Snepp, his wife, and daughter Emily, she returned from one climb to the news that 'the ascent to the Grand Mulets was [...] the *first* ascent of the season, which had never before been done by a lady.' Grierson, *FRH*, p. 126.
[46] Quoted in MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 108.
[47] Quoted in Grierson, *FRH*, p. 115.

> How horrified you would have been at my attire! for on alighting we took off every possible thing, even the skirts of our dresses, and I proceeded with simply my grey linen unlined body [probably a close-fitting garment for the body] on, and not even a necktie, between four and five a.m., and over ice and snow.[48]

The image seems extraordinary for a respectable English lady of the time; yet, the experience must have been extremely liberating for both women. These passages highlight how, as Nina Auerbach has asserted, 'These journeys literally out of England and figuratively out of family are central to a Victorian spinster's sense of her life as they might be for an Oxford graduate embarking on his initiatory Grand Tour.'[49]

What is conveyed in Havergal's accounts of her mountaineering holidays is a sense of joyous freedom. She wrote in a letter to her sister Miriam Crane during this visit with Clay:

> I have been reading this over to E., and she is afraid I shall have frightened you by my account of today, and that you will be sending us someone to look after us! This would be an undesirable arrangement as we don't wish to have any one to *look after*![50]

The trip offered opportunities for independence, self-assertion and youthful adventure. Away from the sexual politics of Victorian England, Havergal and Clay were able to escape from the restrictive ideology of women's place as being inside the home and transgress conventional gender behaviour:

> Oh the delicious freedom and sense of leisure of those days! And the veritable 'renewing of youth', in all senses, that it brought! How we spied grand points of view from the rocks above, and (having no one to consult, or to keep

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[48] Quoted in Grierson, *FRH*, p. 115.
[49] Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon*, p. 124.
[50] Quoted in Grierson, *FRH*, p. 119.

> waiting, or to fidget about us) stormed them with our alpenstocks, and scrambled and leaped, and laughed and raced, as if we were, not girls again, but downright *boys*![51]

As Grierson has surmised, by the time of her later tours at least, Havergal was a well-known religious writer in Britain, and must have felt pressure at home to behave in accordance with her high cause: 'In Switzerland, however, she was answerable only to her own conscience, and although that could be a hard taskmaster it did not demand outward conformity.[52] Havergal's trips to the Swiss Alps tell us something of her independence, vitality and vigour for life; they also intimate that she enjoyed escaping the gendered conventions of Victorian Britain which inevitably constrained her behaviour and tried to force her into the expected mould of a respectable devotional writer and clergyman's daughter.

Crosses to Bear

Unlike Anne Steele or Charlotte Elliott, Havergal spent much of her life in good health, and, in contrast to Dora Greenwell, she had at least one supportive and encouraging parent. This, combined with her unquestioning, zealous faith in adulthood, has meant that she has been seen as a woman whose life was unusually free from disappointments and doubts. But while her writings are characterised by enthusiasm and purpose in faith, there were, inevitably, also times of sorrow and areas of struggle in her life.

Since earliest memory, William Henry Havergal had been his youngest daughter's mentor and guide. Maria Havergal wrote of her sister in *The Memorials*:

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[51] Quoted in Grierson, *FRH*, p. 115.
[52] Greierson, *FRH*, p. 115. A letter to Clay dated 16 July 1872 states, 'I see by my little register that I have received above 600 letters between January and July 1st': MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 117.

> Especially did she value the sympathy of her dear father in all her studies. With him she delighted to talk out hard questions; and his classical knowledge, his poetic and musical skill, settled many a point. She would rush down with her new poems or thoughts, awaiting his criticisms. [...]. His holy and consistent example [...] had been as a guiding light on his child's path.[53]

Frances looked up to her father as a paragon of Christian manhood. Her relationship with her earthly father seems to have greatly influenced her understanding of the love and care of the Heavenly Father. Understandably, therefore, his death, just a couple of days after Easter 1870, although not unexpected as his health had been in steady decline, was devastating to Havergal. She wrote in Oct 1870, six months after the loss, to her friend the Reverend Charles Snepp:

> No one guesses how much I miss my dear Papa, because I can flash up and talk and laugh when spoken to, and people (Mamma [her stepmother] included) think, *of course* that *because* I can do so, I do not feel it much. But God knows how intensely I miss him, and how desolate and fatherless I do feel, and how there are no *smiles*, but often enough tears, when I am *quite* alone.[54]

Her mourning was made in private; alone except for the invisible presence of God. Rather than bringing the two most significant women of William Henry Havergal's life at this time together, the event seems to have created more of a rift. Subsequently, Frances seems to have felt abandoned; after her 1871 holiday in Switzerland with Elizabeth Clay, she wrote again to Snepp: 'The only cloud upon this summer is that even the very independent way in which I am going about (much as in other respects I enjoy it) constantly reminds me that I am an orphan and *alone*, and often I feel it bitterly.'[55] This letter, showing how Havergal confided in and sought consolation from another paternal clergyman, indicates that she held conventionally Victorian and

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[53] MVGH, *Memorials*, pp. 99-100.
[54] Original reference, quoted in Grierson, *FRH*, p. 99.
[55] Original reference, quoted in Grierson, *FRH*, p. 122.

conservative biblical views, about the authority of men; indeed, she wrote in one letter that what she sought was 'the real appreciation of men (not women and girls!) whose own powers or works I appreciate and admire!'[56]

Unable to share her sorrow with her stepmother, Havergal seems to have struggled with guilt and remorse as well as the pain of her own grief: 'I long intensely to be to her all that a daughter could be to an *own* mother---to have interchange of confidence and frank, happy, loving unreserve. I have never felt so *lonely* in all my life as this autumn. O if she were but my own Mamma!'[57] A letter from an unidentified friend suggests that the loneliness Havergal felt was compounded by her singleness:

> My dear Fannie,
>
> Helen tells me you are expecting to hear what I have to say 'On the single woman' in reply to your remarks some time since on the loneliness of such a lot. [...]
>
> It is not much dear, I can say -- only a thought or two which crossed my own mind after Helen read part of your letter to me --
>
> I readily agree that the life of an unmarried woman is incomplete -- I think with Charlotte Bickersteth that but for the Fall we *should* all have been *wives and mothers* -- but redemption through Christ has placed us in far higher positions than man could have allowed in his unfallen state.[58]

The letter echoes William Rathbone Greg's idea that an independent woman is incomplete.[59] What follows is a characteristically Evangelical reading of suffering as a means of grace, of being drawn closer to Christ:

> we should have known and loved God as our Heavenly Father, our Benefactor, our God -- but never should we have known Him in the [...] close wonderful

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[56] Quoted in Grierson, *FRH*, p. 107.
[57] Quoted in Grierson, *FRH*, p. 105.
[58] Letter from unknown writer to Frances Ridley Havergal, Worcester Records Office, Ref: 705:825, Bulk Accession 7520, Parcel 2.
[59] Greg, 'Why are Women Redundant?', p. 441.

> relationships which are ours now -- surely it was because He knew how many widowed and lonely hearts there would be thus our God has given us a right to look to Him as a Friend and Brother and Husband.[60]

A letter by Havergal further suggests that there were times when she felt frustrated and lacking owing to her singleness: 'I [...] had a cry at night, and then prayed a long time that I might be "satisfied with favour;" that I might know something of Christ's love, and so not feel disappointed at the denial of full earthly love all my life.'[61] She goes to explain that her pain is:

> the sense of a general heart-loneliness and need of a one and special love, [...] and the belief that my life is to be a lonely one in that respect [...]. I do so long for the love of Jesus to be poured in, as a real and satisfying compensation .[62]

As with the earlier women writers of this study, including Steele and Elliott, Havergal seems to have tried to transmute suffering into an opportunity for spiritual refinement.

'Who is On the Lord's Side?'

The background detailed above form the context in which Frances Ridley Havergal's hymns were written. Once she had committed herself as a Christian, Havergal's deep and serious-minded faith formed quickly. She later recalled of her time at school in Germany in 1853, two years after her conversion:

> I do not think there was one besides myself who cared for religion. This was very bracing. I felt I must try to walk worthy of my calling, for Christ's sake; and it brought a new and very strong desire to bear witness for my Master, to adorn His doctrine, and to win others for Him. It made me more watchful and earnest than perhaps ever before, for I knew that any slip, in word or deed, would bring discredit on my profession. There was much enmity to my profession, and I came in for more unkindness than would have been possible in an average English school [...]. As for myself, it was a sort of nailing my

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[60] Letter from unknown writer to Frances Ridley Havergal, Worcester Records Office, Ref: 705:825, Bulk Accession 7520, Parcel 2.
[61] Havergal, *Letters*, p. 159.
[62] Havergal, *Letters*, p. 159.

> colours to the mast. I had taken a higher standard than ever before, and had come out more boldly and decidedly on the Lord's side than I might have done for years under ordinary circumstances.[63]

She was clearly not used to being amongst people who were not religious. The sentence that, 'I came in for more unkindness than would have been possible in an average English school' is an indication of the hostility that she experienced; probably not only for her religiosity, but also, because, as Grierson has observed, 'schoolgirls can be very jealous of their peers and would be particularly likely to resent a newcomer, who besides being a foreigner, showed exceptional ability and was popular with staff'.[64]

This 'bracing' experience (like the Victorian practice of invigorating cold baths) in Germany seems to have acted as a catalyst in developing one of Havergal's key theological concepts, the idea of being in contest against an enemy. Whether the thoughts of being 'on the Lord's side' and taking 'a higher standard' were those that presented themselves to the teenage girl in Germany, or to the twenty-two year old woman writing her autobiography, Havergal came to understand her Christian identity as being a soldier fighting faithfully under Christ's command, and held fast to the idea of contest (both martial and sporting) until the end of her life.[65] Indeed, a donkey boy recollected to Maria Havergal that, during the last week of her life, Havergal had reasoned with him to 'leave the devil's side and get on the safe side; that Jesus Christ's was the winning side; that He loved us and was calling us, and wouldn't I choose Him for a Captain'.[66]

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[63] Autobiography published in MVGH, *Memorials*, pp. 48-9.
[64] Grierson, *FRH*, p. 46.
[65] She gave the title 'Marching Orders' to a series of articles written for the *Church Missionary Gleaner*, and, in the final article, she described Christ as 'our perfect Captain': Janet Grierson, *Singing for Jesus*, unpublished manuscript in Nancy Cho's possession, p. 20.
[66] Quoted in MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 295. The Boys' Brigade, formed in 1883 by William Smith, was an Evangelical organisation formed with the idea that boys would find the idea of being a soldier for Christ exciting. The Boys' Brigade in turn inspired Baden-Powell to start the Boy Scout movement. For more on

In terms of Havergal's Anglican theology, the idea of being a soldier for Christ is related to the commission given to the baptised. According to the liturgy of *The Book of Common Prayer*, the newly baptised child (or adult) is commanded, 'not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto *his* life's end.'[67] In her writings, Havergal consistently rededicated herself to Christ's service, and challenged others to pledge and renew their allegiance also. One of her most famous hymns on this subject is entitled 'On the Lord's Side'; the phrase was clearly meaningful to her. It was published in a volume entitled *Loyal Responses* (1878), a title that told her readers, even before they opened the book, of the importance Havergal held in being faithful to one's cause. The hymn was also headed with a biblical passage about pledging allegiance to the King, '"Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse." ---- 1 Chron., xii. 18.' For Havergal, David would not only have been a key figure of the Old Testament, but also, typologically, a Christ-type pointing to the coming of Jesus. The text also reminds readers that Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophesy of being a 'branch of Jesse' (Isaiah 11. 1).

'On the Lord's Side' is an evangelistic hymn which urges immediate activism. It opens by asking each reader/singer/listener which side of the cosmic battle s/he is on, and develops into a campaign song attempting to recruit for God's army:

1. Who is on the Lord's side?
   Who will serve the King?
   Who will be His helpers,
   Other lives to bring?

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the Boys' Brigade see John Springhall, *Sure and Steadfast: A History of the Boys' Brigade, 1883-1983* (London: Collins, 1983).

[67] 'The Ministration of Publick Baptism of Infants to be Used in the Church', *BCP*, p. 188. The biblical source is I Timothy 6. 12. 'Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.' Another scriptural passage which may have influenced Havergal's thought is I Corinthians 9. 24 in which St Paul sees faith as running to win a race. 'Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.'

Who will leave the world's side?
Who will face the foe?
Who is on the Lord's side?
Who for Him will go? (pp. 677-8)

The long succession of questions acts as a rhetorical device which prompts an affirmative answer:

Response. By Thy call of mercy,
By Thy grace divine,
We are on the Lord's side;
Saviour, we are Thine. (p. 678)

Implicitly, Havergal is envisaging the present world as a place of warfare in the pattern of King David's Old Testament military campaigns. However, the battles being fought are not against human enemies, such as the Philistines, Moabites, or Ammonites; instead, they are against the invisible, dark powers of the devil. Indeed, the idea of the righteous battle between good and evil in this hymn resonates with the apocalyptic prophecies of the Book of Revelations, and, thus, 'On the Lord's Side' also warns about the need for prayerful vigilance in a similar manner to Charlotte Elliott's 'Christian! seek not yet repose' (see pp. 161-5).

Havergal's naming of God as King in the second line of 'On the Lord's Side' is important because it reveals many of her thoughts about the character of God. In 1877, she wrote a small book entitled *My King* in which the sovereignty of Christ was explored in relation to Old Testament texts about kingship. She wrote, it: 'has been the greatest writing pleasure I ever had! [...]. The title, *My King* is in itself a very song of joy to me.'[68] The idea that Christ is '*My*' King suggests that she is both proud of having such a worthy sovereign, and that he belongs to her as much as she does to him. It is also significant that Havergal understands God as a male 'King', not a

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[68] Grierson, *Singing for Jesus*, p. 57.

neutral 'Sovereign' or 'Monarch'. While it has been a common Christian tradition to see Christ as the groom and the Church as his bride, Havergal's vision of God as a masculine being seems to have been informed by the example of her earthly father: her close relationship with him, intensified by the early loss of her biological mother and the sometimes strained relationship with her stepmother,[69] appear to have informed her understanding of sexual difference. In her experience, she found men, rather than women, to be most sympathetic, loving and steadfast. Contemporary cultural ideas also re-enforced the belief that men were superior: dominant ideology held that men were more intellectually capable, and the book of Genesis was commonly understood as indicating that men were higher in the order of God's creation; these factors must also have contributed to her conception of God, the highest of beings, as being specifically male.

God as 'King' (the capital letter is significant, it states implicitly that he is the King of kings) also conveys the idea that the human soul is infinitely humble in comparison. Havergal is wanting to honour God, and, by using the title 'King', achieves a similar effect to John Wesley's translation of a German hymn, 'Desiring to Praise Worthily', in which he addresses God as 'Monarch of all'.[70] Paralleling the eighteenth-century trope of identifying people with worms (see p. 62, and pp. 100-1), the title 'King' functions to elevate God; by extension, it also conveys a sense of wonder at the condescension of the Creator King to care for, and be in relationship with, his creatures.

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[69] Grierson has suggested: 'In this bond between father and daughter lay the seeds of friction, and one senses that beneath the expressions of loyal affection and devotion, an undercurrent of tension between stepmother and stepdaughter gradually developed and became increasingly difficult to conceal' (*FRH*, p. 43). Grierson uses the unpublished letters at Worcestershire County Records to highlight how the relationship was strained, especially after the death of William Henry Havergal; for instance, she indicates that Caroline Cooke Havergal attempted to control and limit Frances's involvement in the musical editorship of her father's musical works, *Havergal's Psalmody*.

[70] Wesley, *The Poetical Works*, I, p. 104.

By addressing God as 'King', Havergal is using a traditional image to express her gratitude for God's generosity. In the second verse of 'On the Lord's Side', she explains that Christ the King awards not lands, nor titles, nor money; instead, his greatest treasure is his love:

2. Not for weight of glory,
Not for crown and palm,
Enter we the army,
Raise the warrior-psalm;
But for Love that claimeth
Lives for whom He died:
He whom Jesus nameth
Must be on His side.
Response. By Thy love constraining,
By Thy grace divine,
We are on the Lord's side;
Saviour, we are Thine. (p. 678)

Although Havergal does not dwell on the gory details of the passion of Christ (as, for instance, William Cowper was apt to do in his eighteenth-century verses), lines 5-6 of the verse above render the theology of the hymn implicitly crucicentric. As an Evangelical, she would have associated God's generosity of love with the giving of himself upon the Cross; indeed, it is Christ's purchase of souls with his own blood that makes him the rightful owner and King. In the next verse, Havergal impresses the costliness of Christ's sacrifice upon her audience:

3. Jesus, Thou hast bought us,
Not with gold or gem,
But with Thine own life-blood,
For Thy diadem.
With Thy blessing filling
Each who comes to Thee,
Thou hast made us willing,
Thou hast made us free.
Response. By Thy grand redemption,
By Thy grace divine,
We are on the Lord's side;
Saviour, we are Thine. (pp. 678-9)

To have been bought at so high a price relates the condition of the Christian soul to that of the Pearl of Great Price in Jesus's parable (Matthew 13. 45-46); in this story, a merchant sells everything he owns for the one precious, exquisite pearl. The purchased soul is thus not a shameful vassal, insignificant and inconsequential; rather, it is a much beloved and cherished jewel.

To be on the Lord's side is to be a citizen of Heaven and not of the world. As in the hymns of William Williams, Steele and Harrison, which interpret life as a journey along the lines of the Israelites' Exodus passage, earthly life is a hostile, foreign country to be passed through on the way to the soul's true home; the fifth and final verse explains that Christians are 'Chosen to be soldiers / In an alien land;' (p. 679). However, the nuance of Havergal's hymn is slightly different -- the Christian is a soldier fighting to gain victory in a hostile, heathen country. The eighteenth-century trope has been adjusted in a way that reflects the nineteenth-century civilising and Christianising mission of imperialism. The third line of the final verse, '"Chosen, called, and faithful,"' (p. 679) alludes to Revelation 17. 14: 'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is the Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen and faithful.' Contained within this line is, therefore, the certainty of victory; unlike an earthly, human war where the outcome is not certain, Havergal is confident that the Christian soldier can be certain, safe and protected in the knowledge that Christ has already won victory over death and all satanic powers in his resurrection.

Although the figure of the Christian soldier is common biblical imagery, for a woman to envisage herself in the traditionally male role of being a warrior is striking and potentially subversive within the culture of the nineteenth-century; one is reminded of Joan of Arc, who Christabel Pankhurst came to refer to as the

suffragettes' patron saint.[71] It implies that a woman is capable of being powerful and fearless in upholding the cause she believes in, and, furthermore, suggests that Christian women can be actively engaged in spiritual warfare in the world, unlike Anna Montague's women who 'sit with folded hands' at home (see p. 24). The implication is that they can be worldly; not in Bunyan's sense of being a Worldly Wiseman distracted by the temporal affairs of the world, but in that they are not naïve, ineffective or defenceless because of their sex. Havergal's hymn explicitly tells her singers (male and female) that they are also 'chosen' and 'called' to be active spiritual soldiers for God. This empowering and thrilling idea was also embraced by some of Havergal's contemporaries in the wider Church; the Salvation Army, established in 1865, awarded both its male and female members officer titles. By claiming the identity of the loyal soldier for all Christians, Havergal was implicitly proposing that women could also be capable of fortitude and vitality: perhaps like Grace Darling of the Farne Islands, described by Marianne Farningham as being 'vigorously healthy, sensible, devoted, self-forgetful', who became a national heroine after courageously rescuing nine sailors from a perilous storm in 1838.[72]

Havergal's vision of herself as a Christian soldier fighting 'on the Lord's side' may be contrasted with Coventry Patmore's better-known model of Victorian womanhood, 'The Angel in the House' (1854). Patmore's exemplary angel-wife, a stereotype which Virginia Woolf famously denounced for being an impossible and thereby repressive ideal for women to follow, was located inside the family home; she was passive, delicate and entirely devoted to her husband. In contrast to the angel-

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[71] 'Joan of Arc', <http://www.tchevalier.com/fallingangels/bckgrnd/suffrage/joan/index.html> [accessed 15.10.2006]. Joan of Arc was a figure that fascinated the Victorians: see Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981).

[72] Eva Hope [another pseudonym of Farningham, whose real name was Mary Anne Hearn], *Grace Darling* (London: Walter Scott, 1875), p. 13. See also Jessica Mitford, *Grace had an English Heart* (London: Viking, 1988).

wife cloistered (and thereby kept unknowing of the world outside) in the sanctity of the family home, a soldier is a cosmopolitan figure, especially in the context of Victorian British imperial expansion, who is required to be active, tough, and fighting outside in the world. Contained within this model of the female spiritual soldier is, therefore, the possibility of a radical, alternative vocation of Christian womanhood for a single woman like Havergal.

At the same time, within the context of Havergal's confession that it was 'the real appreciation of men (not women and girls!)' that she desired, it could be argued that she was encouraging women to aspire to masculine qualities.[73] Indeed, Havergal's thoughts about women, particularly about their contribution to society, can seem conflicted and ambiguous. Linda Wilson's observations about Marianne Farningham, another Victorian woman who wrote hymns, suggest that this may have been a peculiarity shared by many intelligent religious women of the period:

> Both orthodox and unorthodox constructions of femininity co-exist within Farningham's writings, and her readers are enthusiastically urged to be good Victorian wives and daughters, as well as to take the initiative in new areas. Yet she was not aware of any inconsistency in her own attitudes to women.[74]

'My Master' and the Desire for Service

It has already been demonstrated that Havergal related to God as a masculine being.

The identification of God as 'Master' became another feature of her hymns. She wrote in her copy of *The Ministry of Song*: "'O Master!" Is perhaps my favourite title, because it implies rule and submission; and this is what love craves. Men may feel differently, but a true woman's submission is inseparable from deep love.'[75]

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[73] Quoted in Grierson, *FRH* p. 107.
[74] Linda Wilson, '"Afraid to be Singular": Marianne Farningham and the Role of Women, 1857-1907' in *Women, Religion, and Feminism in Britain, 1750-1900*, ed. Sue Morgan (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002, pp. 107-121 (p. 108).
[75] MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 138.

Havergal's thoughts reflect the part in the marriage ceremony of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* which requires brides to promise to their husbands to 'obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him'.[76] In *Royal Commandments* (1878), a book of daily devotionals, the reading for the first day was a meditation on the word 'Master'; in it, she wrote:

> I think this is the very epitome of love. [...]
>
> When that word has truly gone up from the soul to Christ, then we have felt what we can never put into any other words. It is the single diamond of soul expression, and we have cast it at His feet forever.[77]

In 'My Master', written in July 1876, Havergal explored the mysterious theological paradox that serving God brings freedom:[78]

1. I love, I love my Master,
   I will not go out free,
   For He is my Redeemer,
   He paid the price for me.

   [...]

5. He choose me for His service,
   And gave me power to choose
   That blessèd, 'perfect freedom'
   Which I shall never lose:

   [...]

9. Rejoicing and adoring,
   Henceforth my song shall be:
   I love, I love my Master,
   I will not go out free! (pp. 714-716)

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[76] 'The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony' in *BCP*, p. 200.

[77] Frances Ridley Havergal, *Royal Commandments: Morning Thoughts for the King's Servants* (London: James Nisbet, 1878), pp. 9-10.

[78] 'O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, *whose service is perfect freedom*; Defend us Thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in Thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries, through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.' From 'The Order for Morning Prayer', *BCP*, p. 51. My italics.

The repetition of 'I love' conveys an intensity of feeling which, combined with Havergal's idea that the term 'Master' is an expression of love, suggests a sublimation of emotional and romantic desire; as 'Master', God is not only the soul's ruler but also its lover entrusted with its care. Havergal later explained in her devotional book *Kept for the Master's Use* (1879) that the statement 'I love, I love my Master, I will not go out free', which comes from Exodus 21. 4-6, relates to the Hebrew slave who chooses to stay with his Master when he is offered freedom. She saw this statement as an act of consecration to God, 'the master then accepting and sealing him to a life-long service, free in law, yet bound in love. This seems to be a figure of later consecration founded on experience and love.'[79] That Havergal's desire for 'life-long service' to Christ the Master was intricately connected to the Evangelical pursuit for usefulness as discussed in relation to Charlotte Elliott, and to the single woman's search for meaning as examined in the chapter on Dora Greenwell will be explored below.

The Ministry of Song, Havergal's first collection of writings, contains four hymns which address God as 'Master': 'Whose I am', 'Whom I serve', 'Master, say on!' and 'Adoration'. In 'Whose I am', the prevalent idea is about belonging to God. For Havergal who desired to dedicate herself 'whole-heartedly' to God, 'Master' is perhaps a more satisfactory title than 'King' because it implies covenant, a social and/or legal bond which necessitates complete obedience and service. Moreover, the soul that cries 'Master' is a slave to God's love; s/he has lost his/her own identity having come under the ownership of the Master (unlike a servant who still maintains some independence and continues to rule his/her own self).

As with the idea of God's kingship in 'On the Lord's side', Jesus is the Christian soul's 'Master' because he has purchased it with his own blood:

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[79] Frances Ridley Havergal, *Kept for the Master's Use* (London: Oliphants, [n.d.]), p. 10.

1. Jesus, Master, whose I am,
Purchased Thine alone to be,
By Thy blood, O spotless Lamb,
Shed so willingly for me;
Let my heart be all Thine own,
Let me live to Thee alone. (p. 28)

The hymn is expressed in the language of romantic commitment; Havergal wishes to give her heart completely and 'to Thee alone'. She does not perceive service to Jesus the Master as an undesirable state of oppression; instead, it is a condition of devotion which professes unquestioning love and gratitude to the one who has liberated her soul:

3. Jesus, Master! I am Thine;
Keep me faithful, keep me near;
Let Thy presence in me shine
All my homeward way to cheer.
Jesus! at Thy feet I fall,
Oh, be Thou my All-in-all. (p. 29)

The second hymn of *The Ministry of Song* about Christ's mastery is 'Whom I serve'. This is a hymn which expresses an ardent desire to be useful in Christian work:

1. Jesus, Master, whom I serve,
Though so feebly and so ill,
Strengthen hand and heart and nerve
All Thy bidding to fulfil;
Open Thou mine eyes to see
All the work Thou hast for me.

2. Lord, Thou needest not, I know,
Service such as I can bring;
Yet I long to prove and show
Full allegiance to my King.
Thou an honour art to me,
Let me be a praise to Thee. (p. 29)

Although the idea that her service is feeble and ill partly serves to convey human inadequacy in the presence of an awesome God, the feeling conveyed in this hymn is

principally Havergal's hunger for meaningful service in which she can 'prove and show' her love to her Master.

'Master, Say on!', one of Havergal's best-known hymns, is about being a servant in waiting:

1. Master, speak! Thy servant heareth,
Waiting for Thy gracious word,
Longing for Thy voice that cheereth;
Master! let it now be heard.
I am listening, Lord, for Thee;
What hast Thou to say to me? (p. 98)

The hymn alludes to the story of Samuel's call:

> The LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth. (1 Samuel 3. 4-10)

Havergal is thus writing about learning to recognise God's voice, and about being prepared to do his bidding. However, her hymn, which omits the first part of the Samuel story and begins abruptly with the passionate exclamation: 'Master, speak! Thy servant heareth', conveys a sense of urgency that is not articulated by Samuel himself in the passage above. The continuous tense in 'wait*ing*', 'long*ing*', 'listen*ing*' [my italics] emphasises Havergal's yearning to engage continually in renewed acts of obedience.

The third verse describes Havergal's ardent desire to hear a special message directed to her from God:

3. Often through my heart is pealing
Many another voice than Thine,
Many an unwilled echo stealing
From the walls of this Thy shrine:
Let Thy longed-for accents fall;
Master, speak! and silence all. (p. 98)

As the hymn continues, Havergal expresses her need to enter ever more deeply and intensely into a relationship with him:

4. Master, speak! I do not doubt Thee,
Though so tearfully I plead;
Saviour, Shepherd! oh, without Thee
Life would be a blank indeed!
But I long for fuller light,
Deeper love, and clearer sight.

[...]

6. Speak to me by name, O Master,
Let me *know* it is to me;
Speak, that I may follow faster,
With a step more firm and free,
Where the Shepherd leads the flock,
In the shadow of the Rock. (pp. 98-9)

There is a feeling of insatiable desire for the beloved in these lines; indeed, it is noteworthy that to be called by name is a lover's yearning, as well as a desire for a personal and individual relationship with God. Havergal conveys a sense of emotional distress in her desperation to hear God call her privately and intimately that is both disturbing and forceful; certainly, readers/singers could easily be caught up in the real sense of heated desire, urgency and need. 'Master, Say on!' does not convey a sense of happiness or even of contentment: instead, it may be suggested that it expresses the insecurity and anxiety of a one-sided love. It is as if, as Havergal implies herself, that

she has not yet learnt to hear her lover's voice. However, perhaps the potency of the hymn, for it is tremendously powerful, derives from the fact that this is often a real stage in the process of love.

It has been seen that the hymns addressed to 'Master' in *The Ministry of Song* all express a desire, to use Dora Greenwell's words' 'to spend and be spent in Christ's service'.[80] We may wonder what kind of service Havergal valued and sought, both for herself and for others. Some clues may be found in her writings about, and interest in, women's ministry.

'Sisters!'

'Sisters!' is a poem which throws light on Havergal's thoughts about sorority and the power of female fellowship. Here, as in 'On the Lord's Side', she adopts the language of apocalyptic war:

1. Oh! for a fiery scroll, and a trumpet of thunder might,
   To startle the silken dreams of English women at ease,
   Circled with peace and joy, and dwelling where truth and light
   Are shining fair as the stars, and free as the western breeze!

2. Oh! for a clarion voice to reach and stir their nest,
   With the story of sisters' woes gathering day by day
   Over the Indian homes (sepulchres rather than rest),
   Till they rouse in the strength of the Lord, and roll the stone away (p. 527).

The rousing words are intended to urge English women to go and fight for the souls of their Indian sisters; the proposal is, therefore, that they should become missionaries to India. Havergal's wish to 'startle the silken dreams of English women at ease' suggests that she considered some English women to be 'living in a dream', complacent and unaware of the real needs of the world. 'Sisters' is a battle cry

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[80] Greenwell, 'Our Single Women', p. 85.

attempting to awaken women to useful activity through the prompting of feelings of sorority and solidarity. She attempts to persuade women to leave their comfortable existences in Britain to seek active ministry abroad:

3. *Sisters!* Scorn not the name, for ye cannot alter the fact!
Deem ye the darker tint of the glowing South shall be
Valid excuse above for the Priest's and Levite's act,
If ye pass on the other side, and say that ye did not see?

[...]

5. Made like our own strange selves, with memory, mind, and will;
Made with a heart to love, and a soul to live for ever!
Sisters! Is there no chord vibrating in musical thrill,
At the fall of that gentle word, to issue in bright endeavour? (pp. 527-8)

Havergal is warning that to act 'racially' superior and refuse to accept Indian women as sisters in God's creation is to be as hypocritical as the Priest and the Levite in the Parable of the Good Samaritan who left the injured man by the side of the road to die. Havergal adopts an authoritarian tone which renders her a kind of military recruiter and commander.

That Havergal really aspired for inter-'racial' sisterhood in her life is indicated by her friendship with Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, a young Indian British woman.[81] When Goreh sent one of her own poems to Havergal anonymously, as by her 'Indian Sister', Havergal responded, despite being very ill, with a warm and affectionate letter addressed to 'My Dear "Indian Sister,"---'.[82] She continued to correspond with Goreh and encouraged the publication of her poetry. In addition, that Havergal believed women could give special support and understanding to each other is further indicated by her involvement with several organisations established to encourage female fellowship.

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[81] See next chapter for more information.
[82] Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, *'From India's Coral Strand'* (London: 'Home Words' Publishing Office, 1883), p. x.

The YWCA

On 23 September 1867, Havergal became a member of the Young Women's Christian Association, a society which had been started by a Miss Emily Robarts of Barnet in 1855.[83] Havergal seems to have been impressed especially with the idea of sharing in prayerful, sisterly fellowship through Christ. She wrote to Clara Gedge who had invited her to join the society:

> I have written the date of my joining in the cover of my Bible, as a continual reminder [...] of such a privilege; and under it the names of all whom I know to be members [...]. How little we know of each other's need! How often the text we want to send must be a bow drawn at a venture! Yet again, how alike are our needs, and how pleasant to know that we may ask Him, to whom each heart is open, to guide us to choose the right gem from the precious mine of His word![84]

Havergal's feeling of privilege seems to have stemmed from a belief that she became connected spiritually and familiarly to the other members of the YWCA through prayer; it is noteworthy that it would normally be the members of one's own family that would be written on the cover of one's Bible.[85] Her thought, 'how alike are our needs', particularly suggests that YWCA women are in solidarity, and that their sharing of common experience makes them sister-like. Havergal would have understood the collective prayer of this large and extensive national sisterhood of young Christian women as an immensely active and powerful ministry in and to the world.[86] Indeed, one of her hymns, 'True-Hearted, Whole-Hearted', which became

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[83] It was intended to be a national prayer union to link together those working in social welfare with girls.
[84] Quoted in MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 87.
[85] It is interesting to wonder what proportion of the members of the YWCA were 'redundant' womenand to consider whether the sisterly fellowship they formed provided an alternative model of family for these single women.
[86] Havergal's remained an active member throughout her life, becoming a regular contributor to the YWCA's two magazines *The Home Friend* and *Silver Bells*, and was involved with work in several branches, including Liverpool, Leamington and Perry Barr. She also gave public addresses to YWCA members; one was given at a meeting of the Swansea branch in the last month of her life. (MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 290). The *Memorials* also contains in the appendix: 'Address to Young Women's Christian Association, at Plymouth, *September 1878*. "*All Things*."', pp. 324-338.

known as the YWCA Hymn, suggested that women had the force to urge others, through their song, to follow Christ whole-heartedly:

8. Sisters, dear sisters, the call is resounding,
Will ye not echo the silver refrain,
Mighty and sweet, and in gladness abounding,---
'True-hearted, whole-hearted!' ringing again?

[...]

10. Peal out the watchword, and silence it never,
Song of our spirits, rejoicing and free!
'True-hearted, whole-hearted, now and for ever,
King of our lives, by Thy grace we will be!'

The Milmay Deaconess Institution

Havergal's involvement with the YWCA also connects her to another organisation established to promote Christian women's ministry, the Mildmay Deaconess Institution. In 1877, the YWCA amalgamated with another Christian organisation for working women in London set up by Lady Mary Jane Kinnaird. This process came about largely through the influence of Catherine Pennefather who, with her husband William Pennefather, was a founder of the Mildmay Deaconess Institution.

The restoration of Protestant deaconess orders and the establishment of Anglican sisterhoods was partly in response to the redundant woman phenomenon (see pp. 29-35).[87] In 1861, the biblical scholar J. S. Howson referred to the problem of surplus single women in the population in his argument for the restoration of deaconesses:

> Has God made a mistake in the law of population, or do we make a mistake in not acting on the hint which He gives us? [... N]ew vocations, directly or indirectly remunerated are much needed for many of our women; and in regard to the occupation here described, [...] suppose one-fiftieth part of the

[87] See Chapter 2: 'Church Communities: Sisterhoods and Deaconesses' Houses', in Vicinus, *Independent Women*, pp. 46-84.

> half-million were seriously engaged in it. How great would be the gain of our parishes, and how many would have found a life full of usefulness and happiness![88]

For the mainly Evangelical women of this study, convents could hint at popery,[89] but the deaconess movement, which did not require a 'cloistered' life hidden from the world, offered an attractive means by which to serve God in the community. Moreover, for the word-centred Evangelicals, scriptural precedence existed for a female diaconate. This was an important fact for many supporters of the deaconess order. For instance, J. B. Lightfoot, Bishop of Durham, wrote that, 'As I read my New Testament, the female deaconate is as definite an institution in the Apostolic Church as the male deaconate. Phoebe is as much a deacon as Stephen or Philip is a deacon'.[90]

One of the most influential British deaconess organisations for the Evangelicals was the Mildmay Deaconess Institution. It was established by the Reverend William Pennefather and his wife Catherine soon after he became the incumbent of St Jude's, Mildmay Park, London, in 1864, and was based on Kaiserwerth, the famous Lutheran Deaconess Institute in Germany, where Florence Nightingale underwent part of her nurse's training. Mildmay deaconesses trained for two years before going to missions in London and elsewhere. Mildmay provided

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[88] J. S. Howson, *The Help of Women in English Parishes*, 2nd edn (London: John Murray, 1861), pp. 15-16.
[89] For instance, Havergal's poem *Constance De V---. An Episode in the Life of Charles Maurice, Prince de Talleyrand* in *The Ministry of Song* (*Poetical Works*, pp. 111-123) pronounces a damning judgement on convent life. The poem (which unusually for a poem by Havergal possesses elements of melodramatic gothic romance) tells of Constance, a beautiful young nun, who entered a Parisian convent as 'a very little child' (p. 117). She longs to experience the world outside: nature, dance, and song, but is enclosed behind an 'iron door' (p. 118). She manages to leave the confines of convent with the help of Charles Maurice, a young abbé, but dies immediately: 'She sank beneath the cloister wall, / Unheeded and alone' (p. 132). The final stanza of the poem is the author's moralistic judgement on the sad tale: 'Was it not merciful and wise / To call her spirit to the skies / From such a living tomb? / How might that gentle maiden / Have scattered joy around, / And made the earth a brighter place, / For all her radiance and grace! / But now, unsorrowed and unknown, / Her only memory is a stone / Within the convent bound' (p. 123). In actual fact many Catholic sisterhoods in Britain during this time were medical or other working orders and not contemplative.
[90] J. B. Lightfoot, *Primary Charge: Two Addresses Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Durham ... 1882* (London: Macmillan, 1884), p. 53.

careful theoretical and practical training which was copied by other deaconess institutions and influenced nineteenth-century social work, and, later, social science courses in universities. There were about 200 deaconesses at any one time; twelve of their twenty missions were in London, and their distinctive uniform helped them to work in the roughest areas with little harassment. A nursing branch was started in 1866 which served Mildmay Cottage Hospital, a nursing home for deaconesses, and a medical mission at Bethnal Green established in 1874, as well as other hospitals and homes in England and abroad.[91] They also ran orphanages and rescue homes, clubs for governesses, Dorcas societies which taught needlework, night schools, and a Bible Flower Mission.[92] Kathleen Heasman has said that, although the numbers of Mildmay deaconesses were relatively small, 'their work was outstanding and their example of training was followed by others. [...] Thus this remarkable institution played an impressive part in the development of nineteenth century social work'.[93]

Havergal visited Catherine Pennefather at Milmay in 1874 and became personally acquainted with the deaconesses.[94] During her stay, she fell ill and had to be nursed by the deaconesses. From her observations, she became deeply impressed by the women's lives of service and prayer. It is perhaps not surprising that Havergal

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[91] Information from Patricia Croot, 'Islington: Undenominational Missions', *A History of the County of Middlesex*, 12 vols (Middlesex: Victoria County History, 1985), VIII, pp. 115-17, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=5195>, [accessed 04.07.2005].

[92] Flower arrangements bearing scriptural texts were sent to the sick and needy.

[93] Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action*, p. 39.

[94] Catherine Pennefather is included in Pitman's *LHW* with 'Not now, my child-- a little more rough tossing' (number 826 in W. Garrett Horder's *Congregational Hymns*) included as an example. Pennefather provided a very powerful model of female leadership at Mildmay. According to Alison M. Bucknall, she 'retained absolute control over the entire network of work at Mildmay, even during the last years of her life when she lived as an invalid on a couch. This woman would never conform to the conventional picture of the weak, passive Victorian invalid. From that couch she controlled every detail of the work of Mildmay, holding audience like a reigning monarch.' M. Bucknall, 'Martha's Work and Mary's Contemplation? The Women of the Mildmay Conference and the Keswick Convention 1856-1900' in *Gender and Christian Religion: Papers Read at the 1996 Summer Meeting and the 1997 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. R.N. Swanson (Woodbridge: Published for the Ecclesiastical History Society by the Boydell Press, 1998), pp. 405-420 (p. 411). William Pennefather also wrote several hymns: 'some were published in pamphlet form as *Hymns Original and Selected, by W. P.*, 1872. Others appeared, mostly undated, in the posthumous *Original Hymns and Thoughts in Verse*, 1873', <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/bio/p/e/pennefather_w.htm> [accessed 26.10.2006].

looked favourably upon both the YWCA and the Mildmay Deaconess Institute as they both represented communities of Christian women knit together and supported by prayer.[95] Havergal's association with both organisations demonstrates her appreciation of the alternative families single women forged amongst themselves as much as her interest in women's work.

Mildmay Conference

In 1874, Havergal attended the Mildmay Conference, which, as another venture of the Pennefathers, also supported women's ministry. By the end of the nineteenth century, a number of Evangelical and revivalist conferences were being held around Britain. The first of these was started in 1856 by William Pennefather while he was still vicar at Barnet. His intention had not been to found an annual meeting but the event gathered momentum and continued to be held after his move to Mildmay Park. The conference grew in size until some 3,000 Evangelicals (lay and clergy) came together at the event each year.

The particular focus of the Mildmay Conference was social and welfare work, not only in London and Britain but also around the world. One of the means by which it promoted Christian work internationally, and identified a field of female ministry, was by supporting the idea of women missionaries. That Havergal was supportive of women missionaries has already been seen in her poem 'Sisters'. At the Mildmay Conference, she met high-profile women missionaries including Jennie Faulding Taylor (1843-1904), the second wife of James Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, who was also the editor of the CIM's periodical *China's Millions*. Although the idea of single women missionaries remained a controversial

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[95] A concrete connection also existed in that the central office of the YWCA was located at the Institute until 1884.

issue for some organisations, including the CMS, until the last decades of the nineteenth century, Havergal was an early supporter: when her friend Elizabeth Clay was accepted to become a missionary to India in 1876,[96] she wrote with some regret that it had '*all my life* it has been a sort of "castle in the air" *to be a missionary*, only that door for me seemed always closed by the state of my health'.[97] It thus seems that, for her time, Havergal was progressive in her views about the ministry of women.

The Consecration Hymn

Havergal's early writings often displayed emotional turbulence and distress in faith; thus the most significant spiritual turning point of her life was her experience of 'consecration' which brought about a profound sense of peace and security. After reading a book entitled *All for Jesus*, she wrote to the author of the book:

> 'All for Jesus' has touched me very much. [...] I know I love Jesus, and there are times when I feel such intensity of love to Him that I have not words to describe it. I rejoice, too, in Him as my 'Master' and 'Sovereign,' but I want to come nearer still, to have the full realization of John xiv. 21, and to know 'the power of His resurrection,' even if it be with the fellowship of His sufferings.[98]

She must have also explained in the same letter that, as in childhood, she still found it hard to believe God could forgive all her sins and that this was a stumbling block to her faith. In his reply, the author of *All for Jesus* directed her to the biblical text: 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son *cleanseth* us from all sin' (I John 1. 7) impressing upon her the power of Christ's blood to continually cleanse and forgive. The knowledge of this verse brought about an increase in joy, and a relinquishing of fear for Havergal.

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[96] Clay became a prominent member of the Church of England Zenana Mission Society. When Ellen Lakshmi Goreh (the hymn writer of the next chapter) went to India, she was posted with Clay by the CEZMS.

[97] Quoted in MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 201.

[98] Quoted in MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 124. The text is: 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.'

Eventually, it led to the intense sanctification she desired; she confided in her sister Maria:

> Yes, it was on Advent Sunday, December 2nd, 1873, I first saw clearly the blessedness of true consecration. I saw it as a flash of electric light, and what you *see* you can never *un*see. There must be full surrender before there can be full blessedness. God admits you by the one to the other. He Himself showed by the one into the other.[99]

This spiritual experience of 'consecration' has been compared to the mystical experience of St Teresa of Avila and of the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, both of whom stressed that the blessing they received was given from God as a gracious gift rather than as the result of human effort. Havergal saw this experience as the most significant spiritual event of her life. She wrote to her sister Maria, 'It's no mistake, Marie, about the blessedness God sent me December 2 1873; it is far more distinct than my conversion, I can't date that'.[100] As the statement 'what you *see* you can never *unsee*' indicates, with the experience of consecration came certainty. Although Havergal did not suffer from doubt in the sense of unbelief in the existence of God, she had all her life, in the words of Janet Grierson, 'been beset with doubt regarding her own response to God and his acceptance of her self-giving. Now there was no longer room for doubt'.[101] She wrote in a letter to Charles Snepp on Christmas day, a few weeks after the experience:

> One has so long 'toiled in rowing,' wearily seeking holiness, wearily striving to blend one's will really with the Lord's, yet seeming to have taken almost nothing. Then comes 'Launch out into the deep,' deep sea of His promises! [...] And one finds one's net filled. Oh, how He does fill it! Every bit of restless longing for---one hardly knew what---taken away, and instead, 'satisfied with His goodness.' [...] He has done it for me---just 'satisfied me.'[102]

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[99] Ibid., pp. 126-127.
[100] Quoted in Grierson, *FRH*, p. 140.
[101] Grierson, *FRH*, p. 140.
[102] Quoted in Havergal, *Letters*, pp. 137-8.

The mystical intimacy of communion she had experienced with God effected a profound internal transformation; Havergal's writing thereafter is inscribed with a sense of unshakable certainty and abiding peace in faith. There is no more 'rowing' against the waves towards the longed for destination; instead, it is as if she has arrived.

The Thoughts of God is a long poem which was published in *Under His Shadow: The Last Poems of Frances Ridley Havergal* (1881). It is the only work by Frances to be included in *The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse* (1917).[103] It expresses more fully the feeling of certainty and security she found after her experience of consecration:

They say there is a hollow, safe and still,
A point of coolness and repose
Within the centre of a flame, where life might dwell
Unharmed and unconsumed, as in a luminous shell,
Which the bright walls of fire enclose
In breachless splendour, barrier that no foes
Could pass at will.

There is a point of rest
At the great centre of the cyclone's force,
A silence at its secret source;----
A little child might slumber undistressed,
Without the ruffle of one fairy curl,
In that strange central calm amid the mighty whirl.

So in the centre of these thoughts of God,
Cyclones of power, consuming glory-fire,----
As we fall o'erawed
Upon our faces, and are lifted higher
By His great gentleness, and carried nigher
Than unredeemèd angels, till we stand
Even in the hollow of His hand,----
Nay, more! we lean upon His breast----
There, there we find a point of perfect rest
And glorious safety. There we see
His thoughts to usward, thoughts of peace
That stoop to tenderest love; that still increase
With increase of our need; that never change,
That never fail, or falter, or forget. (pp. 781-2)

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[103] Grierson, *FRH*, p. 141.

The anxiety and impatience of the earlier works is no longer evident; instead, Havergal speaks of a rest, not of idleness, but of stillness, peace and fulfilment. Unlike so many of her works, which advocate activity in the world, this poem describes a mystical state of being hidden with God in contemplation. Hiddenness has been described as being 'an essential quality of the spiritual life. [...] Even during his active ministry, Jesus continued to return to hidden places to be alone with God.'[104]

This poem, written after her experience of consecration, is a work of deepened and matured faith in which Havergal proposes a new agenda; rather than urging busy service in the world, she also encourages retreating into contemplative intimacy with God.

Havergal's transformed faith can be seen most clearly in what came to be known as 'The Consecration Hymn', her most famous hymn, 'Take my Life'. She explained the circumstances in which the hymn was composed to her sister Maria:

> Perhaps you may be interested to know the origin of the consecration hymn, 'Take my life.' I went for a little visit of five days. There were ten persons in the house, some unconverted and long prayed for, some converted but not rejoicing Christians. He gave me the prayer, 'Lord, give me *all* in this house!' And he just *did!* Before I left the house every one had got a blessing. The last night of my visit I was too happy to sleep, and passed most of the night in praise and renewal of my own consecration, and these little couplets formed themselves, and chimed in my heart one after another, till they finished with, '*Ever*, ONLY, ALL for Thee!'[105]

Havergal's rejoicing attitude in this extract calls to mind St Paul's fruits of the Spirit, the biblical hallmarks of a life filled with the Holy Spirit: 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control' (Galatians 5. 22). As in

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[104] Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey: Reflections for the Day of the Year* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1996), p. 253.
[105] Quoted in MVGH, *Memorials*, pp. 132-133.

The Thoughts of God, the tone of 'Take my Life' is characterised by calmness and satisfaction. In contrast to her earlier hymn 'Master, Say on!' which is expectant of receiving from God, this hymn is about giving to him:

1. Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

2. Take my moments and my days;
Let them flow in ceaseless praise. (p. 669)

The first two lines of the hymn were inscribed on the front cover of various editions of *The Memorials of Frances Ridley Havergal*, and were used to capture her life of service to God. There is no longer a feeling of inadequacy as in 'Whom I serve': 'Jesus, Master, whom I serve, / Though so feebly and so ill'. The neat rhyming couplets and the measured pace of 'Take my Life' create the overall effect of peace and contentment as opposed to fretfulness and dissatisfaction.

Each couplet in 'Take my Life' is a statement of dedication offering up all the various elements of the human body, mind and spirit to God. The following lines focus on serving God physically:

3. Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.

4. Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and 'beautiful' for Thee.[106]

5. Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King.

6. Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee. (p. 669)

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[106] This verse seems to allude to Isaiah 52. 7: 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!'

The hymn works much better in its original form of rhyming couplets as opposed to quatrains, which is how many hymn books now present it. In its original form, each couplet is a separate gift offered to God. Furthermore, the space between the verses conveys the still, prayerful space in which each dedication is lifted to God. When printed as quatrains, it is easy for the singer and reader to rush on to the next part of the hymn without concentrating on each commitment. The contemplative value and potential of this hymn was recognised by Havergal herself, as at the end of her life, she wrote *Kept for the Master's Use* (1879), a devotional book in which each chapter reflected on a couplet of 'The Consecration Hymn'. In this book, she changed the word 'take' to 'keep', indicating a further deepening of trust and resignation:

> when we say 'Take'; [...] we do not want to go on taking a first step over and over again. What we do want is to be maintained in that position, and to fulfil that course. So let us go to another prayer. Having already said, 'Take my life, for I cannot give it to Thee,' let us now say, with deepened conviction [...] ,--- 'Keep my life, for I cannot keep it for Thee.'[107]

The seventh couplet, 'Take my silver and my gold; / Not a mite would I withhold' (p. 669), was the most controversial when the hymn was first published. However, Havergal clarified in a letter:

> Yes, 'not a mite would I withhold'; but that does not mean that, because we have ten shillings in our purse, we are pledged to put it *all* into the next collecting plate, else we should have none for the next call! But it does mean that every shilling is to be, and I think I may say *is*, held at my Lord's disposal, and is distinctly not my own; but, as He has entrusted to me a body for my special charge, I am bound to clothe that body with His silver and gold, so that it will neither suffer cold, not bring discredit upon His cause![108]

She seems to have been a woman of much practical and good common sense. The line 'Take my silver and my gold' is of further interest in its historical context, because

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[107] Havergal, *Kept for the Master's Use*, p. 14.
[108] Quoted in MVGH, *Memorials*, p. 240.

until the Married Women's Property Acts of 1882 and 1893 many women could not claim rights to their own money or property; Havergal, who was unmarried, could claim whole-heartedly that any money she earned from her writings was truly her own to give. At the same time, she was offering her money to a masculine God to whom she considered herself almost espoused.

After the physical attributes, Havergal consecrates her invisible resources to God:

8. Take my intellect, and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.

9. Take my will, and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine.

10. Take my heart, it *is* [her italics] Thine own;
It shall be Thy royal throne.

11. Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store. (p. 670)

Havergal's desire to give her intellect and will to God is interesting because both would traditionally have been deemed male powers. In 1862, William Rathbone Greg had asserted that 'there are women who are really almost epicene, whose brains are so analogous to those of men that they run in nearly the same channels, are capable of nearly the same heights', but warned that these women 'are the objects of admiration, but never of adoration of the other sex.'[109] Will also implies personal discipline and strength, a moral practice more associated with men during the Victorian period.

The final statement is a promise which is almost like a marriage vow. The Christian soul gives him/herself to God entirely, forever:

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[109] Greg, 'Why are Women Redundant?', p. 439.

12. Take myself, and I will be
Ever, *only*, ALL for Thee.

Unlike the earlier hymns which plead with anguish to be used by God, here, the tone is of gentle and calm surrender. The New Year was always a time for spiritual reflection and re-dedication for Havergal and 'For New Year's Day, 1874. "From glory unto glory" ----2 COR, iii, 18', written only a month after Havergal's transforming experience of consecration, contains a verse which articulates a similar sentiment to 'Take my Life':

19. 'In full and glad surrender we give ourselves to Thee,
Thine utterly, and only, and evermore to be!
O Son of God, who lovest us, we will be Thine alone,
And all we are, and all we have, shall henceforth be Thine own!'

Another hymn in which Havergal's deepened faith is evident is 'Trusting Jesus'. In a very short and concise form, Havergal manages to articulate a tremendous sense of peace, certainty, joy and assurance in God:

1. I AM trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,
Trusting only Thee;
Trusting Thee for full salvation,
Great and free. (p. 692)

This hymn conveys the sentiment of being completely dependent on God much more convincingly than an earlier hymn 'I could not do without Thee' which attempts to make a similar point:

3. I could not do without Thee!
I cannot stand alone,
I have no strength or goodness,
No wisdom of my own.
But Thou, belovèd Saviour,
Art all in all to me;

And weakness will be power,
If leaning hard on Thee. (p. 488)

As Janet Grierson has noted, the positive statement of 'I am trusting thee, Lord Jesus', as opposed to the negative one of 'I could not do without thee', 'suggests a greater peace and certainty'.[110] It is thus far more effective as a rousing hymn:

4. I am trusting Thee to guide me;
Thou alone shalt lead!
Every day and hour supplying
All my need.

5. I am trusting Thee for power;
Thine can never fail!
Words which Thou Thyself shalt give me,
Must prevail.

6. I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus:
Never let me fall!
I am trusting Thee for ever,
And for all. (pp. 692-3)

Havergal's expressions of full dedication and contented satisfaction in her writings after her experience of consecration made her hymns particularly popular at the Keswick Convention, the leading proponent of the Holiness or Higher Life movement.[111] As Bebbington has explained:

> From the 1870s onwards Evangelicalism was deeply influenced by a new movement. Advocates of holiness teaching urged that Christians should aim for a second decisive experience beyond conversion. Afterwards they would live on a more elevated plane. [...]
>
> The new style devotion laid stress on the 'rest of faith'. With the struggle over, trust brought calm to the soul.[112]

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[110] Grierson, *Singing for Jesus*, p. 32.
[111] The Keswick Convention, the first of which took place in the summer of 1875, has been described as a Romantic movement. It sought to find the peace of God and to escape the busy and ungodly distractions of modern life (the setting of the Lake District served to enhance this Romantic impulse to escape from the increasingly industrialised world). It affected the Anglican Church more than any other denomination. See Bebbington, Chapter 5: 'Holiness Unto the Lord', *Evangelicalism*, pp. 151-228.
[112] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 151.

It is evident that Havergal's experience of consecration resonated with this new theology.[113] As Steven Barabas explained in his history of the Keswick Convention, consecration is 'sometimes referred to as dedication and full surrender'.[114] It is thus not surprising that Havergal, with her urging for men and women to give themselves 'In full and glad surrender', came to be heavily represented in the Keswick hymnal *Hymns of Consecration and Faith* (1902);[115] indeed, the chapter on 'Keswick Hymns' in *The Keswick Convention* (*c.* 1907), a series of recollections by patrons of the convention, is prefaced by Havergal's hymn 'Perfect Peace. In Illness'.[116] This is most fitting as the story of the composition of this hymn is a fascinating narrative about Havergal's superlative trust in, and surrender to, God after her experience of consecration. The words of the hymn are said to have been dictated during a near fatal-attack of typhoid fever in the winter of 1874. It describes God's peace as ever-flowing and increasing:

1. Like a river glorious
Is God's perfect peace,
Over all victorious
In its bright increase.
Perfect---yet it floweth
Fuller every day;
Perfect---yet it groweth
Deeper all the way.
Chorus. Stayed upon Jehovah,
Hearts are fully blest,
Finding, as He promised,
Perfect peace and rest. (p. 716)

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[113] One of her poems in *Loyal Responses* is entitled 'Resting'. Eighteen out of twenty lines start with the word 'resting'.
[114] Steven Barabas, *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention* (London and Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1952), p. 110.
[115] Nineteen of her hymns are included.
[116] F. S. Webster, 'Keswick Hymns', in *The Keswick Convention: Its Message, Its Method and Its Men*, ed. Charles Harford (London: Marshall Brothers, [c. 1907]), pp. 211-220.

The vocabulary: 'all', 'increase', 'floweth', 'fuller', 'growth' and 'deeper', allows a movement from the normal boundaries of human experience into the eternal depths of God's mystery. If Dora Greenwell saw earthly human life as often being subject to blockages and constraints from fulfilling one's God-given potential, Havergal believed that consecrating oneself to God allowed entrance into the promises of the Kingdom of Heaven while still living on earth.

The sentiments of the hymn seem extraordinary (possibly even delirious) in the context of the tremendous physical suffering Havergal must have endured during her struggle with typhoid. On one level, it is an example of Helen Groth's assertion that nineteenth-century 'Women poets represent as an act of strength the controlling and directing of the differentiating powers of pain'.[117] Groth explains further that:

> rather than seeing the 'masochistic display' of women's poetry as arising out of powerlessness and inertia, [...] these representations arise out of an underlying assumption of power and self-determination. Martyrdom in Victorian women's poetry conflates both the interior struggle and the exterior spectacle implicit in the representational display of the poetic speaker's mastery of pain. The martyr who is usually, though not always, a woman enacts her power to control herself in extreme adversity. Her self-control is driven by a vision of the indeterminate potential of her subjectivity; a potential that exceeds the limitations of her body and the material world.[118]

However, here, Havergal's composition of 'In Illness' seems to have been driven by her vision of God's ability to exceed 'the limitations of her body and the material world', rather than the power of her own subjectivity. Like Steele's tabret (see pp. 63-4), Havergal has become an instrument of God beaten to manifest *his* power and grace.

As with much of Havergal's writing, the images and ideas of 'Perfect Peace. In Illness' are scriptural. Isaiah 66. 12-13 reads:

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[117] Groth, 'Defining the Woman Poet', p. 146.
[118] Groth, 'Defining the Woman Poet', pp. 146-7.

> For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

In the context of this passage, Havergal's hymn is particularly poignant; she is saying that to receive God's peace is to be given comfort and protection like a child from a loving mother. In times of illness, children are the most dependent on their parents, not only for their nursing care, but also for the comfort of their loving presence; at the time of this hymn's composition, both Havergal's biological parents had died. It seems Havergal, who had no earthly parent to give her solace in her pain, sought the protection of her heavenly one. It is noteworthy at this point that each of Havergal's models used to express her relationship with God is in terms of symbiotic couplings between the powerful and protective and the weak and helpless: king and subject, master and servant, parent and child.

Indeed, the second verse is also about the security that God can provide to the vulnerable and weak:

2. Hidden in the hollow
Of His blessèd hand,
Never foe can follow,
Never traitor stand.
Not a surge of worry,
Not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry
Touch the spirit there. (pp. 716-7)

As in *The Thoughts of God*, this verse attempts to describe the state of hidden contemplative intimacy with God. At the same time, the hymn is also reminiscent of various psalms which speak of finding shelter in God, such as Psalm 91. 1-3:

> He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. [...] He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

The image of the mother hen covering her chick is a useful one in gaining insight into Havergal's hymn, as the second verse seems to tell of Havergal's desire in her illness to return to the pre-Oedipal safety and comfort of being in the mother's womb.

The third verse places stress on the trustworthiness of God:

3. Every joy or trial
Falleth from above,
Traced upon our dial
By the Sun of Love.
We may trust Him solely
All for us to do;
They who trust Him wholly,
Find Him wholly true.
Chorus. Stayed upon Jehovah,
Hearts are fully blest,
Finding, as He promised,
Perfect peace and rest. (p. 717)

The chorus may be said to summarise the blessings of the 'rest of faith' expounded by the leaders of the 'higher life' and 'holiness' movements. Being 'stayed' conveys a similar stillness and safety as being at the 'point of rest / At the great centre of the cyclone's force' as expressed in *The Thoughts of God*. The word 'finding' is also prominent as it expresses a sense of wonder at discovery as F. S Webster has noted:

> That one word 'finding' gives the keynote of the Keswick spirit. While no well-taught disciple ever ceases to be a 'seeker,' the testimony at Keswick is clear and definite, 'we have found', 'we are finding,' 'the promises are being graciously fulfilled, unworthy as we are, in our hearts and lives.'[119]

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[119] F. S Webster, 'Keswick Hymns' in *The Keswick Convention: Its Method, Its Message and Its Men*, ed. Charles F. Harford (London: Marshall Brothers, 1907), pp. 213-220 (pp. 214-5).

Although, Havergal has been claimed as 'The best known among Keswick's many female writers', this title is somewhat misleading as she never actually visited the convention and seems to have been careful not to associate herself explicitly with the holiness movement; this may have been owing to the controversy of perfectionism which surrounded the teachings of the holiness movement.[120] Certainly, her sister Maria mentions neither the Keswick Convention nor the Holiness movement in the *Memorials* of her sister's life. Nevertheless, as Alison Bucknall has commented: 'Elevated to such a saintly role, the life of Frances Havergal provided a deft model for the women of Keswick.'[121] The convention's adoption of Havergal as 'one of their own' means they adopted a strong model of female discipleship and service for God; indeed, Bebbington has noted that some have viewed the Keswick movement 'as a landmark in the emancipation of women, at least in the religious sphere', and that '[w]omen contributed a significant proportion of the hymnody of the holiness movement.'[122] He makes the following suggestions why women were so prominent at the convention:

> Romantic sentiment dictated that purity and love should be staple themes of the convention, and according to the stereotypes of the day, these were female qualities. [...] More concretely, the call to total surrender undoubtedly had attractions in an age when female submission was axiomatic. Frances Ridley Havergal liked thinking of Christ as 'Master' [...].[123]

Another role that Christian women developed at the Keswick Convention was that of the woman missionary; when the call for activity in the mission field came to Keswick in the 1880s, women answered it first. At one meeting in 1892, Miss Gollock made an attack on languid Christian women; she asked provocatively if they

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[120] The idea that one's faith could be perfected was problematic for some as it implied that it was possible to stop committing sin.
[121] Bucknall, 'Martha's Work and Mary's Contemplation?', p. 414.
[122] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 174 and p. 175.
[123] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 175.

want to 'be a wet blanket or glow for Jesus?' and asked if her listeners would accept Christ's power to 'overcome their sickly life'?[124] Her call echoed the clarion voice of Havergal over twenty years earlier in 'Sisters', 'To startle the silken dreams of English women at ease' (p. 527) and 'to reach and stir their nest' (p. 527).

Frances Ridley Havergal's Ministry of Song

In 1864, Frances Ridley Havergal wrote to her sister Maria:

> If I had my choice, I should like to be a 'Christian poetess,' but I do not feel I have ability enough ever to turn this line to much account. I feel as if music were a stronger talent, though in neither am I doing anything serious. Most of all would I like to be your ideal, -- a winner of souls. But as no special path is open for me, I feel I can only and simply take any opportunity of using any talent which opens to me.[125]

In her late twenties, it appears that Havergal was uncertain about which of her gifts to use, literary or musical, to bring fulfilment to herself and enrichment to others. What is most interesting is that she seems to have been able to consider her vocation in a manner that must have been unusual for the young ladies of her generation. Dominant cultural ideology saw 'Woman's Mission' as being located in the family home where it was believed the influence of feminine gentleness, morality and affection would produce a shelter of peace and love from the harsh world outside. In 1863, the artist George Elgar Hicks envisaged womanhood as being in three stages, the 'Companion of Manhood'; 'Guide of Childhood' and 'The Comfort of Old Age'. Yet, Havergal did not include marriage or motherhood on her list of possible careers. In this respect, Havergal's belief that her identity was primarily located in her faith and spirituality,

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[124] *The Keswick Week*, 1892, p. 109 in Bucknall, 'Martha's Work and Mary's Contemplation', p. 418.
[125] Havergal, *Letters*, p. 33.

and not as a wife or mother, enabled her to seek more public work at a time when women's roles were becoming increasingly limited to the domestic sphere.

Havergal's dilemma about what special work God was calling her to seems to have been resolved by 1869 when she chose to publish her first collection of poetical works under the title *The Ministry of Song*. She had clearly discovered that she could bring her main interests (the writing of Christian poetry, a love of music, and the winning of souls) together in the writing of hymns and other verses for the furtherance of God's kingdom. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'ministry' as 'the action of ministering; ministration; the performance of an office or labour for another.'[126] Havergal was asserting in the title of her book that she saw her writing, and specifically her hymn-writing, as her work of service for God and his people. It also has a second meaning; Havergal was asserting that *The Ministry of Song* was not only her personal vocation, but also that of many others as singers for God's glory.

In the first poem of the collection, also called 'The Ministry of Song', she explains that God calls each Christian to special work, and that singing is a holy work for all those who are capable of singing:

1. In God's great field of labour
All work is not the same;
He hath a service for each one
Who loves His holy name.
And you, to whom the secrets
Of all sweet sounds are known,
Rise up! for He hath called you
To a mission of your own.
And, rightly to fulfil it,
His grace can make you strong,
Who to your charge hath given
The Ministry of Song. (p. 4)

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[126] Definition 2, *OED online*, <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/cgi/entry/00310324?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=ministry&first=1&max_to_show=10>, [12.10.2005].

In this poem, she reminds her readers that Christian song can take the gospel into the world and minister to people in need of comfort and salvation, as she was encouraged to do by her parents as a child. Song is a suitable medium for teaching unlearned listeners such as 'little children' (p. 4) and those in 'the cottage' (p. 5); and for giving comfort to 'the tired and anxious' (p. 6) and 'God's holy servants' (p. 7). Havergal teaches that sacred song is not only a vehicle of worship to God, but also as a tool for teaching and evangelism, and a means by which weary spirits may be lifted. She suggests that the Christian song, with its good news, will be welcomed by listeners who will find it captivating:

3. I remember, late one evening,
How the music stopped, for, hark!
Charlie's nursery door was open,
He was calling in the dark,---
'Oh no! I am not frightened,
And I do not want a light;
But I cannot sleep for thinking
Of the song you sang last night.
Something about a "valley,"
And "make rough places plain,"
And "Comfort ye;" so beautiful!
Oh, sing it me again!' (pp. 4-5)

The content of this verse may have been drawn from Havergal's own experience as a governess to her sisters' children.

Eight verses out of eleven in 'The Ministry of Song' command readers to 'Sing'. Havergal's message is that, through song, it is possible to minister not only to people but to the whole of creation:

5. [...]
And not for human ear alone
The psalm and hymn we raise.

6. *Sing* in the deepening twilight,
When the shadow of eve is nigh,
And her purple and golden pinions
Fold o'er the western sky.
Sing in the silver silence,
While the first moonbeams fall;
So shall your power be greater
Over the hearts of all.
Sing till you bear them with you
Into a holy calm,
And the sacred tones have scattered
Manna, and myrrh, and balm. (my italics, p. 6)

For Havergal, the hymn is therefore a vehicle for transmitting the gospel of God's love and grace. As such, the ministry of song is a high calling shared with the angelic hosts:

8. Sing to the tired and anxious
It is yours to fling a ray,
Passing indeed, but cheering,
Across the rugged way.
Sing to God's holy servants,
Weary with loving toil,
Spent with their faithful labour
On oft ungrateful soil.
The chalice of your music
All reverently bear,
For with the blessèd angels
Such ministry you share. (p. 7)

She explains that it is also a useful evangelistic tool because it is sometimes welcomed (or at least tolerated) where preaching is not:

9. When you long to bear the Message
Home to some troubled breast,
Then sing with loving fervour,
'Come unto Him, and rest.'
Or would you whisper comfort,
Where words bring no relief,
Sing how 'He was despisèd,
Acquainted with our grief.'
And, aided by His blessing,
The song may win its way

> *Where speech had no admittance,*
> And change the night to day [my italics]. (p. 7)

In the way that Havergal's advice about the best way to collect money for missionary organisations came from her own experience, the tactic of hymn-singing as a means of introducing the gospel and making opportunities for evangelistic conversations also came from her own practice; she wrote in one letter:

> A sacred song thus often gives a higher tone to the evening, and affords, both to singer and listeners, some opportunity of speaking a word for Jesus. [...] I was at a large regular London party lately, and I was so happy. He seemed to give me 'the secret of His presence,' and of course I sang 'for Jesus,' and did not I have dead silence? Afterwards I had two really important conversations with strangers [...].[127]

Havergal also felt there was an appeal and enjoyment in collective hymn-singing.[128]

She wrote in a letter dated 10 June 1872:

> I had a little party on Friday, and quite after my own fashion, and it was enjoyed much more than an ordinary party! We had a good set-to at hymns soon after tea, and then got our Bibles and read and talked over part of Colossians i. The hymns had done all the ice-breaking and thawing first, and so we came to the reading warmed up. [...] I do positively believe that nineteen people out of twenty, even without being 'very religious,' would really enjoy joining in good rousing hymns, ten times more than listening to any ordinary drawing-room music.[129]

Havergal also saw the church choir as a ministry. Through it she hoped to help the members to deepen their own spiritual lives. She stated: 'It is to me *just* the same opportunity as having a large open Bible class; and I am not sure that it does not give me more influence, just because it is in a less usual groove, as far as those who attend are concerned.'[130] She also taught her choir to aim to evangelise through their worship: 'The aim I have set before them is that, as Paul and Barnabas "so spake that

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[127] Quoted in MVGH, *Memorials*, pp. 133-4.
[128] As did the Salvation Army and Ira M. Sankey and D. L. Moody.
[129] Havergal, *Letters*, p. 117.
[130] Quoted in Grierson, *Singing for Jesus*, p. 62.

multitudes believed," they may "so sing" that the same result may follow.'[131] In October 1873, she used hymn-singing as a method of evangelism at a mission in Liverpool:

> My hymn-meeting began at 7.30 [...]. The hall was fairly full, and it is a capital place for a sound. It took a while to get the steam up, but before long we had some very fair singing. I had made out a little programme of hymns, progressing to a climax of praise and brightness, and all seemed to enjoy it, the token thereof being that when I closed at 9.15 every one was astonished at the time being gone.[132]

As the extract above indicates, the enjoyment of singing was of fundamental importance to Havergal; she wrote: 'Rejoice in this good thing / Which the Lord thy God hath given thee, / The happy power to sing' (p. 8). If it is remembered from Havergal's mountaineering holidays that the joy she experienced was often derived from a feeling of liberation, some further insight may be gained into why she found singing so important and pleasurable; for Havergal, singing was another activity which made the spirit feel free. This connection was a convention of Victorian women's poetry; as Isobel Armstrong has traced, metaphors of breathing and breath, air and musical vibration worked 'as the representation of the imprisoned life of emotion seeking to escape or to take form.'[133] Not only does this point help place Havergal's writing within the wider corpus of women's writing during the Victorian era, it also suggests that contained within the traditional image of the Christian woman as singer (in the pattern of biblical women such as Miriam and Mary) is also an impulse that cries out for greater personal freedom.

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[131] Quoted in Grierson, *Singing for Jesus*, p. 62.
[132] Havergal, *Letters*, pp. 189-90.
[133] Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 337.

In 1884, she wrote a poem as a summary of a singing lesson with a famous teacher, which not only exhibits her wit and impressive ability to rhyme, but also a sincere desire to understand the principles of singing:

> The voice has machinery---(now to be serious),
> Invisible, delicate, strange, and mysterious.
> A wonderful organ-pipe firstly we trace,
> Which is small in a tenor and wide in a bass;
> Below an Æolian harp is provided,
> Through whose fairy-like fibres the air will be guided.
> Above is an orifice, larger or small
> As the singer desires to rise or to fall;
> Expand and depress it to deepen your roar,
> But raise and contract it when high you would soar. (p. 225)

By the time she wrote 'My Singing Lesson', Havergal had already decided that she would devote her singing to God; after her near-fatal attack of typhoid in 1875, Havergal explained to her sister,

> It is a long time ago that I made the choice of singing sacred music *only*. I did so some months before I wrote:
>
> > 'Take my voice, and let me sing,
> > Always, only, for my King.'
>
> ... [A]t Leamington, the first large party I went to, they asked me to sing, and I sang 'Whom having not seen ye love.' Every one seemed astonished, and especially some Christian girls who had begun to think music could not be for the King's service, and were rather rebelling at their daily practice. They had never thought of consecrating their voices and fingers, but began from thenceforth.[134]

Havergal recalled that her decision had been made in 1869; as such, she was already thinking of song as a medium for sacred work four years before she wrote 'Take my Life'. Havergal's understanding of her vocation as 'the ministry of song', indicates

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[134] Quoted in MVGH, *Memorials*, pp. 163-4.

that she was a woman privileged enough to have determined, and followed through, her own call at a time when women's life decisions were still very limited.

Indeed, it was as God's 'Sweet Singer' that many came to remember Havergal after her death in 1879. The first work in Goreh's *From India's Coral Strand* (*c.* 1883) is a poem entitled 'Sweet Singer!' which was sent to Havergal in her lifetime (see pp. 289-290). In the appendix to *The Memorials of Frances Ridley Havergal*, two poems were included addressed to the 'Sweet Singer': another poem by Goreh entitled 'Our "Sweet Singer"', and a work by G. R. Taylor entitled 'Sweet Singer and Yet Strong'. As the title indicates, Taylor's poem was a tribute which prophesied that the message of her songs would remain strong long after her death.

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Frances Ridley Havergal's hymns may be identified as a model of Christian ministry. Instead of the traditional and historical interpretation of ministry as ordained male priesthood, she demonstrated that it was possible to be a lay, female minister to Christian souls. Although she was not a wife and mother (the vocation which Victorian society often interpreted to be woman's mission), she clearly believed that God had called her to other special work. Armed with this knowledge, she could not believe herself to be a 'redundant woman', as some social commentators like William Rathbone Greg would have suggested. At a time when vocation for ministry was not yet tested in the Anglican church,[135] Havergal determined her own call and followed it through.

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[135] See Anthony Russell, *The Clerical Profession* (London, SPCK, 1980).

Her hymns are further important because they show the effects of the holiness movement upon Evangelical women's spirituality during the final decades of the nineteenth century. Havergal's works written after her transforming experience of 'consecration' signal a movement to the contemplative, away from the calls for activism seen in the mid-nineteenth-century works of Charlotte Elliott, Dora Greenwell, and in the early works of Havergal herself. Hymns such as 'Take My Life' and 'I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus' mark a development in Evangelical women's hymn writing urging readers and singers to retreat into contemplative rest with God rather than busy service in the world. The continuance of this trend will be seen in the last two chapters of this thesis.

'A Brahmin Lady':

Ellen Lakshmi Goreh (1853-1937)

A destiny has been thereby conferred on us by Providence of universal beneficence -- namely to diffuse among millions of the human race the blessings of Christianity and civilization; and it is no less obligatory on nations than on individuals to use the power entrusted them by Providence.[1]

Missionaries

During the second half of the nineteenth century, overseas mission became identified in Britain as a potential arena for the ministry of women. The idea was that women missionaries could reach out to and convert native women who were inaccessible to male missionaries. It was further believed that they would have an indirect effect on the conversion of native men and children, because, in the words of Mrs Urmston in the *Mildmay Proceedings* of 1878, 'though the women's sphere may be very limited, they have great influence in the house'.[2] An important advocate for women missionaries was J. Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission. From the establishment of the CIM in 1865, Taylor looked for 'brothers *and sisters*'[3] to recruit. He believed that female missionaries were needed because:

> the early religious and moral education of the whole rising generation and the strongest and most constantly operating influence that is brought to bear upon the whole male part of the population through life, is in the hands of women [...] [who would] only be effectively reached and instructed by their own sex.'[4]

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[1] Author unknown, 'Lord Grey's Colonial Administration', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and* Country, April 1853, pp. 485–499, (p. 487).

[2] Mrs Urmston, *Mildmay Proceedings*, 1878, p. 311 in Peter Williams, '"The Missing Link": The Recruitment of Women Missionaries in some English Evangelical Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century', in *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Providence, Oxford: Berg, 1993), ed. Fiona Bowie and others, pp. 43- 69 (p. 51).

[3] Williams, 'The Missing Link', p. 48. Broomhall, *Hudson Taylor and China's Open Century*, 7 vols (Hodder and Stoughton and the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1981-9), III, p. 399 (my emphasis).

[4] James Hudson Taylor, *China's Millions* [the CIM magazine], Feb 1879, p. 15. Quoted in Williams, 'The Missing Link', p. 51.

The idea of single women missionaries remained controversial for mainstream missionary organisations until the final decades of the century. The CMS remained hesitant about sending them out until the late 1880s. Henry Venn, during his time as the secretary to the CMS, objected to the employment of women missionaries on the grounds that the society should send out gifted clergy who had been carefully selected and trained for their work.[5] As Peter Williams has commented, 'There was then little or no room for laymen, let alone lay women.'[6] Even after Venn's death, the CMS remained sceptical about the authority of women to teach the gospel. In 1878, the secretary of the society, Henry Wright, attended the Mildmay Conference but refused to sit on the platform as women were to speak.[7] As well as the Pauline admonition against women preaching, there were also fears, which existed into the twentieth century, that single women would marry expatriates on arrival and abandon their posts.[8] Ultimately, as Jane Haggis has asserted:

> Rather than an emancipatory struggle to break through the bounds of convention, it was precisely convention which enabled the making of the female missionary. Constructed within the meshed discourses of religion and empire, the occupation of the single female missionary charted a way 'out of the garden' with sufficient adroitness to remain within the mainstream frameworks of institutional religion and dominant gender norms.[9]

India, in particular, was an accepted and common destination for British women missionaries. Britain had links with the country from the foundation of the East India Company in 1600, and during the eighteenth and the first half of the

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[5] Venn became (part-time) honorary clerical secretary of the CMS in 1841. He became full-time in 1846 and remained in this position until 1872. He was the son of John Venn and cousin of Charlotte Elliott.
[6] Williams, 'The Missing Link', p. 36.
[7] Georgina Anne Gollock, *Eugene Stock: A Biographical Study, 1836-1928* (London: CMS, 1929), pp. 114-5. Quoted in Williams, 'The Missing Link', p. 54.
[8] At the 1910 World Missionary Conference, it was said that marriage was considered a 'grave problem' which was sometimes 'the direct result of a mistaken vocation' (Edinburgh 1910, v: 150-1): Williams, 'The Missing Link', p. 61.
[9] Jane Haggis, '"A Heart that has Felt the Love of God and Longs for Others to Know it": Conventions of Gender, Tensions of Self and Constructions of Difference in Offering to be a Lady Missionary', *Women's History Review*, 7 (1998), pp. 171-193 (p. 172).

nineteenth century, in the time of the Mogul rulers, India had also become the place where many second sons of titled families (those who would not inherit the estate) went as Army officers to make their fortunes. India thus had the reputation for being a romantic site for adventure, but was also perceived as being a respectable place for the British to go. From 1853, India was run by the Indian Civil Service made up of British civil servants, so it seemed to be a safer and less foreign land for British women wishing to work abroad. After the Indian Mutiny (1857-8), the India Act of 1858 abolished the East India Company and transferred its powers to the Crown. This brought about the period of the British Raj when the Indian subcontinent was ruled directly by the British under a British Viceroy who reported to the secretary of state for India, a member of the prime minister's cabinet; thus it seemed a safer and less foreign land for British women seeking to work abroad. The British saw India as belonging to Britain and, in 1876, Victoria was crowned Empress of India at the instigation of Disraeli. Many British felt the burden of responsibility to spread western cultivation in their daughter land and Evangelicals identified Christianity as the most important civilising truth to be dispersed. The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society asked, in a prefatory issue of their magazine, *India's Women*, 'Why is India ours?'[10] The answer given is that:

> *India is God's gift*, His *loan* rather, *to England*; we hold it as *His stewards*, and 'it is required in stewards that a man be found *faithful*.' 'Take this child' -- and 'children' its people are, wrapt in the ignorance, and folly and superstition, and priestcraft of Hinduism or Mohammedanism -- 'take this child and nurse it for Me.' It is ours, therefore, to rescue from the thrall of the Evil One, with its bitter bondage and dark cruelties, and to plant the pure Gospel of the Lord Jesus, giving them the Word of God in their own manifold mother-tongues,

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[10] Author Unknown, 'Our Object and Our Work', *India's Women* (London: James Nisbet, 1881), prefatory number October 1880, p. 8. The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society will be referred to as the CEZMS hereafter.

> showing the beauty and blessedness of a just, peaceful rule, laying well the foundations of a Christian Church, indigenous and vigorous, evangelical and evangelistic.[11]

A Brahmin Lady Hymn Writer

Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, the only woman hymn writer to be distinguished by Emma Pitman with a chapter to herself, was born at Benares, India, on 11 September 1853.[12] At the time of her birth, her father, Nehemiah Goreh, had been a Christian for one or two years; he was later to become a famous and influential priest of the Indian Church.[13] His conversion had resulted in excommunication from his Brahmin caste and rejection by his family. Ellen's mother, Lakshmibai Jogalekar, who also declared herself a Christian shortly after the birth of her daughter, died on 3 December when Ellen was less than three months old. Probably because her father felt incapable of looking after a baby girl on his own, Ellen was adopted by an indigo planter's wife, a Mrs Smailes, shortly after her mother's death. Although 'Nellie' had little to do with her biological father for nearly thirty years after this time, the story of his faith and his sacrifice of the privileges of his high birth for the sake of Christ, became part of the narrative of her own identity as an Indian Christian. The courage and faithfulness of the father seem to have been implicitly understood as a significant factor in Goreh's own development as a Christian.

Ellen's childhood was much disrupted. After her mother's death, she spent four years with the Smailes, but they lost all their property in the Indian Mutiny (1857-8) and had to give her up. It was arranged that Ellen should go to the CMS Orphanage at Benares, but, instead, the Reverend and Mrs W. T. Storrs, a missionary

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[11] *India's Women*, prefatory number (1880) p. 9.
[12] It is entitled 'A Hindu Hymn Writer: Ellen Lakshmi Goreh' in *LHW*, pp. 334-339.
[13] See C. E. Gardner's *Life of Father Goreh*, ed. Richard Meux Benson (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1900). Nehemiah Goreh was a Mahratta Brahmin. He travelled to England in 1853 as companion and tutor for the Maharajah Dhuleep Singh.

couple, decided to adopt her. It seems the Storrs tried to bring up and support Ellen as their own child, even after the birth of their own children:

> When we came to England for a time, in 1865, [on furlough] we brought 'Nellie' with us, and were, by the aid of kind friends, able to put her to a good school. When we returned to England, in 1871, she again rejoined us in our English home, and has been to us indeed as a daughter, and a most beloved one, and to our children altogether as a sister. [... Y]ear by year God's grace has grown and shone more and more brightly in her [...].[14]

Culturally, the move to England at the age of eleven or twelve must have been a great shock. Goreh later recalled:

> When I arrived in England I wore a red flannel thing on my head called a *chaddar*. I used to have crowds of children running after me wherever I went, and one day on arriving at the house where I was staying, I got hold of one child and gave her a good shaking. Afterwards I always wore a hat, generally a sailor hat. The three girls, who were as my sisters, and I always dressed alike. Afterwards, when I was grown up, I wore a bonnet.[15]

Taking off the *chaddar* and putting on the sailor hat signalled the beginning of the process of assimilating an English identity.[16] As the extract above indicates, she became part of a large English family; when the Reverend and Mrs Storrs returned to India after their furlough, she came under the care of the Reverend Storrs's sister who had three girls (presumably the ones mentioned above) and three boys.

In many respects, Goreh's life appears to have followed the usual pattern of an English clergyman/missionary's daughter. Her life does not seem to have been unhappy. During her first few years of her life in England, she went to a private school in York. She then went to the Home and Colonial College, a teacher training

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[14] Bullock, preface to Goreh, *'From India's Coral Strand'*, pp. ix.
[15] D. S. Batley in collaboration with A. M. Robinson, *Devotees of Christ: Some Women Pioneers of the Indian Church* (London: CEZMS, 1937), pp. 55-6. In the main text, I will refer only to Batley rather than 'Batley in collaboration with Robinson'.
[16] Goreh's identity, which becomes that of an Asian British woman, is strikingly postmodern in its hybrid nature. See Homi Bhabha's thoughts on 'Hybridity' in his *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

institution, in London. After Mr and Mrs Storrs came back to England, she returned to their home and, for some time, acted as governess to at least one of their young sons.[17] Unmarried, she was another one of the 'redundant' numbers and must have desired to find useful work for her life. Like Frances Ridley Havergal, she was engaged in local evangelistic and social work:

> She held a Sunday afternoon Bible Class for mill girls [the Storrs were living in industrial Yorkshire], which had remarkable spiritual results: as many as seventy girls used to attend, and it is recorded that these rough girls 'simply adored her'.[18]

That she was genuinely well-liked and appreciated is indicated by her adoptive father's remarks that:

> Her work, both in my first parish, Heckmondwike, and in Great Horton, will never be forgotten. The people loaded her with love when she went away last year; and the tree which they persuaded her to plant near the church, is to all quite a sacred and beloved thing.[19]

The extent to which she absorbed the culture and saw herself as being British is illustrated in the following anecdote. In a publication of the Church of England Zenana Mission Society entitled: *Devotees of Christ: Some Pioneers of the Indian Church*, D. S. Batley in collaboration with A. M. Robinson tells that, while she was training at the Home and Colonial College, Goreh used to be taken to missionary meetings. When the speaker was a woman missionary, 'Ellen was inevitably taken up and introduced. The speaker, as inevitably, "hoped that one day I would return to my own country to teach my own people."'[20] Goreh recalled, "How I disliked those talks!

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[17] Batley with Robinson, *Devotees of Christ*, p. 56.
[18] Batley with Robinson, *Devotees of Christ*, p. 56.
[19] Bullock, preface to Goreh, *'From India's Coral Strand'*, p. x. Batley with Robinson quotes from Goreh about this, '[the parishioners] made me plant a tree in front of the church, and had a farewell meeting for me, and presented me with a clock': *Devotees of Christ*, p. 57.
[20] Batley with Robinson, *Devotees of Christ*, p. 56. The Home and Colonial College was one of the first teacher training establishments for women.

I did not in the least want to go back to my own country and teach my own people!'"[21] These talks seem to have frustrated her because at this stage, with her upbringing and education, she identified with Britain, not India. The story also reveals a glimpse of her independence of mind; she did not liked being pushed into a role, and did not want to be made into a stereotype.

It was Goreh's unusual blend of Indian birth, Christian faith and English education that captured the imagination of Frances Ridley Havergal. In 1876, Goreh sent a poem to Havergal anonymously 'by her "Indian sister," as an expression of deep Christian regard and affection, as well as a tribute of gratitude for the benefit derived from her devotional books.'[22] The poem, entitled 'Sweet Singer', astutely recognised Havergal's vocation for the ministry of song:

1. Sweet singer, warbling forth thy Master's praise,
Sing on, sing on;
Cease not thy rich, sweet melodies to raise:
Sing on, sing on!
Well dost thou use the talents given thee:
Oh, what! yea, what shall thine 'hereafter' be?
The King in *all* His beauty, thou shalt see;
Therefore, sing on![23]

By incorporating Havergal's favourite terms 'Master' and 'King', Goreh was demonstrating the absorption of her heroine's key ideas. Her use of inverted commas for 'hereafter' is also an instance of her privileging of the scriptures as it is an allusion to heaven, using the more archaic language of the King James Bible.

That Goreh feared possible criticism from her heroine is suggested by the final two verses of the poem. Here, she makes apologies for being an unpractised poet:

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[21] Batley with Robinson, *Devotees of Christ*, p. 56.
[22] Bullock, preface to Goreh, *'From India's Coral Strand'*, p. x.
[23] Goreh, *'From India's Coral Strand'*, p. 19.

5. An Indian,---yet a sister in the Lord,
Thus would thee greet:
Go singing on, for sure is thy reward,---
At Home we'll meet.
I know no rules wherein to guide my song;
I know not if my rhymes be right or wrong;
He speaks, *I* write, since I to Him belong---
And oh! 'tis sweet!

6. Forgive the imperfections of my verse,
For His dear sake.
It could be better, but it might be worse;
He'll undertake
To waft my simple feeble notes on high,
Till they re-echo downwards, from the sky,
And I some nobler verses, by-and-by,
To *Him* shall make. (p. 20)

That these verses functioned not only to protect Goreh from potential criticism but also as a literary modesty trope is suggested by the penultimate line of the fifth verse. If Goreh really believed her work was poor poetry, she would have been convicting God of literary incompetence. Instead, it seems likely that she had spent some time polishing her poem before sending it to the 'Sweet Singer'.

Goreh must have been delighted when Havergal responded with a warm letter to 'My Dear Indian sister' asking for her name. Until Goreh received her second letter, however, she could not have anticipated how much her poem had excited Havergal's thoughts:

DEAR MISS GOREH,---
I cannot refrain any longer from telling you what is on my mind [...]. The more I think of you, the more strongly it seems impressed upon me that there is a great 'open door' before you of special and unique usefulness, and that you only want a little push to make you enter it! [...]
Now, dear 'Indian sister,' believe that if you will lay your gift at His feet, and let your verses go forth as no Englishwoman's work, but as that of a Brahmin who is now one of us in Christ, you will be giving help to the cause of Zenana Missions and Female Education in the East, which, so far as I know, none but yourself can give! It will be a testimony to many thousands of what

> His grace can do and has done. You will probably do more by the mere fact of becoming known as a writer, to English Christian readers, than if you gave £500 to Zenana Missions.[24]

Flattered as Havergal must have been by the gratifying poem, it was evidently the uniqueness of Goreh's position as one able to demonstrate the workings of God's grace in Indians that stimulated her enthusiasm. (Unlike the women missionaries Goreh had met, Havergal was not suggesting that she should leave her life in England to become a missionary.) Goreh's identification of herself as an 'Indian sister' probably also appealed to Havergal's beliefs about the power of female solidarity.[25] Havergal also seems to have genuinely believed that her protégée possessed literary talent:

> I am not too much inclined to judge favourably of amateur verses! I get quantities sent to me by all sorts of aspirants to literary name or profit: 'Will I kindly give a candid opinion?' and so forth; and never but once has my 'candid opinion' been that the verses gave promise of real success, or showed real gift. Therefore when I tell you that my 'candid opinion' of yours is that they do show that God has given you a real gift, which may be, and ought to be, used for His glory, you will see that I am not speaking lightly.[26]

Havergal had been astute in observing that Goreh was in an excellent position to aid 'the cause of Zenana Missions and Female Education in the East', as her writing of Christian poetry demonstrated what fruits could be produced by an educated Indian woman.

Frances Ridley Havergal's words were heeded and a small collection of Goreh's verses appeared in 1883 (four years after Havergal's death). The title chosen for the book, '*From India's Coral Strand*', was a quotation from Reginald Heber's

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[24] Original reference, Bullock, preface to '*From India's Coral Strand*', pp. xii-xiii.
[25] Although it is unknown when Havergal wrote her poem 'Sisters' (it was published for the first time in her *Poetical Works* in 1884), by 1876, she had been a member of the YWCA for nine years, and the letter above attests that she was already interested in the cause of Zenana missions and female education in India.
[26] In Bullock, preface to Goreh, '*From India's Coral Strand*', p. xii.

'From Greenland's Icy Mountains' (1819), a favourite missionary hymn of the Victorians which appeared in the majority of contemporary hymn books. Indeed, when William Henry Havergal composed a setting for the hymn in 1824, he entitled the work 'The Admired Missionary Hymn'.[27] For the Victorians, the hymn was associated with the heroism of its author, Bishop Heber of Calcutta; as J. R. Watson has said:

> The hymn is a conspicuous example of that fervent belief in the need to convert the world to Christianity which led Heber and others to lay down their lives in the mission field. Heber, a distinguished scholar and poet, became an example for many, and his life of courageous dedication was followed by missionaries throughout the century. [...]
>
> It is in the light of such heroism that this hymn is best understood.[28]

When Goreh's collection appeared, as established by her (or her publisher's) choice of title, it would have been within this cultural and historical context that her work would have been received and understood.

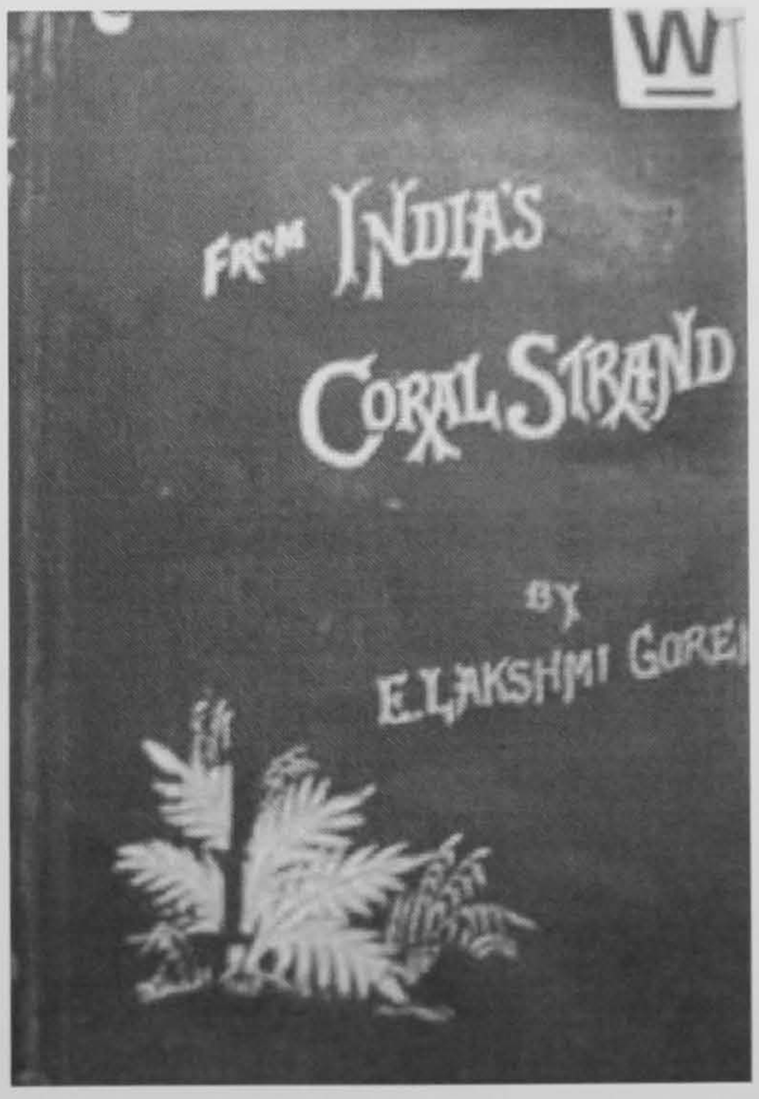


Figure 10

[27] William Henry Havergal, 'The Admired Missionary Hymn, written by ... Reginald [Heber], Lord Bishop of Calcutta, and Set to Music for Voices and the Organ or Piano Forte' (London: Paine and Hopkins for the Composer, [*c.*1824]).
[28] J. R. Watson, *An Annotated Anthology of Hymns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 243.

The cover design of Goreh's book tells much about how the work was marketed. The lettering is in an eye-catching and Eastern-looking font which has been designed to look like coral. It immediately suggests to the reader that the book relates to something exotic and 'Other', not British. Perhaps to highlight the author's 'Indianness' (or at least to draw attention to her foreigness, figure 10) her English name is abbreviated to 'E.' while her surname is retained in capitals: 'LAKSHMI GOREH'. There is also a small illustration of some greenery which looks like palm leaves, perhaps as an allusion to the Indian climate. Inside the title page, the Indian origin of the authoress is more explicitly stated as it reveals that Goreh is '*A BRAHMIN LADY*'. This statement fulfilled Havergal's suggestion that:

> if you will lay your gift at His feet, and let your verses go forth as no Englishwoman's work, but as that of a Brahmin who is now one of us in Christ, you will be giving help to the cause of Zenana Missions and Female Education in the East, which so far as I know, none but yourself can give! (p. xii)

'The cause' is more explicitly highlighted on the title page as a quotation from Goreh's second hymn of the collection, a work about Zenana mission entitled 'Who will go for us?', is given as an epigraph: 'Listen, listen, English sisters, / Hear an Indian sister's plea'.

Frances Ridley Havergal's considerable influence on the work's publication, even in death, is further confirmed by the fact that the preface was written by Charles Bullock, a close friend of the Havergal family.[29] The book was also printed by the publishing office of *Home Words*, a magazine with which 'F. R. H.' had close links. Indeed, Bullock's preface gives no indication that he was personally acquainted with the author of the verses. Instead, he quotes from others including Reverend Storrs and

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[29] Bullock had been curate of William Henry Havergal at St Nicholas's Parish Church, Foregate Street, Worcester. He was also the editor of the Victorian Evangelical magazine *Home Words*.

Frances Ridley Havergal. This is probably because, by the time of publication (1883), Goreh had returned to India to pursue Zenana mission work herself.[30] In the words of her adoptive father:

> As year by year God's grace has grown and shone more and more brightly in her, the wish has increased in her heart to go out and work among her own countrywomen; and now that desire has at last been gratified. She left England in October, 1880.[31]

Goreh had managed, at the age of twenty-seven, to find a meaningful occupation for herself. Like many of the other women writers of this study, her vocation was not found in the more conventional 'woman's mission' of marriage; indeed, it may be that her identity as a British Indian woman complicated the issue in Victorian England. Her singleness was thus an aspect of her life which she shared with many of the women writers of this study.

Goreh's application to serve abroad was initially hindered: 'She offered first to the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, but the Society was unable to send her out.' However, 'The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, [...] "joyfully accepted her," and appointed her an educational missionary to the Alexandra Girls' School at Amritsar.'[32] Goreh's selection as an Indian woman missionary must have been an exceptional and extraordinary event. Susan Thorne has observed that:

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[30] This is perhaps surprising at first because of her vehemence against the idea earlier on. It may be that, writing verse which attempted to persuade women to go out to India as Zenana missionaries, Goreh felt under pressure to lead by example.

[31] Bullock, preface to Goreh, *'From India's Coral Strand'*, p. x.

[32] Both quotations from Batley with Robinson, *Devotees of Christ*, p. 57. The post in Amritsar was with Havergal's friend Elizabeth Clay. Ivana Frian, at the Birmingham University Special Collections Library where the papers of the CEZMS are kept, writes that, 'Miss Goreh is specifically mentioned in paperwork relating to the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society. The CEZMS was founded in 1880 when it separated from the interdenominational Indian Female Normal School Society. Its main aim was to evangelise the women of India. Miss Goreh is linked with Jandiala in 1880 and Amritsar in Northern India in 1883. Amritsar was one of the chief centres for teaching and medical work, with industrial work starting in 1883. Jandiala was one of the main locations for "village missions" where evangelists visited dozens of villages grouped around a chosen centre.' Private correspondence dated 4th January 2006 to Nancy Cho.

The entire edifice of missionary 'feminism' -- the employment opportunities, the valorization of (British) women's skills and virtues, the institutional and social space for self-assertion, collective action, and aggressive challenging of male prerogatives -- rested on the existence of a degraded female Other in the colonies and at home. The missionary rationale for women's escape from the separate sphere, in other words, actively depended on the subordination of their heathen sisters. It was perhaps for this reason that British women missionaries and their sponsoring organizations rejected the applications of non-European women to become missionaries themselves. The application of one such lady born in Bombay 'with some native blood in her' was forwarded to the LMS Ladies Committee in 1876 by Reverend Alexander of Manchester. In refusing her offer, the committee stipulated that it sends out 'only English ladies of thorough English education at present' (London Missionary Society Archives, Ladies Committee, 8 March 1876). The missionary presumption that the best means of reaching female and male heathens alike was by displaying examples of pure Christian character and lifeways convinced most 'white' missionaries that their physical presence was indispensable.[33]

It is thus all the more significant that 'She went out with the status and salary of a European worker'.[34] As a protégée of Frances Ridley Havergal, Goreh could not remain ignored by the Christian women's organisations of the day, especially the CEZMS, who benefited from the CMS Frances Ridley Havergal Memorial Fund. She seems to have been accepted as an honorary European, but, rather than perpetuate this status, she started to re-appropriate her Indian identity upon return to India:

> On arrival to Calcutta on my return to India, when I went to a church on Sunday and saw a great number of my fellow-countrywomen wearing hats and bonnets, they looked so ugly that I determined on reaching Amritsar to throw hats and bonnets away, and wear a white *chaddar*.[35]

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[33] Susan Thorne, 'Missionary-Imperial Feminism' in *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, ed. Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), pp. 39-65 (p. 60).

[34] Batley with Robinson, *Devotees of Christ*, p. 57.

[35] Batley with Robinson, *Devotees of Christ*, p. 56. They note the difficulties Goreh faced in attempting to identify with the Indians: 'Those were days, now so strange to us, when converts were encouraged to adopt English dress, English customs and English names -- a policy of which she did not approve. Many influences combined in an attempt to keep her separate from her own folk, but she counted the reproach of colour greater riches than the treasures of European privilege, and though she was misunderstood in some quarters, she had her reward. The warm-hearted Punjabi schoolgirls simply adored her, as the Yorkshire mill-hands had done' (p. 58).

Earlier, when she stopped wearing her *chaddar* as a child, it was as if she was taking off her Indian identity. Here, it is as if by throwing away her hats and bonnets and wearing a *chaddar*, she was casting off her English identity and putting her Indian one back on again. Her observation that Indian women looked 'so ugly' in bonnets, and her subsequent decision to wear a *chaddar* also suggests that she had come to see the beauty of Indian women and native clothes.

With her hybrid identity, it is perhaps not surprising that she was drawn to work with Anglo-Indians. After some years in Amritsar, Goreh moved to Allahabad. While visiting the Anglo-Indian community there, she was moved by needs of the sick and this led her to train as a nurse. Later, after working as a hospital nurse, she became the first superintendent of a new orphanage for Anglo-Indian children at the Bishop Johnson Orphanage which opened on 29 February 1892.[36] During her time at the orphanage, Goreh also felt the call to become a deaconess (see figure 11).



Figure 11

[36] Anglo-Indian is used here to refer to people of mixed 'racial' parentage, not the English living in India.

This was another unusual, and also perhaps ambitious, route for Goreh to pursue. When she wrote to Bishop Clifford about her wish, 'he wrote back that he did not have enough knowledge of the Order to give her a decided answer then'.[37] However, on this return from furlough in England, he agreed to admit her to the order, and she was ordained a deaconess on St Andrew's day in 1897 at the cathedral in Allahabad. The fact that the Bishop did not initially know much about deaconesses indicates that that Goreh had made a request that was unusual for the diocese.[38] She had proved herself, again, to be an extraordinary Indian Christian woman.

A second volume of Goreh's verse, *Poems,* was published in 1899 in London and Madras by The Christian Literature Society for India. The following year, she retired from her work at the orphanage and, 1901, she started working with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. She retired as an 'official' missionary in 1919, but continued to work for the cause of Indian women, first in Kotogarh, and then in association with the women's work at St Thomas's Church in Simla.[39] She went to live at the Bishop Cotton School in 1930. From here, she continued with regularity in her zenana work. Two years later, her health broke down and she had to go to St Catherine's Hospital in Cawnpore, where she stayed until her death in early 1937.

Female Education and Zenana Missions in India

Although the Hindu scriptures (*snastras*) did not prohibit female education, Indian women were largely denied access to formal education. Prejudices had developed that women's education was unorthodox, unnecessary and dangerous; for instance, it was believed that girls would resent their domestic duties if they became literate, and that

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[37] Batley with Robinson, *Devotees of Christ*, p. 59.
[38] See pp. 252-255 for more information on deaconesses.
[39] Batley with Robinson, *Devotees of Christ*, p. 59.

they would disobey their parents and husbands.[40] One nineteenth-century missionary commissioned to survey the state of education in Bengal also wrote of the prevalence of a superstition that a man would die shortly after marrying a literate girl.[41]

For missionaries, who believed in the importance of studying the Bible, it seemed evident that women's education would be an important means of spreading the gospel and bringing about conversion. In addition to these religious motives, many believed that the promotion of female education would lift women up from oppressive customs which were seen as uncivilised and barbaric.[42] Emma Pitman listed some of the practices which the British found shocking in a pamphlet about *Indian Zenana Missions*:

> Of the entire population, not six per cent can read or write. But of the female population, not *one* in *two hundred* can read or write. For centuries this vast female population has been enslaved with the chains of error and heathenism, producing, as the result, untold sufferings. Among these sufferings may be enumerated -- 1st, The rite of Suttee [widow burning]; 2nd, Child-marriages; 3rd, Polygamy; 4th infanticide; 5th social bondage in Zenanas, producing deepest ignorance; 6th Cruel domestic customs.[43]

For many Britons, it seemed to be their responsibility and burden as colonial rulers to raise up India, the jewel in the imperial crown, in a civilising mission.

However, the provision of female education in India was complicated by the fact that high-caste girls often practised *purdah* and therefore could not go to school. Even if girls did attend school, child marriages meant that long-term school

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[40] Aparna Basu, 'Mary Ann Cooke to Mother Teresa: Christian Missionary Women and the Indian Response' in *Women and Missions: Past and Present : Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Providence, Oxford: Berg, 1993), ed. Fiona Bowie and others, pp. 187- 208 (p. 189).
[41] William Adam, Second Report on the State of Vernacular Education in Bengal, 1861, pp 187-311. Quoted in Basu, 'Mary Ann to Mother Teresa', p. 190.
[42] James Wilson of the Scottish Missionary Society said, 'I am more and more convinced that in seeking for the moral renovation of India, we must make greater efforts than we have yet done to operate upon the female mind [...]. In India it is the stronghold of superstition. Its enlightenment ought to be anobject of first concern with us.' Quoted in M. D. David, *John Wilson and his Institutions*, (Bombay: n. p., 1975), p. 31. Quoted in Basu, 'Mary Ann Cooke to Mother Teresa', p. 191.
[43] Emma Pitman, *Indian Zenana Missions: Their Need, Origin, Objects, Agents, Modes of Working and Results* (London: John Snow, 1881), p. 6.

educations were not practicable. In this cultural context, the Zenana system, where education was delivered to females in their homes by women teachers (men were not permitted into the Zenana), was promoted as a solution for educating and elevating Indian women. As this system became popular, a demand was created for women teachers to work in India. The call was answered most zealously by women missionaries; the job appealed to them because it gave them access to natives in their family homes. The fact that India was ruled by Britain also meant that it seemed a more familiar and safe foreign country to live in, and this added to the appeal of Zenana work.

Zenana teachers taught reading, writing, music and accounts as well as needlework skills like embroidery and darning. Missionaries also insisted that Bible stories should form part of their teaching. This was not objected to as long as efforts were not made to proselytise. The missionaries' examples of Christian purity and character were also thought to be influential. One woman missionary working in China wrote:

> for a foreign lady, who is so scrupulously clean in her own person and surroundings, to be willing to cleanse and bind up the loathsome sores of the dirtiest of Chinese women, without any other expression but that of tender sympathy, is surely one of the most practical lessons in Christianity which we can set before the Chinese.[44]

Similarly, Emma Pitman presumed that missionary ladies would be the first to bring kindness to the lives of Zenana women: 'the very *kindness of the Gospel to women* has won for it a glad reception among those who never before had any claim to kindness.'[45] These extracts demonstrate how, in the words of Jenny Daggers:

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[44] Annie Pearson, 'Work among the Native Women in Peking', *Quarterly News of Women's Work* (July 1892 [LMS]). Quoted in Thorne, 'Missionary-Imperial Feminism' (p. 60).
[45] Emma Pitman, *Female Missions in Eastern Lands: Fields of Labour, Mission-work, Agencies* (London: John Snow, 1882), p. 5.

> Religion provided a buttress, shoring up a stable, gendered and class-based social order against its potential rupture by radical elements. This conservative use of religion is illustrated [...] later in the [nineteenth] century as the churches developed the missionary activity, which went hand in hand with the extension of the Empire. The female civilising mission, through which British white, middle-class women subverted their domestic confinement, is firmly located within these class and race relations.[46]

For late nineteenth-century British women, the social condition of 'the Indian woman' was a matter of feminist concern.[47] Feminist periodicals depicted eastern women's lives as being filled with misery and hopelessness. A pamphlet published by the Female Education Society for their fiftieth anniversary in 1884, promoted Zenana education as alleviation from lives characterised by emptiness, boredom and bleakness: 'Nothing to do, nothing to see, nothing to hear, nothing to learn, nothing to think of, nothing to hope for, nowhere to go, no one to expect from the world without [...] no books, no music, no pictures, no ornaments.'[48] This view was a western interpretation of the life and experience of Zenana women. In terms of Edward Said's Orientalism, 'a style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient',[49] it was the occidental's constructed view of life in the East. Indeed, as Antoinette Burton has argued, such discussions of the oppression of Eastern women

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[46] Daggers, 'The Victorian Female Civilising Mission', p. 653.

[47] Antoinette Burton notes that Florence Nightingale, Mary Carpenter, Anna Gore-Langton, Frances Power Cobbe, Annie Besant, Henrietta Muller, Mary Scharlieb, Eva McLaren, Josephine Butler, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Arabella Shore, Margaret Cousins, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Eleanor Rathbone all wrote about or encouraged reform on behalf of Indian women. See *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 8-9.

[48] The Society for Promoting Female Education in the East, *Light through Eastern Lattices: a Plea for Zenana Captives* (London: Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East, 1884), p. 2. Quoted in Margaret Donaldson, '"The Cultivation of the Heart and the Moulding of the Will ...": The Missionary Contribution of the Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India, and the East', in *Women in the Church*, ed. W.J. Sheils and D. Wood (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 433.

[49] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 3.

constituted: 'a powerful declaration of feminist imperial authority [...]. For those who read the feminist periodical literature of the period learned who "the Indian Woman" was according to British feminists'.[50]

In practice, 'Missionary efforts for women's education were', as Aparna Basu has asserted, 'like a drop in the ocean'.[51] Frustrations for those hoping to bring about conversion in India included attitudes of religious pluralism. In 1908, when she was working for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Goreh contributed an article on 'Evangelistic Work among Women' in a volume entitled *Being Problems for Consideration at the Pan Anglican Congress, 1908*. She lamented:

> Alas! as soon as we have told them as simply as we could about the Son of Man, who came to save them from sin, they have turned to each other and said, 'All she says is true, we say 'Ram' and she says 'Jesus', both are the same.' No amount of explanation can convince them to the contrary, they still shake their heads, and say 'Yes, yes we understand they are both the same, the difference is just in the name.'[52]

That many Indians did not see a distinct difference between other religions and Christianity was a grave problem for missionaries who understood scripture literally. For Christ had pronounced, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me' (John 14. 6), and the apostles had agreed: 'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4. 12). Sometimes, Zenana women simply were not interested in religion; Goreh wrote about some of her strategies for introducing the topic in her article:

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[50] Burton, *Burdens of History*, p. 98.
[51] Basu, 'Mary Cooke to Mother Teresa', p. 203.
[52] Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, 'Evangelistic Work among Women' in *Methods of Carrying on Missionary Work I. Pan-Anglican Papers: Being Problems for Consideration at the Pan-Anglican Congress, 1908* (London: SPCK, 1908), pp. 1-4 (p. 2).

> I have noticed Mahommedan women can often only be reached by our willingness to teach them reading, writing, or fancy work; then comes the Bible lesson, which is sometimes tolerated, sometimes appreciated, sometimes closed to us. For this latter reason, I have found it wiser to introduce the religious teaching very gradually -- some Bhajan,[53] or Gazul is sung, and the talk has been about the suffering in the world. Which has led on to a talk about sin as the cause of suffering in the world, and then the way is prepared for the message of salvation from sin.
>
> [...] One great danger I have often felt in the Zenanas, is that of the secular work crowding out the spiritual. I like to keep that to the last, otherwise any impression made is likely to be lost in the interest of the other work coming after it.[54]

For missionaries, the Christian religion was the most important subject for education, but for many Zenana women, it clearly was not. Still, it was hoped that Indian women would be converted, and that they would take part in Christ's commission for the evangelism of the world:

> Win the women, and you will win the men; the Indian woman is not the helpless tool she is often imagined to be, her will is law in the Indian home; many a man would give up customs which he has learned to despise, but he dare not, because of the women in his Zenana. Win the women, and you will win the men; win the men, then of course, India is won. Is she worth winning? When won, she will do her part towards winning the world.[55]

The fact that the article was written by Goreh, an Indian woman missionary, must have been heartening for the readers of the *Pan-Anglican Papers.* Her hopeful final statement had, in her case, already been fulfilled as truth.

'From India's Coral Strand'

It seems likely that, had she still been alive when Goreh's verses were published, Frances Ridley Havergal would have written an introduction or preface to '*From*

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[53] Bhajals are 'simple songs in soulful language expressing the many-splendored emotions of love for God, a complete submission or self-surrender to him through singing'. About: 'Bhajan: Hindu Devotional Music' <http://hinduism.about.com/library/weekly/aa121799a.htm> [accessed 15.11.05]. Goreh was using Hindu devotional song as a leader to a discussion on Christianity.
[54] Goreh, 'Evangelistic Work Among Women', p. 2.
[55] Goreh, 'Evangelistic Work Among Women', p. 2.

India's Coral Strand'. In her place, Charles Bullock expressed the hope that Goreh's verses would 'prove a stimulus to missionary effort especially on behalf of the women of India [...] whose lot is cast in misery.'[56] As this sentence illustrates, the British perception of the lives of Indian women was that they were characterised by misery, unhappiness and hopelessness. Particularly for Evangelicals, the belief was that without the saving knowledge of the gospel, Indian lives would be filled with spiritual darkness and oppression. Havergal's hope had been that Goreh might be seen as an example of how God's grace could work in Indian women, an encouraging success story for those supporting missionary efforts, and that her writings might promote Zenana work. (The final paragraph of Bullock's preface actually tells readers where contributions to the CEZMS could be sent.)

It is thus not surprising that the first work in Goreh's collection after 'Sweet Singer' is an appeal for Zenana missionaries. 'Who will go for us?' pleads for English women to rescue their Indian sisters out of oppression. The call is specifically for missionaries to India, not anywhere else, and as the pronoun 'us' in the title suggests, Goreh is identifying herself as an Indian woman. By doing this, she is claming special erudition and authority to talk about and represent eastern women. For British readers, she must have seemed to provide a glimpse of the true thoughts of Indian women, although her poem is still arguably an act of Orientalism as she is British educated and articulating her knowledge in the colonizers' language, English:

1. Listen, listen, English sisters,
Hear an Indian sister's plea---
Grievous wails, dark ills revealing,
Depths of human woe unsealing,
Borne across the deep blue sea!
"We are dying day by day,
With no bright, no cheering ray:

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[56] Preface, *'From India's Coral Strand'*, p. xvi.

Nought to lighten up our gloom---
Cruel, cruel, is our doom." (pp. 21-2)

Goreh was uniquely placed as an Evangelical Christian Indian woman living in Britain to advocate the need for Zenana missionaries in the land of her birth; in the first two lines of the first verse, she was able to align herself with both the English and Indians because of her hybrid identity. The description of Indian women's lives here correlates with the reports given by Pitman and the Female Education Society. Even though she had lived in India, Goreh had clearly assimilated the popular British understanding of the country of her birth, and interpreted the situation of Indian women from the point of view of a western observer.

The first three verses of the hymn all open with the words, 'Listen, listen, Christian sisters'. Goreh is commanding the attention of her readers to make her appeal. The repetition of the phrase 'Christian sisters' reinforces the idea of a shared humanity and sorority between eastern and western women. In accordance with the Victorian idea that women's hearts are especially tender and loving, Goreh's petition appeals to Christian women's sympathy and compassion:

3. Listen, listen, Christian sisters:
Hark! they call, and call again;
Can ye pass them by, unheeding
All their eager, earnest pleading?
Hear ye not their plaintive strain?
Let your tender hearts be moved,
Let your love to Christ be proved:
Not by idle tears alone,
But by noble actions shown. (p. 22)

The succession of questions in the middle of the verse is rhetorical as the Christian is commanded to love and aid the needy. The second and third lines are an allusion to Lamentations 1. 12. 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there

be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.' Goreh is placing herself in the role of the prophet Jeremiah, and is thus taking on the authority of one who speaks on behalf of God. A further connection can be made to Lamentations 1. 1, which begins by sorrowing over the reversal of fortune that has fallen on Jerusalem: 'How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary'. As Adam Clarke's Bible Commentary noted, 'The Hindoo widow, as well as the Jewish, is considered the most destitute and wretched of all human beings. She has her hair cut short, throws off all ornaments, eats the coarsest food, fasts often, and is all but an outcast in the family of her late husband.'[57]

The pace is quick and helps to articulate a feeling of urgency to the reader/singer/listener. Although it can not be established if Goreh had read Havergal's 'Sisters!' before writing 'Who will go for us', her question 'Can ye pass them by, unheeding / All their eager earnest pleading' is similar to Havergal's:

> *Sisters!* Scorn not the name, for ye cannot alter the fact!
> Deem ye the darker tint of the glowing South shall be
> Valid excuse above for the Priest's and Levite's act,
> If ye pass on the other side, and say that ye did not see?[58]

Goreh's work actually makes the point less forcefully; she may suggest that those who pass by are unfeeling and apathetic, but does not make Havergal's critical judgement that those who ignore their neighbours are like the religious hypocrites Christ abhorred.

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[57] Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments. The Text Carefully Printed from the Most Correct Copies of the Present Authorised Translation, including the Marginal Readings and Parallel Texts. With a Commentary and Critical Notes; Designed as a Help to a Better Understanding of the Sacred Writings*, 6 vols (London: T. Tegg & Son, 1836), <http://www.studylight.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=la&chapter=001> [accessed 30.01.06].

[58] Havergal, 'Sisters' in *Poetical Works*, p. 527. See pp. 252-3 for discussion of this poem.

The vocabulary and imagery of 'Who will go for us?' appeal to the reader's sympathy. The Indian woman's life is said to be filled with 'Grievous wails' (p. 21) with 'Nought to lighten up our gloom---' (p. 22) being 'Deep in heathen darkness hidden' (p. 23). Goreh is not talking of material poverty or physical danger but of spiritual darkness. She is saying women are 'dying day by day' (p. 22) because they do not know Jesus Christ as their saviour. The hymn is intended to provoke not only pity but also outrage in Christian women who are privileged enough to 'prize a Father's love'; 'hope for rest above'; know their 'sins are all forgiven'; and that they 'have a home in heaven!' (p. 22). Referring to God specifically as 'Father' is significant because the implication is that western and eastern women are sisters because they were created by the same heavenly Father. While the concept of sisterhood should to some extent suggest equality, or at least similarity, between English and Indian women, the idea of international feminist solidarity was coloured by imperialist notions of western moral superiority. As Antoinette Burton has written:

> With the emergence of international feminist institutions like the International Women Suffrage Alliance and the International Council of Women in the pre-World War I period, British women figured in British feminist rhetoric as the saviors of the entire world of women as well. As Sarah Amos put it, 'We are struggling not just for English women alone, but for all the women, degraded, miserable, unheard of, for whose life and happiness England has daily to answer to God.'[59]

In this context, Goreh is, therefore, somewhat uncomfortably for modern readers who are living in postcolonial times, validating and perpetuating this model in her hymn.

India, and implicitly all the non-Christian world, is understood to be a domain of demonic powers. As such, an urgent need exists for the bright light of the gospel to be shone on those living in darkness. The contrast given is of abundance and plenty in

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[59] Sarah S. Amos, 'The Woman Suffrage Question', *Contemporary Review*, 61 (1892), p. 778. Quoted in Burton, *Burdens of History*, p. 3.

the western Christian world and poverty in the heathen world. In this way, the social message of the hymn shares similarities with those of our contemporary international welfare campaigns such as Make Poverty History. Goreh frequently uses motivational imperatives: 'Rise and take the Gospel message'; 'Go, disperse the shades of night'; 'Rise and go, whate'er it cost!' (p. 23). The word 'rise' is significant as the movement from slumber to activity. Dora Greenwell used the word to similar effect in 'A Christmas Carol': '*Rise, and open wide the door; / Christians, rise! The world is wide,* (p. 358)'; '*Rise, and bake your Christmas bread: / Christians rise! the world is bare,*' (p. 359); '*Rise, and light your Christmas fire; / Christians, rise! the world is old*' (p. 359). In the way that Greenwell's hymn calls all Christians to engage in social action, 'Who will go for us?' makes its appeal to all Christian women. Goreh requires no testing of vocation, presumably because every Christian has been commissioned to spread the gospel. She reminds her readers of this:

6. […]
Ye are by the Master bidden,
If we know the Master's mind.
[…]

7. Would ye miss His welcome greeting
When He comes in glory down?
Rather would ye hear him saying,---
As before Him ye are laying
Your bright trophies for His crown,---
"I accept your gathered spoil,
I have seen your earnest toil;
Faithful ones, well done! well done!
Ye shall shine forth as the sun!" (p. 23)

The implication is that to ignore the call is to be guilty of disobedience to Christ. The penultimate line is a biblical allusion to Christ's words in Matthew 25. 21, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord', so Goreh is saying

that to ignore God's call would also be to forfeit his pleasure and praise. In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that Goreh later felt that she herself was called to answer.

'Who will go for us?' is the only hymn in '*From India's Coral Strand*' that is explicitly about India or Zenana Mission work. Whether it was because the author could not remember the country of her birth very well, or because at this point she wished to embrace the 'English' aspects of her cultural inheritance, none of the hymns contain any descriptions of India, its landscape or people. Indeed, two illustrations at the start of the collection (figure 12 and 13) provide the only mental images of how India may look. The rest of the hymns of the collection are more contemplative and about the internal workings of faith.

Figure 12

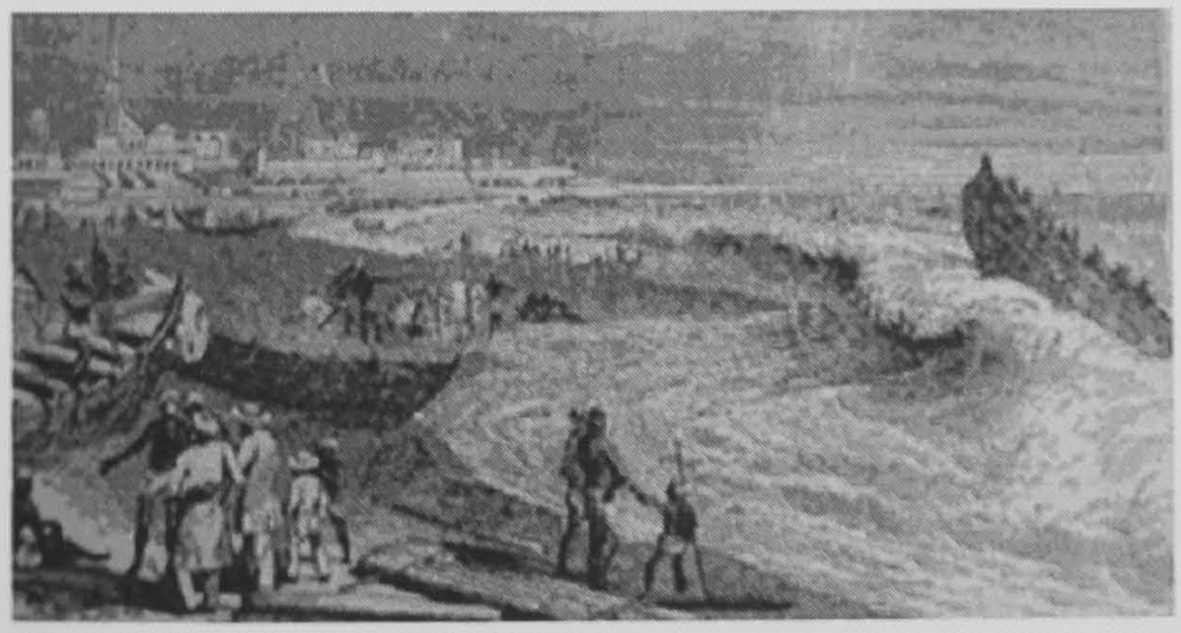
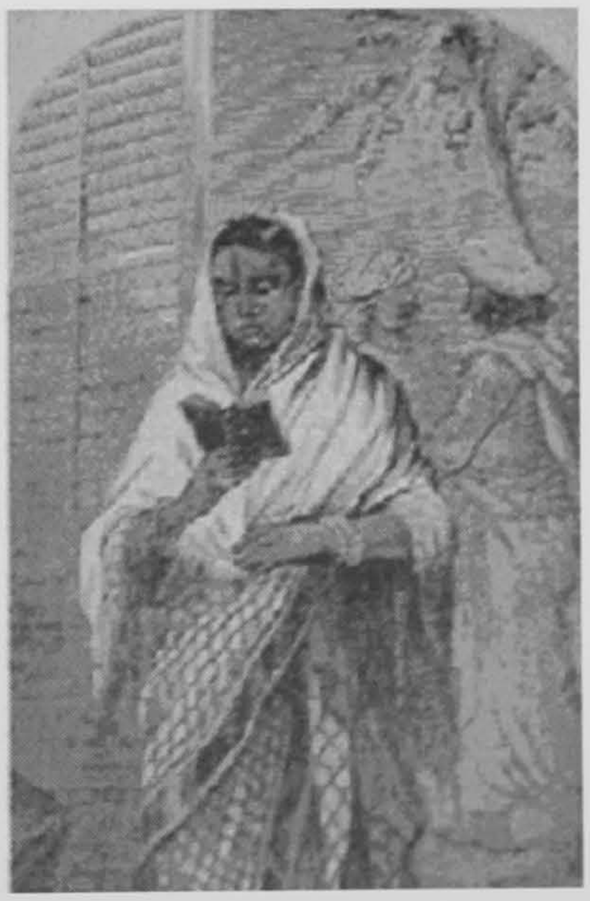


Figure 13



Goreh's most famous hymn of the collection is 'My Refuge'. It is based on a text from Psalm 31. 20: 'In the secret of Thy presence'. Its principal idea is about being in a contemplative state of hiddenness with God:

1. In the secret of His presence how my soul delights to hide!
Oh, how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesus' side!
Earthly cares can never vex me, neither trials lay me low;
For when Satan comes to tempt me, to the secret place I go. (p. 24)

'The secret place' relates to a belief in the dwelling of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the innermost being of each human soul. The contemplative, emptied of his/her self, can create the space and opportunity for encountering God deep within. This contemplative state is a retreat away from the world, its temptations and dangers.

The influence and inspiration of the psalms on this meditative hymn is important; as Louis Martz has noted:

> the word 'meditation' occurs six times in the King James version of the Psalms, and nowhere else in this version of the Bible, while the word 'meditate' occurs here nine times in the Psalms, and only once apiece in each of five other books. In the Psalms lay the prime models for the soul in meditation: here, above all places, lay a precedent for what I have called the poetry of meditation.[60]

The theology of the hymn is in keeping with that of the holiness movement which 'laid stress on "the rest of faith"' as noted in the previous chapter (see Chapter 5, n. 112).[61]

In I Samuel 19. 2, Jonathan warns David to hide himself in a 'secret place' away from the harm intended by Saul. It is within this context that many of David's psalms are set, and, in Goreh's hymn, much of the language and imagery comes from the Psalms:

2. When my soul is faint and thirsty, 'neath the shadow of His wing
There is cool and pleasant shelter, and a fresh and crystal spring;
And my Saviour rests beside me, as we hold communion sweet:
If I tried, I could not utter what He says when thus we meet. (p. 24)

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[60] Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, p. 279.
[61] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, pp. 151-152.

The soul that faints and thirsts for God alludes to Psalm 42. 1, 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God', while dwelling in the shadow of God's wings is from Psalm 91. 1, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' The appeal of such tender, protected hiddenness seems to hark back to the antenatal experience of being in the mother's womb, a state which Frances Ridley Havergal's hymn 'Perfect Peace. In Illness' also alludes to (see pp. 269-272). For the contemplative, abiding in God's presence is a blissful state of union with the beloved out of time and space; indeed, Bebbington has written that 'Holiness was so much an internal matter of personal consciousness, a trysting of the elevated soul with its God, that the practicalities of everyday living were generally passed over in silence'.[62] Accordingly, Goreh's hymn is oblivious of the world, its busyness, the passing of time and of physical activity. Bebbington's use of the word 'trysting' is particularly pertinent here as the 'secret place' is not only a refuge from danger but is also a 'happy meeting-place' (p. 25) for the lover and the beloved to be united in secret. For the singer of this hymn, the description of being so marvellously refreshed and in a state of such contented security is an enviable condition, and, as such, the hymn is an invitation for the singer to seek and find that secret place also.

'My Refuge' contrasts considerably with the call to activism given in 'Who will go for us?' Alison Bucknell has talked of 'Martha's Work and Mary's Contemplation', from the story in Luke 10. 38-42, to describe the activism of the Mildmay deaconesses and the contemplative rest of the Keswick Convention women. In contrast to 'Who will go for us?', which could be said to be about 'Martha's work' because of its call to missionary activity, this hymn about holy rest relates to 'Mary's

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[62] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p. 175.

contemplation'. Indeed, the final verse maybe even makes reference to the meetings which were popular with the holiness movement: 'And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy meeting place, / You must mind and bear the image of the Master in your face' (p. 25).[63] Goreh, a practical woman who was actively engaged in social work, first in her adoptive father's parish and later in India in her roles as a missionary and a deaconess, thus told her readership (as did Charlotte Elliott, a housebound invalid) about the importance of resting, listening and waiting for God. The example of her life and the words of her hymns intimated that to fulfil one's potential in faith, one had to pursue both the active and contemplative life.

'My Refuge' seems to have been most popular in the revivalist meetings of Sankey and Moody. Ira D. Sankey recalled that it was largely introduced to the public during the London Winter Mission of 1883-4:

> The hymn at once came into general favor, and the deeply spiritual tone of the words brought blessing to many. The song was afterwards published in 'Gospel Hymns,' and in 'Sacred Songs and Solos.' Very soon it found its way into all parts of the world. Dr Hudson Taylor, head of the great China Inland Mission, stated at Northfield [Massachusetts] that it was the favorite hymn of his missionaries.[64]

Hudson Taylor moved in holiness movement circles and it follows that his organisation would place importance on the rest of faith. However, a further reason for the hymn being a favourite of missionaries can perhaps be glimpsed in I. Howard Marshall's comment that the Martha and Mary story 'is not meant to teach the value of a contemplative compared with a life of action, but that service to Jesus must not fill people's lives to such an extent that they have no time to learn from him.'[65] The

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[63] This hymn was included in the Keswick Convention's *Hymns of Consecration and of Faith* (1902).
[64] Ira D. Sankey, *My Life and Sacred Song* (London: Hodder and Stoughton,1906), pp. 166-7.
[65] I. Howard Marshall, 'Luke', *New Bible Commentary*, ed. Carson and others, p. 999.

hymn was perhaps a reminder of the necessity to balance time in God's presence along with work for him.

That the message of 'My Refuge' moved contemporary singers and readers to admire its author is indicated by the following account:

> A missionary well remembers being introduced [...] to Deaconess Goreh in Simla. [...] [S]he knew the famous hymn, and was thrilled at the prospect of meeting its author, even though she was aware that writers in the flesh are not always so interesting as their creations! A single glance at the Deaconess's face removed misgivings. 'Oh, she *does* do it,' she felt, 'she *does* dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and bear the impress of the Master in her face.'[...] Many years later the same worker met her again, wrinkled, fragile, emaciated with age and illness, and still reflecting in the mirror of her most beautiful face the glory from within the veil.[66]

This story intimates that it is possible to live long-term in an elevated spiritual state of abiding peace; Goreh suggested this herself in her own hymn:

> 4. You will surely lose the blessing, and the fullness of your joy,
> If you let dark clouds distress you, and your inward peace destroy;
> You may always be abiding, if you will, at Jesu's side;
> In the secret of His Presence you may every moment hide. (p. 25)

In a similar manner to the example of Havergal's life of 'consecration', a permanent state of deeper spiritual communion with God, Goreh is also claiming that such closeness with God is possible throughout one's life. As a young woman (she must have written the hymns before she left for India in 1880 at the age of twenty-seven), she could not yet have tested the truth of this statement for herself. It thus follows that she was drawing from contemporary theology and the examples of others, probably including her heroine Frances Ridley Havergal. Her hymns are written with an authoritative tone of spiritual experience beyond her years.

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[66] Batley with Robinson, *Devotees of Christ*, pp. 62-3.

Many of Goreh's hymns are conventionally Evangelical. The fourth hymn, 'The Great Refiner' (the title is from Malachi 3. 2, 'But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire') expresses the common Evangelical trope of wishing for refinement from spiritual dross to gold. However, coming from an Indian author, the hymn would have been remarkable to its British readers as an impressive and articulate example of how ardent an Indian woman's faith could be:

1. Take my heart, O Great Refiner,
  Plunge it in the cleansing flame:
Heat the furnace seven times hotter,---
  I shall still adore Thy Name.
I shall hail its hungry roaring,
  'Twill be music in mine ear,
If, amid its fiery anger,
  Thy sweet gentle voice I hear. (p. 26)

The idea of faith being tested in a burning furnace is from Daniel 3. 1-30; Goreh is declaring that she desires to be such a faithful servant. What is fascinating and most powerful is that Goreh seems to be transmuting the idea of *suttee*, which so many of her readers would automatically have associated with Indian women, from a Hindu to a Christian sacrificial act of devotion. She is declaring that, standing in an enemy's furnace, trusting in and being faithful to God, she will withstand the fire and be refined in an act of spiritual alchemy.[67] At the same time, the 'I' of the hymn requires identification from the singers and readers of the hymn. As such, it invites readers to seek the same spiritual cleansing and inner transformation from God.

In 'The Great Refiner', Goreh is resolving to remain faithful to God amidst the greatest difficulties of life. As in 'My Refuge', she says what should be prized most is

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[67] One is reminded of John Donne's phrase the 'true religious alchemy' in 'The First Anniversary', l. 182: John Donne, *The Complete English Poems*, ed. A. J. Smith (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 275.

the close presence of God; pain can be endured 'If, amid its fiery anger, / Thy sweet gentle voice I hear.' As in Havergal's 'Perfect Peace. In Illness' (see pp. 268-271), her desire is for whole-hearted trust in God to the extent of rejoicing in suffering:

3. Oh, how wonderful Thy goodness,
Far beyond my highest thought!
I can only take, rejoicing,
What Thy tender care has brought.
Purged and tried as gold or silver,
This is what I long to be;
Perfected, and wanting nothing---
Work Thine own sweet will in me. (pp. 26-7)

This complete giving of the self and resignation to God's will is an act of love reminiscent of Havergal's comment that 'Master' was her 'favourite title, because it implies rule and submission; and this is what love craves' (see p. 247).[68] Indeed, both pleasure and suffering are interpreted as demonstrations of God's love, and, consequently, as precious gifts not to be missed:

5. Welcome, welcome every dealing,
Pain or pleasure, joy or woe;
All is sent, O Great Refiner,
By a loving hand, I know.
Daily cares which fret and grieve me,
Small and trifling, yet so keen,
Are on purpose to refine me,
Though by human eyes unseen.

6. Do not let me miss *one* trial
Which would make me purer still;
When Thine image shineth through me
Cease the fining---not until
When the silver gleams and glitters,
From all earthly dross set free,
When no stain to mar its beauty,
Satisfied Thou then shalt be! (p. 27)

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[68] M. Havergal, *Memorials*, p. 138.

For readers who knew from the preface to '*From India's Coral Strand*' that Goreh had returned to India as a missionary, the hymn could also be read as a heroic embrace of all that lay ahead of her in her work for God. Her high standard of devotion as an Indian woman could also have challenged some British readers' beliefs.

'Led Aside' is another hymn about trusting in God's will, as the editor explains regarding the circumstances of the hymn's composition:

> Being attacked with scarlet fever while residing in a large family of children, Miss Goreh was removed by her own desire to the Bradford Fever Hospital. During the time she was there, God was pleased to give her a mission of usefulness to the patients on each side of her. These lines were written in the Hospital.[69]

This introduction means that the hymn is connected in the minds of its readers to the strength of Goreh's faith and her gift for ministry. Readers who are familiar with Havergal's hymns may also make the connection that Goreh is an Indian Christian woman following the mould of Havergal, as the story of the composition of this hymn is like that of 'Perfect Peace. In Illness' (see pp. 269-272). This hymn thus becomes, as Havergal desired, 'a testimony to many thousands of what His grace can do and has done [to an Indian woman].'[70] The interpretation that God mercifully granted 'a mission of usefulness' to her, even in sickness, is another example of Victorian Evangelicals' preoccupation with purposeful activity at all times, as seen in the hymns of Charlotte Elliott. The story behind the hymn is in keeping with the idea for providing the conditions for prayer and contemplation, but as an opportunity for evangelism. God can transform a dissatisfying and frustrated situation into a fulfilled and happy one.

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[69] Goreh, '*From India's Coral Strand*', p. 31.
[70] Goreh, '*From India's Coral Strand*', p. xii.

'Led Aside' is about trusting in God's purposes even when life does not seem to make sense. Goreh explains that she was disappointed when admitted to hospital, because she seemed to be denied the ability to serve God:

3. Laid aside from work for Him,
Though hot tears my eyes should dim,
"Nothing, nothing" I would be!
If He really needed me,
He would not have laid me low:
Well his tender love I know.
Now laid aside from pleasant duty,
I gaze and see the Saviour's beauty. (pp. 31-32)[71]

The feeling of disappointment and unease in the first part of the verse is comparable with the preoccupation with the restricted state of 'languor' in the hymns of the earlier women hymn writers of this study. However, in the final two lines of the verse, Goreh is articulating her realisation of thought that service to others in Jesus's name must not distract from learning from him. If one humbly submits to God and waits on him, he will reveal what work he has in store:

5. Laid aside---behold I lie,
Humbled 'neath Thy searching eye.
Painful lessons I am taught;
Now I know why I was brought
Here aside, my Lord, with Thee:
"I was blind, but now I see!"
I do not shrink, dear Master, teach me:
All sound is hushed: Thy voice can reach me.

6. Called away to Jesu's side,
Here content I will abide;
Peace, sweet peace, my spirit fills:
Every murmuring thought He stills:
All my tears He wipes away,
Turns the darkness into day.
Some work for Him e'en here is given,
A few dear souls to lead to Heaven. (pp. 32-33)

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[71] 'Led Aside' is the title of the hymn even though the verses I quote start 'Laid aside [...]'.

The sixth line of the sixth verse is a reference to the story of Jesus healing the blind man in John 9. The idea is that of scales falling from one's eyes so that the real truth of God can be seen. 'Led Aside' is also a testament to the many Victorian women's earnest desires to engage in active service for God, and records the real growing demands for women's ministry. In the context of Goreh's desire for God's work in this hymn, it is not surprising that she became a missionary and a deaconess.

In the first half of the third verse of '*God's* Will and *My* Will, Equals *Our* Will', Goreh articulated some of the frustrations an able and motivated single woman could face:

3. His Will:---
That I should have a lowly post---
And mine, to guide and teach a host---
I cannot toil on still
With many a fretting care
Which I can scarcely bear:
I vainly wish to be as others are,
Whose noble fame is spreading near and far.
To me, my work appears too common-place,
No silver linings in the clouds I trace.
[...] (p. 43)

In the context of such dissatisfaction, Goreh finds comfort, as Dora Greenwell did, in God's surpassing ability to understand the human heart. This can be seen in 'Thou Understandest', a hymn which takes its title from a text from Psalm 139. 2: 'Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.' Its message is that God's understanding brings consolation:

1. "Thou understandest,"---Oh, how sweet
The comfort of this word!
All my heart yearnings it can meet---
"Thou understandest," Lord.

2. "Thou understandest"--- Thou alone
When human sight is blind:

To Thee my inmost thoughts are known;
Here calm repose I find. (p. 38)

What is revealed in the next verses is that what God understands most is Goreh's urgent and intense desire for him:

5. "Thou knowest how I long to do
The thing that pleaseth Thee;"
Then, Lord, my failing strength renew---
"Thou understandest" me!

6. "Thou knowest," Lord, on Thee I wait:
"Teach me to do Thy will"
Obedient at Thy palace-gate---
Speak, Master! I fulfil!

7. "Thou knowest," Lord, the way I take:
I do not wish to see
One step beyond: for Jesu's sake
All shall be well with me! (p. 39)

The third line of verse seven contains an allusion to 'Lead, Kindly Light' (1833), in which John Henry Newman asks 'Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see / The distant scene; one step enough for me', to stress further God's trustworthiness emanating from his omniscience.[72] Pitman wrote that 'Thou Understandest', 'breathes forth the language of filial trust. None but a true Christian could have written the lines' (p. 337), and it does articulate a willingness to please and a dependence that is almost childlike. The words 'Speak Master' in the final line of the sixth verse is a reworking of Havergal's plea in her famous hymn, 'Master, speak! Thy servant heareth' (see pp. 251-3). As such, it is evident at this stage of her writing career, that Goreh's hymns followed heavily the conventional pattern of her heroine's verses rather than expressing her own distinctive agenda or poetic voice.

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[72] John Henry Newman, *Verses on Various Occasions. By John Henry Cardinal Newman, Of The Oratory* (London: Burns and Oates, [1883]), p. 152.

Hymns Written with the CEZMS

During the first five years of her work in India, a number of Goreh's writings were published in the CEZMS Magazine, *India's Women*. It seems likely that they, like her *'From India's Coral Strand'*, had the purpose of encouraging British subscribers to the publication by demonstrating the kind of faith and intelligence that Indian women could cultivate. As may be expected, they often turn to the cause of mission in India. Her hymn 'All One in Christ', published in the prefatory issue of *India's Women* (1880), contains the following verse:

2. 'One in Christ Jesus,' no longer as strangers,
Though we may differ in language and hue;
One in the midst of a world full of dangers,
Cheering each other with brave hearts and true.[73]

Another hymn, 'Give Ye Them to Eat', published in the first official issue (1881), is a plea for readers back in Britain to answer the call to missionary service. Like Havergal's 'Sisters' and Goreh's earlier 'Who will go for us?', it conveys an urgent need which the fortunate British sisters are pressed to meet:

3. How can this hungry multitude be fed?
Whence can we satisfy them each with bread?
Oh, faithless question! -- which the Lord will meet
With one short sentence, 'Give ye them to eat.'

[...]

7. The Master seeth still a multitude
In India's darkened homes of solitude;
Fast bound in Satan's cruel chains they lie;
Say, shall those million souls be left to die?

[...]

9. And though He is on high, and we on earth,
He has not left us helpless in our dearth;

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[73] Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, 'All One in Christ', *India's Women*, prefatory number (1881), p. 46.

We have some loaves and fishes, have we not?
The Master needs the little we have got.

10. Have we not eaten of the Bread of Life,
And been refreshed and strengthened for the strife
With deadly sin? -- are we not glad
In Him who *always* comforts us when sad?

[...]

13. Are there not others, who might join this band
Of willing workers in that distant land?
So many doors are open, will not some
Who know and love the precious Saviour, come?[74]

As a Christian woman, fed with 'the Bread of Life', Goreh is not one of the Indian multitude but is among the numbers of the saved called to feed the hungry. It suggests that Christianity transcends nationality. The implication is also that the uncivilised 'Other' is not the man or woman of different 'race' or colour, but those separated from Christ through lack of knowledge of him and his saving work of love.

Poems

Even in the hymns published in *India's Women*, there is little about the interaction Goreh made with the non-European peoples in her life as a missionary in India. In contrast, it is possible to see in her later *Poems* (1899) the effects of her life as a missionary in India. This volume was a small run of 1,000 copies and the only copy I have been able to locate is held at the archives of the Church of England Zenana Mission Society at the University of Birmingham. As far as I am aware, it has not been subject to literary analysis, or comparison with *'From India's Coral Strand'* before. These poems display how Goreh's faith and interest were engaged in the community she served. The book was published while Goreh was Superintendent of

[74] Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, 'Give Ye Them to Eat', *India's Women*, 1 (1881), pp. 32-3.

the Bishop Johnson Orphanage (*c.* 1891 to 1900), and, as such, several works seem to have been influenced by her work among children.[75] *Poems*, written in greater maturity (they were published nearly two decades after she started her work in India), displays more of Goreh's concern and care for, and awareness of, others.

'A Plea for the Waifs and Strays' is introduced with the following lines:

> The writer was once told by a friend that he would send her money whenever she needed it for her own use, but that he would not send anything if she persisted in spending it on her waifs and strays.[76]

This story may be seen as an instance, as described in 'Thou Understandest', of human sight being blind to the true desires of a person's heart. Goreh's point is that even if people fail, she trusts that God will provide for those who seek to serve him with a pure heart:

1. I welcome the poor waifs and strays,
   And find them a place in my heart;
   To brighten their desolate days,
   And give them in life a fair start.

2. Although I am not very wise,
   Although I myself am but poor;
   The Master has bid me arise,
   And open to them my home door.

3. The barrel of meal shall I know
   Be filled to the full as I need;
   The oil in my cruise overflow,
   The Master will bless me indeed. (p. 7)

God has instructed her to welcome the needy and she trusts that he will provide what is needed if she undertakes this work. The childlike tone and simplicity of language convey humility, perhaps a childlike faith and trust in God's provision. Indeed, the

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[75] She had also worked with children as an educational missionary at Alexandra Girls' School in Amritsar.
[76] Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, *Poems* (London and Madras: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1899), p. 7.

sing-song rhythm gives the poem the feel of a children's song.[77] Goreh's verse emphasise material and intellectual poverty to articulate their lowliness. This partly serves to highlight God's grace more. Unworthy as humankind is, he will not deny people opportunities to love and seek him. Indeed, in Goreh's work, the implication is that God's commission to 'open to them my home door' (p. 7) is actually more of an honour because of the person's humble position. The poor, unaccomplished and unskilled person is a more transparent instrument for God. Opening the home door to waifs and strays is, as in Dora Greenwell's 'A Christmas Carol', a welcoming act that mimics God's open-armed invitation to his love. 'The barrel of meal' and 'oil in my cruise' are allusions to the story of Elijah and the Widow at Zarephath (1 Kings 17) which Goreh employs to convey her childlike trust and confidence in God's ability to provide.

In the subsequent verses, it is possible to see the determination to whole-hearted service to God that was expressed repeatedly in '*From India's Coral Strand*':

4. His servant I am, every day
I watch what His wishes shall be;
To do with my might what I may,
With the talents He giveth to me.

[...]

6. My object in life is but one,
I have but *one* Master to serve;
His will, *only His* shall be done,
For Him I will strain every nerve.

7. To-day He may bid me do this,
To-morrow my work may be changed;
But nothing comes to me amiss,
Which He in His love has arranged.

8. His will, and His wisdom and strength,
Shall comfort and help me each day:

---

[77] The sentiments are similar to the final verse of Christina Rossetti's 'In the Bleak Mid Winter': see p. 12.

Till I shall behold Him at length,
And serve Him up yonder alway. (pp. 7-8)

Goreh incorporates several biblical references in the poem. The fourth verse, which asserts that she is a servant who will use the talents given to her by her master, is alluding to the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25. 14-30; Luke 19. 12-28). The sixth verse, which emphasises the idea that she has only 'one Master' to serve, relates to Jesus's words in Matthew 6. 24 that 'No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' By making the allusions, she is asserting that she will not let God down; she will be the faithful servant who pleases him. Nearly twenty years after '*From India's Coral Strand*' was written, Goreh's preoccupation is still with service for God, and the great reward she envisages is to 'behold Him at length/ And serve Him up yonder alway' (p. 8) in heaven.

'Psalm xxxiv. 1.' is a simple three-verse poem based on the scriptural text: 'I will give thanks unto the Lord: his praise shall ever be in my mouth.' From this piece of scripture, Goreh teaches that if one praises God in times of difficulty, the soul will be comforted:

1. Sing a little song, dear heart,
Just a little song of praise,
When some murmuring thoughts upstart,
Better feelings it will raise.

2. Breathe a little prayer, dear heart,
Just a little prayer for love,
When ungenerous thoughts upstart,
Grace will come in form of dove.

3. Smile with sunny face, dear heart,
Let not others see thee sad,
When grief-stricken thoughts upstart,
God's sweet peace will make thee glad. (pp. 25-6)

Goreh's simple diction, for instance her recurring use of the word 'little', is an attempt to capture the innocent childlike mind for adults. That the poem is intended for adults is indicated by the upsetting thoughts listed. '[M]urmuring thoughts', 'ungenerous thoughts' and 'grief-stricken thoughts' (p. 25) relate more to the cares of the world which burden weary adults rather than young children. Despite the attempt to replicate childlike tones, Goreh does not produce a poem that is patronising to its readers. Instead, her work conveys a charming tenderness that, although sentimental, is comforting and motherly. The repeated address 'dear heart' is particularly intimate, kind and gentle. The voice who speaks seems to be a caring and understanding parental figure; perhaps the imagined voice of God himself. The implicit lesson is that even 'a little song' and 'a little prayer', which do not require too much effort when the soul is weary or downhearted, are sufficient to be heard by God who always cares. The reminder is that the Almighty and omnipotent God notices and listens to the smallest pleas. Indeed, the simple language and measured tone are reminiscent of Ann and Jane Taylor's *Hymns for Infant Minds* (1808). Although not identified in the book as a hymn, the simple ABAB rhyme scheme and 7.7.7.7. metre would lend itself to be sung easily. In many ways, this poem would be more accessible as a hymn, the desire and need for comfort and consolation in times of upset being universally understood by adults and children alike, rather than some of Goreh's earlier hymns which talk of an elevated level of spiritual devotion which many could find inaccessible to their experience.

Another poem which articulates similar ideas is 'Isaiah lxvi. 13'. The text is, 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be

comforted in Jerusalem.' Goreh uses the example of a mother's love to teach of God's even greater care. Like 'Psalm xxxiv. 1.', the tone and language of the poem is gentle and kind:

1. Little one, what ails thee,
Wherefore weepest thou?
Mother never fails thee,
Clear thy troubled brow.

2. See, her arm enfolds thee,
Hush thee, hush thee, dear,
Tenderly she holds thee,
Wipes away each tear.

3. Clouds are disappearing,
Tears to smiles give place,
Mother's words are cheering,
Bright the little face.

4. Child of God, now hearken,
Thou shouldst happy be,
Nought thy life should darken
When *He* comforts thee. (pp. 26-7)

The image of the mother who comforts her child is powerful to the human memory. The gentle tones of the kind parental voice in the first verse reproduce successfully the reassurance that a mother gives. In the second verse, Goreh triggers associations of love and protection with soothing words like 'enfolds', 'hush' and 'hold'; as in 'Psalm xxxiv. 1', the voice may be imagined to be that of God himself. In four short verses, Goreh moves effectively from the child's distress to happy smiles brought about by the mother's consolation. As this is in the pattern of actual children's behaviour, it reveals something of Goreh's understanding of the experience of children. This is poignant when it is considered that this poem was probably written while she was superintending motherless orphans, and that, as a spinster, she was unlikely to have the chance to become a biological mother herself. The idea of a

mother's love is accessible to children and adults alike, and the poem is in some ways a reminder that all are children of God, whose love is eternal and unconditional, regardless of age.

Goreh's consideration of the holiness and redemptive powers of motherhood may be explored further in 'The Sorrow'. This poem is, somewhat surprisingly, a work of progressive feminist theology. It starts with a valorisation of the Virgin Mary's role as the mother of Christ from the *Te Deum*:

> "When Thou tookest upon Thee, to deliver man,
> Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.
> When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death,
> Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven
> To all believers."
>
> Again I see, what do I see? A sight,
> The very fairest, ever looked upon.
> A virgin-maid, and on her breast, a child;
> No other child was ever seen like Him.
> Here rest awhile my soul, nor haste away.
> Shut out the world's rude din, and meditate
> On deep mysterious things, to thee revealed.
> In this sweet Infant, lying peaceful here.
> Whence came He? Who is He? great questions these;
> Not to be lightly answered, then forgot.
> Approach them reverently, with wondering awe,
> Weigh well, the mighty import of each word
> *This*, is the "Lord of Glory," "King of Kings!"
> [...]
> He came to this sin-stricken world of ours,
> A lowly Babe, born of the Virgin's womb!
>
> Most Blessèd Lord, I worship Thee, I praise,
> I bless Thy Holy Name, adoring Thee,
> For thou hast raised weak erring womanhood
> From lowest depths of hopeless misery. (pp. 18-19)

The lines that follow convey a message similar to that of I Timothy 2. 15 that women 'shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety':

A *woman* first transgressed and brought forth woe,
For *woman* was reserved the glorious chance
Of giving to the world a Saviour too (p. 19).

Goreh continues her poem with further examples of how women faithfully supported the ministry and life of Christ:

And *women* made a home for Him on earth,
When He had ne'er a place to lay His Head,
A *woman* washed His Sacred Feet with tears,
The while a haughty Pharisee reviled;
A *woman* poured sweet ointment on His Head,
While Judas enviously desired its gain;
Frail *women* stood beside His cross till death,
While faithless friends forsook Him all and fled;
And timid where *Mary* weepeth sore beside
The place where Jesus lay, till He appears
And speaks to her, the first of all His friends.
. . . .
Most Blessèd Lord, I worship Thee, I praise,
I bless Thy Holy Name, adoring Thee,
For Thou hast raised weak erring womanhood,
From lowest depths of hopeless misery. (p. 19)

The language of the quatrain above, which has been repeated from earlier in the poem as a kind of chorus, requires closer examination. Goreh praises God for his elevation of women 'From lowest depths of hopeless misery'. This phrase clearly echoes British women's writing about Indian Zenana women as seen above; thus, Goreh is commending God for engaging a similar project to her own work as a Zenana missionary. At the same time, she is valorising the feminist strand of Zenana missionary work, the impulse to enlighten and liberate women whose educations have been blocked by oppressive patriarchal systems.

The final work of *Poems* is entitled 'Baby Preachers'. It seeks to speak about faith through an observation of little children. The poem opens with an adult voice narrating a scene of children engaged in bedtime prayers to the reader:

1. Tiny hands folded,
Tiny eyes closed,
Tiny lips moulded,
Sweetly composed.

2. Tiny hearts beating,
Full of His love,
Angels are greeting
Them from above. (p. 37)

The language draws attention to the smallness of children again. The repetition of the word 'tiny' conveys not only the diminutiveness of their size but also their vulnerability.[78] The fact that most lines only contain three short words means that form and content are unified in privileging the small and simple. Goreh's emphasis on the children's little hands, eyes, feet, lips and hearts, gives the feeling that the observer is in awe and wonder of the exquisite delicacy of the children. Indeed, the poem is an adult's interpretation of the innocence and preciousness of childhood; this is not unusual in writing of her period, as sentimental views about children abounded in Victorian culture where high infant mortality rates meant that children were imbued with the preciousness of something that might easily be lost. Christ's statement in Luke 18. 16, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God', also gave scriptural provenance to the privileging of childhood simplicity and innocence. That Goreh became attached to the children she worked with is indicated in Batley's comment about her work at the Bishop Johnson Orphanage, 'So for nine years she remained in happy charge of the orphanage,

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[78] Mrs Alexander's 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' also emphasises the tiny and little: 'Each little flower that opens, / Each little bird that sings, / He made their glowing colours, / He made their tiny wings.' Alexander, *Hymns for Children*, p. 11. J. R. Watson has noted: 'The word "little" has a respectable provenance, from Matthew 18 ("And Jesus called a little child"); but the chapter was exploited for its behavourial possibilities and for its sentimental associations.' See 'Quiet Angels', p. 133.

resigning in about 1900 "owing to the death of a dear child which nearly broke my heart!"'[79]

In the third verse, Goreh seems to suggest she has been humbled at witnessing the faith of little children:

3. Baby words rising
Upward to heaven,
Is it surprising
Answers are given? (p. 37)

The reminder is that God cares, loves and listens to even the meekest child. The description is a sentimental Victorian vision of beatified, angelic children, who are imagined to be closer to God because of their purity and innocence:

4. Tiny feet pattering
Off to each bed,
Angels are scattering
Blessings a head.

5. Tiny cheeks dimple
With their glad smiles,
Ah, their talk simple
How it beguiles. (p. 37)

The word 'beguiles' indicates that the scene has been an enchanting and magical one for the observer. As readers, we have shared in the privilege of glimpsing something extraordinary. Indeed, the final verse of the poem is a reversal of roles and it is the adult who asks to learn from the children:

6. Dear little preachers,
Influence me,
Help me, sweet teachers,
Simple to be. (p. 38)

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[79] Original reference, quoted in Batley with Robinson, *Devotees of Christ*, p. 59.

The scriptural justification for this idea comes from Psalm 8. 2, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.' To end her collection with this poem was an affirmation of her vocation to work with the children of the orphanage and a tribute to the blessings she received from her work. In doing God's work and conveying his love to others, she was gaining insight into riches beyond gold and silver.

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Ellen Lakshmi Goreh's life may be seen as an index to the possible ministries that women could have at the turn of the twentieth century. Her roles included being a missionary teacher, a nurse, a superintendent of an orphanage, a deaconess and a worker for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, as well as being a hymn writer. What is evident from Goreh's devotional verse, both the hymns written in youth and the later poems, is that her desire was always to be a channel for God's work. She was fortunate enough to have been born at a time in history when women were able to hold such positions for the first time. She was a woman pioneer, not only of the Indian Church as asserted by Batley, but in the whole communion of believers. Unlike the early women of this study who wrote of the frustrations of 'languor' brought about by social restrictions and limitations, Goreh's final poems, published while she was a missionary in India, demonstrate the fulfilment and peace of a woman who had had the opportunity to accomplish much.

'Suffer Little Children to Come Unto Me':

Amy Carmichael (1867-1951)

Background

Amy Beatrice Carmichael was born on 16 December 1867 in Millisle, a seacoast village in County Down, Northern Ireland. She was the eldest of the seven children of David Carmichael, the prosperous owner of several local flour mills, and his wife, Catherine Jane Filson Carmichael. The Carmichaels had originated from Ayrshire, Scotland, and remained devout Presbyterians. In April 1885, only a couple of years after the family had moved to Belfast for business, the father died of pneumonia. This period was remembered by family members as the time when 'Amy passed---suddenly, it seems---out of childhood into young womanhood.'[1] She seems to have become like a second mother to her siblings; one brother recalled how much he had admired her, 'My memories are of a wonderfully sincere, downright, unafraid and sympathetic sister. Amy had the faculty of placing herself in the position of the one in trouble.'[2] Indeed, even during this difficult time, she seems to have been drawn to helping the less fortunate; her sister Ethel remembered:

> She would kindle so quickly to anything that promised the betterment of the poor or unhappy. She was fired up by the hope that socialism presented when she first read about it [...]. [O]nce she had an object before her which she was convinced was worth working for, no difficulty in the way would deter her.[3]

Like many of the women of this study, Carmichael believed strongly in the social gospel and engaged actively in evangelistic mission and welfare work from her youth. At the age of seventeen, she started a meeting in her home for the poor children of her

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[1] Quoted in Frank Houghton, *Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur: The Story of a Lover and Her Beloved* (London: SPCK, 1953) p. 19.
[2] Quoted in Houghton, *Amy Carmichael*, p. 19.
[3] Quoted in Houghton, *Amy Carmichael*, p. 19.

area. Her other enterprises included weekly prayer meetings for schoolgirls and a Sunday class for 'shawlies' (mill-girls who wore shawls rather than hats).

One of the great landmarks of Carmichael's spiritual life came in September 1886. It was an experience which led to a deepening of understanding about God's grace and power:

> Something happened that changed everything for me. The friends with whom I was staying took me with them to Glasgow, where a convention on Keswick lines was being held. The hall was full of a sort of grey mist, very dull and chilly. I had been longing for months, perhaps years, to know how one could live a holy life, and a life that would help others. I came to that meeting half hoping, half fearing. Would there be anything for me? I don't remember feeling there was anything (my fault) in either of the two addresses. The fog in the hall seemed to soak into me. My soul was in a fog. Then the chairman rose for the last prayer. [... T]he one who prayed began like this, '*O Lord, we know Thou art able to keep us from falling*'. Those words found me.[4]

The revelation about the possibility of not falling from God, and thus living at all times in holiness, was in keeping with the theology of the Keswick movement. However, for Carmichael, this experience seems to have spoken also to her yearning to live 'a life that would help others'. It initiated a movement away from the self and a desire to leave worldly pursuits behind:

> Soon after that shining day I went home to Belfast. The long time of being 'in mourning' for our father was over. So my mother took me to a shop to buy coloured things, and among them was to be an evening dress. [...] It meant that once more I would be going to parties and spending time in all sorts of pleasant ways. Suddenly I felt I couldn't do that. To my startled mother I said so. The shopman came and unrolled his loveliest materials, his loveliest colours too, and my mother, looking rather pained, apologized for troubling him and we left the shop. [...] I had told my mother nothing of that meeting in Glasgow. No wonder she was perplexed. But she understood a little later.[5]

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[4] Ibid., p. 22.
[5] Ibid., p. 22-23.

A year later, the Keswick Convention meetings came to Belfast. Carmichael attended and later reflected that, 'It was an unforgettable time: it meant a new committal of one's whole life.'[6] At the meetings, she first became acquainted with Robert Wilson (d. 1905), one of the founders and a chairman of the Keswick Convention -- this was the start of a seminal friendship of her life.[7] By this time, Wilson had lost both his wife and a beloved only daughter, and Carmichael eventually became like a surrogate daughter to him:

> At last in 1890 he asked my mother to let me stay with him for the greater part of the year and be as his own daughter. She had a dear daughter with her, and he had nobody. She knew how lonely he was and consented; so, though I was often with her, it came to be that I was more and more with him.[8]

It was at Wilson's house, Broughton Grange, on 13 January 1892 that Carmichael first heard the call to overseas mission. She wrote to her mother that, 'as clearly as I ever heard you speak, I heard Him say "GO YE"'.[9] She explained further in the same letter:

> for a long time as you know the thought of those lying in the dark---50,000 of them every day, while we at home live in the midst of blazing light---has been very present with me, and the longing to go to them, and tell them of Jesus, has been strong upon me. Everything, everything seemed to be saying 'Go', through all sounds the cry seemed to rise, 'Come over and help us.' Every bit of pleasure or work which has come to me, has had underlying it the thought of those people who have never, never heard of Jesus; before my eyes clearer than any lovely view has been the constant picture of those millions who have no chance, and never had one, of hearing of the love which makes our lives so bright.[10]

As earlier, Carmichael felt the burden to help others in need, and the particular poverty she perceived was want of the saving knowledge of the gospel; indeed, the

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[6] Ibid., p. 34.
[7] It was at Wilson's invitation that Amy Carmichael attended her first Keswick Convention in 1888.
[8] Quoted in Houghton, *Amy Carmichael*, pp. 34-5.
[9] Quoted in Houghton, *Amy Carmichael*, p. 45.
[10] Ibid., p. 44.

extract above is another example of the idea of spiritual abundance in Britain and deprivation elsewhere. The language of the letter suggests that Carmichael had been deeply influenced by the appeals for missionaries to 'those lying in the dark' such as those given by Frances Ridley Havergal, Emma Pitman and Ellen Lakshmi Goreh.

For some time, Carmichael was uncertain of where she was being called to -- at first she thought it was Ceylon, then it seemed to be China. In September 1892, Robert Wilson accompanied her to the China Inland Mission premises in London. The thought that he would soon lose his surrogate daughter must have been difficult, and this was when Wilson came up with the idea that she should incorporate his name into hers:

> 'Thee must sign thy name Carmichael Wilson in the C. I. M. papers. I would not have the world think that thou art not my child anymore!' A little later, he said, 'Thee had better write Wilson Carmichael'; and that is how it came to pass that his name was in my name.[11]

She was accepted by the CIM but, shortly afterwards, felt certain that China was not the right place either. Finally, she reached India, via Japan and Ceylon, as a missionary of the Church of England Zenana Mission Society (the same organisation with whichGoreh was engaged over a decade earlier).[12] Carmichael remained in India from her arrival on 9 Novembe r 1895 until her death.

Carmichael's Missionary Work and the Dohnavur Fellowship

From early in her ministry in South India,[13] Carmichael set herself apart from the other European missionaries. She decided to adopt native dress, believing that Indians

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[11] After Mr Wilson's death, she notes, 'It became a little difficult in some small ways, and as I knew he would not misunderstand and be hurt, I went back to my own name'. Quoted in Houghton, *Amy Carmichael*, p 52.

[12] Unusually, she was accepted even though she was not an Anglican.

[13] The CEZMS hospital she was first stationed in was in Bangalore.

would be more responsive to her in familiar clothes, much to the disapproval of most of the missionary community; this is perhaps illustrative of the Victorian fear of 'going native', which would be construed as the opposite of the civilising mission (figures 14 and 15). This was a time when Indian converts to Christianity were 'encouraged to adopt English dress, English customs and English names.'[14] She also believed that it was necessary to learn the native languages, and wrote that

'Underneath [the surface of the Indian] there is much, much more, but one can't get at it until one can speak and I am far off that yet.'[15] She started with Urdu, but, when she realised that nobody in the Zenana hospital spoke Tamil, she spent six hours a day studying the language. Her fluency in Tamil was to become a vital part of her Indian ministry.

Figure 14



Figure 15



The work for which Carmichael has become most famous is the establishment of the Dohnavur Fellowship. The work started in the Tinnevelly (now Tirunelveli)

[14] Batley with Robinson, *Devotees of Christ*, p. 58.
[15] In Elisabeth Elliott, *Amy Carmichael: Her Life and Legacy* (Eastbourne: MARC, 1988), p. 115.

district of Southern India, and was concerned with the fate of *devadasis*, young girls given in marriage to the temple deity by their parents in parts of Southern India. As Katherine Mayo explained in *Mother India* (1927):

> In some parts of the country, more particularly in the Presidency of Madras [...], a custom obtains among the Hindus whereby the parents, to persuade some favor from the gods, may vow their next born child, if it be a girl, to the gods. [...] The little creature, accordingly, is delivered to the temple women, her predecessors along the route, for teaching in dancing and singing. Often by the age of five, when she is considered most desirable, she becomes the priests' own prostitute.[16]

Mayo also provided a list of contemporary cases where the appalling physical consequences of sexual misuse in such early 'marriages' was all too evident:

> A.---Aged 9. Day after marriage. Left femur dislocated, pelvis crushed out of shape. Flesh hanging in shreds.
> B.---Aged 10. Unable to stand, bleeding profusely, flesh much lacerated.
> C.---Aged 9. So completely ravished as to be almost beyond surgical repair.
> [...]
> D.---Aged 10. A very small child, and entirely undeveloped physically. This child was bleeding to death from the rectum. Her husband was a man of about forty years of age, weighing not less than eleven stone [...]
> [...]
> M.---Aged about 10. Crawled to hospital on her hands and knees. Has never been able to stand erect since her marriage.[17]

While Carmichael's rescue of *devadasis* could be interpreted from a postcolonial point of view as an Occidental's interference with indigenous cultural practices, this shocking list highlights the types of abuse and their potentially fatal consequences from which she was attempting to save temple children.

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[16] Katherine Mayo, *Mother India* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), p. 47. The practice was legal in India until 1988. Some sources report that the practice still occurs in private ceremonies.
[17] Mayo, *Mother India*, p. 411-2. She also gives specific mention to the work of Carmichael: 'Anyone curious as to the fierceness with which it would be defended by the people, both openly and covertly, and in the name of religion, against ably frontal attack, will find answer in the extraordinary work and in the all-too-reticent books of Amy Wilson-Carmichael.' Ibid., p. 48.

In March 1901, seven-year-old Preena was the first temple child to escape to Carmichael. Thereafter, the rescue and protection of these vulnerable and exploited girls became the focus of Carmichael's work. She undertook the operation with the rest of her 'Starry Cluster', the band of Indian women evangelists who worked with her around Pannaivilai village.[18] The *devadasi* traffic in children was not well-known in non-Indian circles and Carmichael shocked the missionary world by drawing attention to the practice in *Things As They Are* (1903).[19] By 1901, Carmichael had moved her mission to Dohnavur, which became the permanent residence of the Fellowship. Here, the mission workers' aim was to provide the rescued children with a loving, secure and Christian family environment where they could grow up healthy and happy. They also sought to equip the children with the skills and education required for life.

From 1918, boys vulnerable to similar exploitation also became a part of the community. The settlement grew and nurseries and schools were built as well a hospital and house of prayer. There were also outposts in the surrounding villages, so that by 1940, the community had grown to more than 600 people. In 1919, Carmichael was awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind medal for services to the people of India.

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[18] That she believed, like Frances Ridley Havergal and Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, in sisterhood between British and Indian Christian women is evident in her establishment of her 'Sisterhood of the Common Life' with seven Indian women in 1916. All the women were single. The aim of the group was the development of female spirituality. The meetings were also a time for meditation on the works of religious writers and mystics including: Teresa of Avila, Samuel Rutherford, Gerhard Tersteegen, John Bunyan, Julian of Norwich, Handley Carr Glyn Moule (Bishop of Durham), Richard Rolle, Raymond Lull, Brother Lawrence, and Thomas à Kempis. Carmichael's interest in the mystics, unusual for an Evangelical, emerged as the result of a friendship with another unmarried Christian woman, Dr Eleanor MacDougall, the founder and first Principal of the Women's Christian College, Madras. They met in 1916 when Amy Carmichael saw some criticism about the new institution and wrote to MacDougall to express her sympathy. This story indicates that Carmichael was also supportive of women's higher education. MacDougall published *Lamps in the Wind*, which was advertised as 'Fascinating stories from an Indian Christian College for women' in the CEZMS magazine, *Looking East at India's Women and China's Daughters*, 61 (1941) [inside back cover].

[19] At first, many western missionaries and government officials did not believe her accounts.

In 1925, she ceased to be a missionary of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society and legally established the Dohnavur Fellowship as an independent organisation.

Carmichael felt strongly that the Dohnavur children should retain their Indian roots while being brought up as Christians. Tamil was the first language, although English was also taught alongside. She herself was referred to as 'Amma', the Tamil word for mother. Furthermore, the Dohnavur children were not dressed in European outfits but in clothes that were more in keeping with local customs:

> Very little Indian girls in the South wear either nothing, or a silver chain and a silver fig leaf. If they are rich little girls, the chain and the fig leaf are gold.
>
> It is true they look much more dressed than English children would. In fact they look exceedingly nice. But there are disadvantages.
>
> So in schools and in other particular places they wear print frocks, sometimes frilly and tucked, or very long print petticoats tied tightly round the waist with a tape.
>
> But we did not fancy the frilly frocks, and the tightly tied petticoats made us quite unhappy, so when our babies began to get to the chain and fig leaf age we put them into knickers, kept up by little straps over the shoulders and crossed at the back. It was not Indian, and we wanted to be Indian. But it was as inoffensive as we could attain unto. [...]
>
> At a later stage, another garment had to be [used]. The perfect Indian garment is a sari, but it is too complicated for very tiny girls, and so we put ours into cumasus, which are sleeveless, low-necked, and undecorated, and bridge the gulf between knickers and saries. The corresponding boy sticks to knickers, and so we go on.[20]

Like Goreh, who thought Indian women looked ugly in hats and bonnets, Carmichael appreciated the beauty of dressing in the Indian way. Although compromises were made to the local practices, the choices made were culturally sensitive and eminently practical. She seems to have been in the vanguard of sensitive Europeans respecting Indian cultures and peoples.

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[20] Amy Carmichael, *Tables in the Wilderness* (London: SPCK, 1923), pp. 40–41.

Carmichael wanted Dohnavur to be a happy, welcoming and affirming family home. She was known as *Amma*, the Tamil word for 'mother', and, as many of the children's birthdays were unknown, the celebration of 'coming days', the day when a child first arrived at Dohnavur, became an imaginative substitute to mark each child's growth and membership of the community. Donhavur was also an international family; the reputation of the fellowship spread widely and attracted workers from all over the world. It became a multi-cultural community which promoted inclusiveness and welcome to all:

> It is noticeable that the words 'Indian', 'European', or 'foreign' are never used. The Fellowship consisted from the first of men and women of several nationalities. Since it was an outgrowth of the Starry Cluster, Indians were naturally included in it from the very beginning. On the other hand, the number of workers from the United Kingdom and Australia, and later from Switzerland, Canada and New Zealand has increased from a mere handful to between forty and fifty, many more than Amma anticipated [...].[21]

Figure 16 the picture of 'Tara Cootie', daughter of Joan and Philip England, suggests that the children of the western workers may have been brought up in the same way as the rest of the Dohnavur children during their time there.

Figure 16



[21] Houghton, *Amy Carmichael*, p. 256.

Indeed, the many photographs which illustrate the Dohnavur books capture the children happily engaged in ordinary childhood play (see figures 17 and 18).

Figure 17



Figure 18



The surroundings were colourful, cheerful and stimulating, and reflected Carmichael's love of nature; for instance, the House of Prayer was covered with flowers and greenery.[22] Singing was another important component of the Dohnavur Fellowship experience; Carmichael composed many hymns for the children's use, and some of them were put to Indian melodies. Carmichael's narrative of one morning at Dohnavur describes it as an enchanting and delightful place:

> All round under the tree were groups of children, the bigger ones in the white and yellow, our Sunday colours, and the little ones in blue. And the little ones were all saying softly, 'We have *new* blue! Look at our *new* blue!
>
> It was all so pretty, the sunlight fell through the leaves and made pools of gold on the sand under the tree, and the children all round were like bright flowers about the golden pools.
>
> […]
>
> The bells stopped suddenly that morning, the pools of light were left without their flowers and the whites and yellows and blues streamed into the Praise Room which was dressed in yellow allamanda, with blue and lilac

[22] Of an Anglican Church in with the usual gothic arches and pews in Ooty, Carmichael described it as 'depressingly English'. See Elliott, *Amy Carmichael*, p. 122.

convolvulus straying over creamy Indian mignonette in the bowl that is put under the hanging lamp, to keep people from knocking against it.

The forget-me-nots scattered all over the room, for we have long ago given up orderly lines, and are Indian in that we let order take care of itself, and the effect is more than ever that of a garden of flowers.

But flowers are very much alive. The Jubilate is being sung to an Indian tune and all over the room the forget-me-not children are waving flags, such eager little faces and fat resolute hands grasping the flag sticks. It is their own special share in the worship, and they feel deeply aggrieved if the flags are forgotten.[23]

The sweetness and charm of the Dohnavur children in their colourful clothes is captured in the frontispiece photograph to Frank Houghton's official Dohnavur Fellowship biography of Amy Carmichael (figure 19).[24] In this description, we find them singing from the *Book of Common Prayer* but to an Indian tune; it is an interesting Anglo-Indian combination. As the passage above indicates, Carmichael was extremely aware of the beauty and magic of India. Her belief in the preciousness of the people was also a far more sensitive vision of 'Other' peoples to that of Heber's heathen who 'in his blindness bows down to wood and stone!'[25]



Figure 19

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[23] Carmichael, *Tables in the Wilderness*, pp. 42-44.

[24] 'Frank Houghton was consecrated as Bishop of East Szechwan in 1937. For the difficult years of 1940 to 1951 he served as General Director of the China Inland Mission, a time when most missionaries were either interred or evacuated. Although some would return after World War II, by 1953 there were no more foreign missionaries in China.' Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III. 'II Corinthians 8:9 "Thou Who Wast Rich Beyond all Splendor" ', <http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/Topical_Seasonal%20%20Sermons/Christmas/Songs%20of%20Christmas%202004/10_songs_of_christmas_2004.htm> [accessed 04.04.2006]

[25] 'Before a Collection Made for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel', Reginald Heber, *Hymns, Written and Adapted to the Weekly Church Service of the Year* (London: John Murray, 1828), p. 104.

On 24 October 1931, Carmichael fell into a pit which had been dug in the Dohnavur estate. The accident left her an invalid for the rest of her life and she rarely left her room. This period of her life was her most productive in terms of writing; she was a prolific author and by the end of her life, she had published thirty-eight books which were mostly about the work at Dohnavur. Many of these were published in several different languages raising awareness of the organisation. She died on 18 January 1951.

The Hymns

Amy Carmichael's hymns were written mainly for the children of the Dohnavur Fellowship. She started writing them because she felt that established English hymns were culturally inappropriate for Indian children. She seems to have been extremely careful about the selection of suitable songs. She wrote:

> We dreaded [...] the insincere and what John Wesley called the namby-pambical. Tamil came first, naturally, but they were learning English alongside Tamil. There were many pleasant songs to be found, though most were a little too English; and there were some perfect hymns for children; but it is curious how questioning the mind becomes when it is thinking of the Indian child carefully considering the meaning of every word: 'Pity my simplicity,' what did that mean? 'Fain I would to Thee be brought, gracious Lord, forbid it not.' Did He, who said 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me,' wish that a child should be taught to say such words to Him?[26]

As with the issue of clothing, Carmichael seems to have thought sensibly about the practical application of the hymns. English hymns, like English clothes, seemed unsuitable for her Indian children, although, as we have seen, she had them singing the Jubilate. She was not trying to force Indians to fit into a European Christianity, but to allow the gospel to meet their needs; her hymns were thus opening doors to a new

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[26] Amy Carmichael, *Though the Mountains Shake* (Madras: The Diocesan Press, 1943), pp. 191-2.

kind of Indian inculturation. The last sentence of the quotation above also intimates that she thought about the psychological effects of the hymns as well; indeed, she wished to avoid unnecessarily exposing children too early to the upsetting aspects of humanity: 'As for a hymn translated into definite Tamil in their hymn-book, "Earthly friends may fail or leave thee, one day kind, the next day grieve thee" ---was it necessary to teach the very young that depressing fact?'[27]

The answer seemed to be for the members of the Fellowship to write their own hymns: 'So, as the simplest way to help these children who at that time had no teachers, we began to make rhymes and songs for them, little things that they could sing truthfully.'[28] The music came largely from Mabel Wade, another missionary who came to work with the Fellowship. They also sometimes came from outside Dohnavur:

> lately; a book of prayer music for some of our prayer-songs came from an unknown friend, an organist in South India. He had written it out with his own hand, suffering though he was, for he had been very ill. At home, we have one who allows us to use him as Musical Editor. From time to time for many years he has sent us beautiful music.
>
> Because of all this generous help, our children are growing up to care very much for singing. It is part of the substance of their life.[29]

Music and singing in particular seem to have been a most important characteristic of the Dohnavur community under Carmichael's leadership:

> One of the greatest pleasures we can give our children is to gather them for an hour's singing. We are glad and grateful that it is so. We have none of the diversions or excitements of cities, but we have books, mountains, forest, sea, music, song. 'And all that is *pothum*' said one, after hearing of other and different delights, and *pothum* means 'enough.'[30]

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[27] Carmichael, *Though the Mountains Shake*, p. 191.
[28] Carmichael, *Though the Mountains Shake*, p. 192.
[29] Ibid., p. 193.
[30] Ibid., p. 193.

This extract suggests that Dohnavur was a place where one learnt to appreciate the simple pleasures of the natural world over busy manmade distractions, and where life could be appreciated at a slower pace to the crowded busy streets of Indian cities.

Indeed, one of the prime means by which Carmichael sought to teach about the goodness of God in her hymns was the application of nature as a universal sign of his grace.[31] 'Sunset' is a hymn which uses the accessible image of a beautiful sunset deepening into the dark night sky as a kind of compline prayer giving thanks at the end of a day:

1. For the great red rose of sunset,
   Dropping petals on its way
   For the tired feet of day,
   Thanks to Thee, our Father.

2. For the violet of twilight
   Singing, "Hush, ye children, hush,"
   For the after-glow's fair flush,
   Thanks to Thee, our Father.

3. For the softly sliding darkness
   Wherein many jewels are,
   Kindly-eye'd, familiar,
   Thanks to Thee, our Father.[32]

The pictures and ideas employed, a rose dropping its petals, tired feet, the colour of twilight, and starry night sky, are all familiar and easy for children to grasp and imagine. However, this does not mean that Carmichael's meditation on the divine is simplistic; instead, her hymn grows from kataphatic contemplation, that is, meditation with image.[33]

The next two verses incorporate thoughts which are less tangible:

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[31] Elliott, *Amy Carmichael*, p. 214.
[32] Amy Carmichael, *Toward Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1936), pp. 46–47. All further references of Carmichael's poetry from this text will appear in the text after the quotation.
[33] See note 39 to chapter 2.

4. For the comfort of forgiveness
Taking from us our offence,
Steeping us in innocence,
Thanks to Thee, our Father.

5. For the viewless, tall white angels
Bidden to ward off from us
All things foul, calamitous,
Thanks to Thee, our Father. (pp. 46-47)

In terms of the hymn's use in the Dohnavur community, the repetition of the idea that God is 'our Father' at the end of each verse seems significant in reinforcing the idea that all children are spiritual siblings even if they are not related biologically. However, in contrast to the concrete images about natural beauty in the first three verses, ideas such as innocence and calamity are difficult for a child to understand. The vocabulary is also more difficult; 'viewless' is less straightforward a word than invisible, and one wonders how easily infants would pronounce the word 'calamitous'. Nonetheless, both verses offer reassurance; any ills committed during the day are forgiven and taken away, and tall (presumably also big and strong) angels are promised to protect each child from harm. Carmichael teaches that, ultimately, the greatest comfort possible is God's eternal love, and, in the final verse, she contrasts the setting of the sun, stars and moon with God's love which does not diminish or fade:

6. That thy love sets not with sunset,
Nor with starset, nor with moon,
But is ever one high noon,
Thanks to Thee, our Father. (pp. 46-47)

The metaphor is a beautiful one, but the idea of God's love as being like the light of perpetual noon is one which small children could find difficult to comprehend. Indeed,

'Sunset' starts as a hymn which would be apt for young children but becomes progressively complex and perhaps more suitable as a work for adult contemplation and for older children, thus offering something to everyone in the community.

God can often be glimpsed in his creation in Carmichael's hymns; in 'Where Dwellest Thou?', she sets her work in the landscape of a wood, like the forest which surrounded Dohnavur:

1. O what is that that wanders in the wind?
And what is it that whispers in the wood?
What is the river singing to the sun?
Why this vague pain in every charmèd sense,
This yearning, keen suspense?

2. Often I've seen a garment floating by,
Fringe of it only; golden-brown it lay
On the ripe grasses, fern-green on the ferns,
And in the wood, like bluebells' misty blue
Whitened with mountain dew. (p. 4)

The verses are intricate and their content could be considered somewhat esoteric, so that the work may be deemed more a mystical poem about Carmichael's own spirituality than a hymn suitable for corporate worship. However, its inclusion in *Toward Jerusalem* indicates that it was written as a song and that it was not intended to be divorced from music; Carmichael explained in the foreword to the collection:

> But the Healer does not speak to us from a distance, He comes under our roof and sometimes we hear songs or fragments of song. The songs in this book came in that way. Perhaps some may seem to have little to do with the business of life, but whoso understands will understand.[34]

Indeed, this extract conveys a feeling that Dohnavur is a place permeated with God's music, guidance and presence; one is reminded of the words of Zephaniah 3. 17 that

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[34] Forward, Carmichael, *Toward Jerusalem*, p. vi. All the poetical works discussed in this chapter come from *Toward Jerusalem* and are interpreted as sacred songs. Many of them were included in other song books and hymnals, including *Wings. A Book of Dohnavur Songs* (London: SPCK, 1960).

'The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.'

The woodland scene of 'Where Dwellest Thou' is an enchanted fairy place, lush and cool, with ripe grasses and ferns. It is easy to imagine that wonderful secrets could be kept in the shelter of the trees. In this setting, God is a dreamlike, elusive spirit that evades human capture -- he is almost like Peter Pan flying through, and hiding mischievously, in the fantasy landscape of Neverland. Carmichael certainly conveys a sense of childlike excitement and inquisitiveness in her narration. The possibility of magic and transformation is also alluded to by the mention of the fragment of God's garment. Carmichael, who is almost putting herself in the position of the haemorrhaging woman of the gospels who was healed by touching the fringe of Christ's cloak in a meditative spiritual exercise,[35] is saying that any contact with Christ by faith, even a glimmer of the fringe of his garment, is a life-changing experience which leaves the onlooker feeling spell-bound and drowsy as if waking from a potent dream:

4. It slipped like sunshine through my eager hands,
See, they are dusted as with pollen dust:
Soft dust of gold, and soft the sense of touch,
Soft as the south wind's sea-blown evening kiss,
But I have only this.

5. This dust of vanished gold upon my hands,
This breath of wind blowing upon my hair,
Stirring of something near, so near, but far,
Glimmering through colour's fleeting preciousness,
The fringes of a dress. (pp. 4-5)

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[35] See Matthew 9. 20; Mark 5. 25; Luke 8. 43.

The gentleness of God is intimated by Carmichael's choice of lexicon: hands are 'dusted' as with 'dust of gold' 'soft' to the 'touch'; indeed, the experience has been a sensual one, and this points to the intimacy that is possible in a personal relationship with him.

God is not only tender in his interaction with humankind -- an encounter with him is also an exhilarating one which leaves one touched, yearning to find and be with him:

6. O Weaver of that garment, if its hem
Hardly perceived can thrill us, what must Thou,
Its Weaver and its Wearer, be to see?
Master, where dwellest Thou? O tell me now,
Where dwellest Thou? (p. 5)

What remains unspoken, but is suggested, is that God is also the 'Weaver' because he knit together the universe, and that he is the 'Wearer' because he fills the whole of his creation. While I have referred to God as 'he', weaving is an occupation that has traditionally been associated with women. The non-gender specific title 'Weaver' could thus be said to be a more inclusive and feminist form of address for God. As such, the hymn could be said to valorise the feminine viewpoint in worship.

In the final verse, Carmichael suggests that to seek God would be a great adventure (a connection with children's fantasy, like J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904), may be seen again):[36]

4. But mixed his music with my human cry,
But somewhere from the half-withdrawing wood
Sound of familiar footsteps: Is it Thou?
Master, where dwellest Thou? O speak to me.
And He said, *Come and see.* (p. 5)

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[36] One is reminded of what is probably the most famous quotation from *Peter Pan* (1904): 'To die would be an awfully big adventure.' J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*, ed. Jack Zipes (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 84.

The idea of God's footsteps, along with the idea that he wears a garment, highlights the humanity of Christ, and thus Carmichael's theology here is incarnational.

The idea of capturing a glimpse of God's hem is repeated in a shorter and also more theologically accessible hymn, 'Immanence':

1. Have we not seen Thy shining garment's hem
Floating at dawn across the golden skies,
Through thin blue veils at noon, bright majesties,
Seen starry hosts delights to gem
The splendour that shall be Thy diadem?

O Immanence,
That knows nor far nor near,
But as the air we breathe
Is with us here,
Our Breath of life,
O Lord, we worship Thee.

2. Worship and laud and praise Thee evermore,
Look up in wonder and behold a door
Opened in heaven, and One set on a throne;
Stretch out a hand, and touch Thine own,
O Christ, our King, and Lord when we adore. (p. 113)

This text is more accessible and is likely to work better as a hymn as its theology is not so personal and thus appeals to general Christian experience. The fact the pronoun used is 'we' and not 'I' also means that it would work better in congregational worship. Indeed, 'Immanence' was included in the 'Worship and Adoration' section of *Wings: Dohnavur Songs. Part I* (1960); its place in this collection suggests that it was popular within the Fellowship and that it was representative of the worship songs of the community. According to Carmichael's prefatory note, the hymns published in *Wings* had been used during times of prayer. She wrote that 'friends who shared our prayer times asked for them'.[37]

[37] 'Author's Note'. Presumably this work was prepared before Carmichael's death in 1951.

The ideas and images of the hymn are more conventionally Christian than 'Where Dwellest Thou'. For instance, the 'wearer' of the garment is identified as 'Christ, our King, and Lord', so the hymn is specifically Christological and conforms more to traditional understandings of a masculine God in comparison to the ambiguous 'Weaver' of 'Where Dwellest Thou?' Additionally, the first image of a shining garment being spread across the skies is an allusion to Psalm 104. 1-3: 'Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain'. Thus, the hymn is 'Word-centred' and more obviously Evangelical. The landscape is also no longer a fantasy forest; there is no focus on the supernatural in Nature, and there is no danger that it may be interpreted as a pantheistic work. 'Immanence' may thus be considered more mainstream in its theology than 'Where Dwellest Thou'.

In 'God of the Nebulae', Carmichael meditates on the idea that God is lord over everything in the universe and of all time:

1. Lover of all, I hold me fast by Thee,
Ruler of time, King of eternity
There is no great with Thee, there is no small,
For Thou art all, and fillest all in all. (p. 3)

She contemplates God's control of the movement of the skies, the sun, moon and stars, and the passing of time:

2. The new-born world swings forth at Thy command,
The falling dewdrop falls into Thy hand.
God of the firmament's mysterious powers,
I see Thee thread the minutes of my hours. (p. 3)

Nature, here, is a universal indicator of God's power as Creator and Master; like the invisible wind in the trees, he can be seen by the movement of his work. Furthermore,

he commands both the big, 'the new-born world', and the small, 'The falling dewdrop'. Even though he fills the whole of the universe, he also carefully ensures that each little minute is connected to the next.

The idea that God is 'God of the Nebulae' speaks about his awesome vastness and his omnipotence over the universe. In contrast to God, the human is tiny, unworthy and weak. Carmichael is thus producing a similar effect as the eighteenth-century hymn writers who envisaged humanity as lowly worms (see p. 62, and pp. 100-1), although her description reflects a more scientific view of the universe. Indeed, the hymn was included in a section entitled 'Prayers of Humble Access' in *Wings*, indicating that it may have been used as a hymn of preparation before receiving Holy Communion. The title 'God of the Nebulae' also elucidates God's own nature; nebulae is a term from astronomy which refers to 'diffuse mass[es] of interstellar dust or gas or both, visible as luminous patches or areas of darkness depending on the way the mass absorbs or reflects incident radiation'.[38] It is apparent that God is not only 'God of the Nebulae' because he rules over them, but also because he is like nebulae, massive but diffuse, mostly obscured from sight but sometimes illuminated by the refraction of the light (such as when the fringe of the dress was glimpsed in 'Where dwellest Thou?' and 'Immanence').

In the third verse, Carmichael drifts a more personal poetic reflection about nature of God. She humanises nature to reveal truths about God's care:

> 3. I see Thee guide the frail, the fading moon
> That walks alone through empty skies at noon.
> Was ever way-worn, lonely traveller
> But had Thee by him, blessèd Comforter? (p. 3)[39]

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[38] <www.dictionary.com> [accessed 15.04.2006]. This definition relates better to the idea of God's nebulous nature than those given in the *OED*.

[39] See p. 318 for Newman's influence on Goreh.

Her interpretation of the journey of the waning moon through the night sky, as a lonely and physically weak person being accompanied in solidarity by God, is moving. The idea of God guiding the weak is similar to that of Newman's 'Lead, Kindly Light' (1833), one of the best-loved hymns of the Victorian period:

1. Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home----
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.[40]

It teaches about God's consolation and compassion; consolation originally meaning 'to be with the lonely one' and compassion meaning 'suffering together with another'.[41] In this image of the God who is always with those in need, even when they appear to be alone and friendless, is the idea of Christ as Emmanuel, 'God with Us', which Dora Greenwell found so comforting and central to her theology. His constant protection and guidance is invisible to the human eye but can be fully trusted:

4. Out of my vision swims the untracked star,
Thy counsels too high and very far,
Only I know, God of the nebulae,
It is enough to hold me fast by Thee. (p. 3)

Carmichael drew much of her spiritual insight from the natural world. The story that accompanies figure 20 underscores how beauty and goodness in nature were interpreted as visible indicators of God's invisible grace:

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[40] Newman, *Verses on Various Occasions*, p. 152. See p. 317 for Goreh's allusion to this hymn.
[41] Definition 1, *OED Online*, <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50045414?query_type=word&queryword=compassion&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=bi6r-U9v3qB-3850&hilite=50045414>, [20.05.2006].

> One day our Forest men brought down a log of rotten wood. It was not covered with the fairy cups and saucers of golden-brown satin so often found on such wood; it was a mass of fungi, like little arum lilies [...]. From many a place of pain to-day beautiful things are growing like this lily-fungus on the log.[42]

Her claim is that even in an imperfect world full of brokenness, God creates startling beauty. This is an indication of God's redemptive powers and a foretaste of how he will restore the world to wholeness and health.

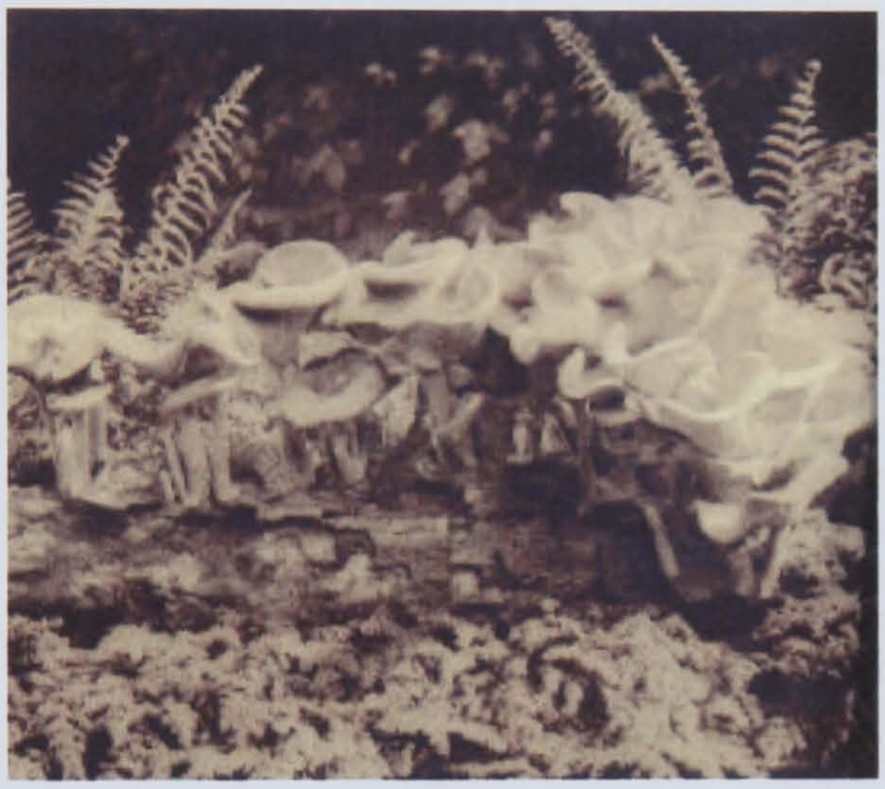


Figure 20

Carmichael's hymns look for the promise of redemption. Unhappy incidents are therefore interpreted in ways that give meaning and hope, as can be seen in 'Out of the Heat', which seems to have been written as an adult's response to infant death:

1. Out of the heat and out of the rain,
   Never to know or sin or pain,
   Never to fall and never to fear,
   Could we wish better for one so dear?

2. What has he seen and what has he heard,
   He who has flown away like a bird?
   Eye has not seen, nor dream can show,
   All he has not seen, all he may know. (p. 38)

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[42] Amy Carmichael, *Windows* (London: SPCK, 1937), p. 35.

The hymn seeks to give comfort by suggesting that the infant whose spirit has left the mortal world is better off than the mourners left behind, because s/he will not 'know or sin or pain' and is blessed with innocence. Her suggestion is also that since his/her departure, the child's spirit has been privileged to embark on an exciting adventure. Unlike the adult of 'Where dwellest thou?' unable to capture more than a glimpse of the fringe of God's dress, the spirit of the child has been given access to full audience with God.

In the final verse, Carmichael reminds us of how Christ the Saviour welcomes, privileges and cares for children:

3. For the pure powers of Calvary
Bathe little souls in innocency;
Tender, tender Thy love-words be,
"Dear little child, come home to Me." (p. 38)

Carmichael's imagined words of Christ are reminiscent of both his teaching, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God' (Matthew 10. 15) and, 'Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 18. 3). However, her mention of Calvary, a word which acts as a metonym for the saving work of Christ upon the cross, also privileges the crucentric theology of Carmichael's Evangelical and Calvinist background. It privileges the doctrine of the cross theologically and displays a belief that even the infant who has not experienced sin needs to be washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ. In contrast to the high church idea of baptismal regeneration, which said that a child could only go to heaven if regenerated by the sacrament of baptism, Carmichael seems to be suggesting a more

Calvinist and Evangelical thought that only the blood of Jesus Christ that can make a soul eligible to enter heaven. This would have been in keeping with her Presbyterian background.

'Carried by Angels', another consolatory hymn about child death, is a short one-verse hymn that is extremely gentle:

1. "Carried by angels" -- it is all we know
Of how they go;
We heard it long ago.
It is enough; they are not lonely there,
Lost nestlings blown about in fields of air.
The angels carry them; the way, they know.
Our kind Lord told us so. (p. 39)

The word 'nestlings' indicates that Carmichael is talking about children rather than adults. The hymn offers comfort by teaching that, although death is a mystery, souls lost from their earthly families will not have to make the unknown journey on their own; angels, invisible to the human eye though they may be, are friendly companions who will guard and guide the departed spirit on its way. The idea comes from the story of Lazarus the beggar in Luke 12. 22, 'And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom'. In the context of this story where Lazarus the leprous beggar gains the delights in heaven while a man who was rich on earth is tormented in hell, Carmichael may be suggesting implicitly that the soul of the dead child who was not blessed with a rich and long life on earth may benefit all the more in heaven for his/her unhappy early demise.

Carmichael's writings are especially responsive to the brokenness of the world. 'For Our Children' asks for children to be protected from the dangers that exist in a fallen world:

Father, hear us, we are praying,
Hear the words our hearts are saying,
We are praying for our children.

Keep them from the powers of evil.
From the secret, hidden peril,
From the whirlpool that would suck them,
From the treacherous quicksand, pluck them.
From the worldling's hollow gladness,
From the string of faithless sadness,
Holy Father, save our children.

Through life's troubled waters steer them,
Through life's bitter battle cheer them,
Father, Father, be Thou near them.
Read the language of our longing,
Read the wordless pleadings thronging,
Holy Father, for our children.

And wherever they may bide,
Lead them Home at eventide. (p. 106)

Within the context of the work of the Dohnavur Fellowship, this composition could be seen to address implicitly and euphemistically the horrifying subject of paedophilia. The quick, steady pace of the song with its many repeated words and phrases give it the feel of an incantation; it is as if Carmichael is invoking a protective spell to bind her children to safety (although Carmichael's Christian theology would not have allowed her to indulge in the occult arts). It seems unlikely that 'For Our Children' was written for children's ears; instead, it is a prayer for adults to make supplication to God.

'For Our Children' may have been influenced by Cecil Frances Alexander's equally prophylactic 'St Patrick's Breastplate':

5. I bind unto myself today
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, His might to stay,
His ear to hearken to my need.
The wisdom of my God to teach,
His hand to guide, His shield to ward;

The word of God to give me speech,
His heavenly host to be my guard.

6. Against the demon snares of sin,
The vice that gives temptation force,
The natural lusts that war within,
The hostile men that mar my course;
Or few or many, far or nigh,
In every place and in all hours,
Against their fierce hostility
I bind to me these holy powers.

7. Against all Satan's spells and wiles,
Against false words of heresy,
Against the knowledge that defiles,
Against the heart's idolatry,
Against the wizard's evil craft,
Against the death wound and the burning,
The choking wave, the poisoned shaft,
Protect me, Christ, till Thy returning.[43]

Certainly, Carmichael's hymn replicates the repetition that occurs in 'St Patrick`s

Breastplate', which produces the effect of conveying a sense of fearful urgency, and, apart from the final two lines, follows the same octameter pattern.

The adult exploitation of vulnerable children is alluded to again in the first verse of 'Come, Lord Jesus':

1. Because of little children soiled,
And disinherited, despoiled,

2. Because of hurt things, feathered, furred,
Tormented beast, imprisoned bird,

3. Because of many-folded grief,
Beyond redress, beyond belief,

4. Because the word is true that saith,
The whole world creation travaileth---

5. Of all our prayer this is the sum:
O come, Lord Jesus, come. (p. 108)

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[43] Cecil Frances Alexander, 'St Patrick's Breastplate', <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/s/t/stpatric.htm> [accessed 10.12.2006]

The idea that small children are 'soiled', 'disinherited' and 'despoiled' not only seems to refer to children being dirty from poverty, abandonment and neglect, but to the more alarming danger of abuse from the adults who should be protecting them. Carmichael is, again, euphemistically talking about paedophilia and lamenting the fate of girls dedicated to temples to become *devadasis*. Yet, she articulates her thoughts so carefully that it would be possible for children to sing or hear this hymn without being exposed to the horrors of all her meaning.

In the second verse, it is human depravity which occupies her mind again. Animals are 'tormented' and birds 'imprisoned' by human hands. The natural world may be violent but it is out of instinct for survival and not for malicious cruelty or perverse entertainment. Such inhumane heartlessness is for Carmichael 'beyond belief'. In contrast, the reader/singer may be reminded that Jesus cares about every single sparrow that falls off a tree (Matthew 10. 29, Luke 12. 6). In the fourth verse, her reflection is that the scriptures tell the truth, for Romans 8. 22 asserts, 'For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.' The needs of the suffering world are so great that they can only be redeemed by the return of Christ.

As in Dora Greenwell's writings, Christ's second coming is envisaged as a time when the pain and ills of the world may be banished forever. God's incarnate love will bring an end to the abuse and hurt of the weak because he will bless and protect the meek and helpless. The measured pace of the lines conveys a sense of sorrow and lament. The fact that each verse is only two lines long means that it is as if the speaker does not have the energy or time to be intricate or verbose. Starting the

first four verses with the word 'Because' also adds to the effect of one unable to summon effort to formulate a more constructed sentence; instead, the verses simply state the reasons for which Christ's return is urgently longed for.

Christ as Emmanuel is the incarnation of Divine Love, and 'If it were not so' is a reflection on his everlasting and unconditional love:

1. I thought I heard my Saviour say to me,
My love will never weary, child, of thee.
Then in my whispering, doubtfully and low,
How can it be?
He answered me,
But if it were not so
I would have told thee. (p. 58)

The words of the title and refrain allude to Christ's words about preparing a place in heaven for his followers given in John 14. 2: 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you'. The hymn thus implicitly teaches that God's care extends into the distant future, to beyond the end of time to the eternity of heaven. The hymn conveys a powerful sense of God's sympathy and tenderness; the imagined words of the Saviour, 'My love will never weary, child, of thee' are reassuring and healing to the human soul that feels the need to be loved. The address 'child' is intimate and works equally well for young and old readers/singers alike in rearticulating the idea that God's care is like that of a parent, unconditional, deep and abiding. The hymn thus aims to soothe the insecure soul; it teaches that God's understanding is like that of a wise parent, who knows the anxiety and fears of his/her child. At the same time, the human response of 'whispering, doubtfully and low / How can it be?' indicates how incredible and awesome God's promise is. The final two lines of the verse relate to God's faithfulness; its message that one need not doubt God's promise of eternal love

because he is truthful is simple, but also refreshing to the soul that has been pained by human failings and/or limitations. This hymn would be particularly apt for building up a crushed and fragile spirit; indeed, the second verse offers encouragement by reminding the reader/singer of St Paul's belief that God's 'strength is made perfect in weakness' (II Corinthians 12. 9):

2. I thought I heard my Saviour say to me,
My strength encamps on weakness---so on thee.
And when a wind of fear did through me blow,
How can that be?
He answered me,
But if it were not so
I would have told thee.(p. 58)

The theme of God's inexhaustible love is explored again in 'Love's Eternal Wonder':

1. Lord belovèd, I would ponder
Breadth and length and depth and height
Of Thy love's eternal wonder,
All embracing, infinite. (p. 83)

The scriptural influence is a favourite one for Christians from Ephesians 3. 17-18. The word 'ponder' articulates the human's wonder at the generosity of God's grace. The second verse recognises that God's love freely given is undeserved:

2. Never, never have I brought Thee
Gold and frankincense and myrrh;
In the hands that groping, sought Thee,
Precious treasures never were. (p. 83)

While this statement could be used by any Christian, it is perhaps especially true to the experience of the children singing the hymn brought to Dohnavur under unfortunate circumstances, both poor and vulnerable. The next verse teaches that such material offerings do not compare with the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross:

3. That was nought to Thee? The measure
Of Thy love was Calvary.
Stooping low, Love found a treasure
In the least of things that be. (p. 83)

Carmichael's line that 'Love found a treasure / In the least of things that be' resonates with the work of her Dohnavur Fellowship. The small children, often given up by their parents, without wealth or status, were the precious riches of the community; indeed, the Christian names given to the first children, such as 'Jewel of Victory' and the 'Jewel of Life', reflect this.[44]

From her youth, Carmichael recognised a desire to be close to God and help others. For her, the two aspirations go together, for one can only keep giving love to others when replenished by God:

1. Love through me, Love of God,
Make me like Thy clear air
Through which unhindered, colours pass
As though it were not there.

2. Powers of the love of God,
Depths of the heart Divine,
O Love that faileth not, break forth,
And flood this world of Thine. (p. 11)

While the human heart may grow weary, God promises that his love 'faileth not'. 'Love through me' is thus a hymn about the desire for ministry, about the wish to become a channel of God's transforming power, moved by the belief that if love would flood the world, it would bring healing and joy to all that it covered.

'Love through me' is similar in thought and pattern to Edwin Hatch's 'Breathe on me, Breath of God' (1878):

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[44] See Houghton, *Amy Carmichael*, p. 104. The final section of *Wings* is entitled 'The Preciousness of Souls' indicating further the centrality of this belief to the Dohnavur Fellowship.

1. Breathe on me, breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.[45]

Although the metre, 66.86 (S. M.), is common in hymnody, as Carmichael is also replicating the idea of being a channel for God in her hymn, it seems likely that she was imitating the earlier work. Another work which follows the same pattern as Hatch's hymn is 'Think Through Me'. This work appears in *Wings*, in the section entitled 'Prayers of Humble Access'. The format again follows the same metrical pattern and ABCB rhyme scheme, and conveys the same idea of being a channel for God:

1. Think through me, Thoughts of God,
My Father, quiet me,
Till in Thy holy presence, hushed,
I think Thy thoughts with Thee.

2. Think through me, Thoughts of God,
That always, everywhere
The stream that through my being flows
May homeward pass in prayer.

3. Think through me, Thoughts of God,
And let my own thoughts be
Lost like the sand-pools on the shore
Of the eternal sea. (p. 75)

To be filled with God's thoughts is to occupy a state of peace and stillness away from the busy activity of the world as seen in the latter writings of Havergal and in Goreh's 'In the Secret of Thy Presence'. Carmichael's privileging of the thought that if one is to be engaged in God's work, one must also take time to rest and spend time with him, is perhaps not surprising in the context of her connection with the Keswick

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[45] It was first published in a pamphlet entitled *Between Doubt and Prayer* (1878) and was later published in Edwin Hatch, *Towards Fields of Light. Sacred Poems* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980). See 'Breathe on Me, Breath of God', <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/b/o/bombog.htm>, [accessed 10.12.2006].

Convention and the theology of the Holiness Movement. However, Carmichael is not only advocating a retreat from the real business of the world. The sentiments of both hymns articulate a similar wish to that of John the Baptist when he said, 'He [Christ] must increase, but I must decrease' (John 3. 30). She is thus also yearning for an annihilation of the self, a common religious trope, to be replaced by the power of God instead.

'Thy John' describes the gentleness and intimacy of rest with God. Each of the verses, the singer/reader of the hymn expresses the desire to depend on and trust in God:

1. As John upon his dear Lord's breast,
So would I lean, so would I rest;
As empty shell in depths of sea,
So would I sink, be filled with Thee. (p. 13)

John has been identified traditionally as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' (John 21. 7); thus, Carmichael is claiming that she would like to possess a similar identity. The image of an empty shell full of water sunk at the bottom of the sea articulates effectively her desire to be a vessel immersed in God's love, while also describing a state of being one with the beloved which may be likened to the Bible's teachings about marriage, as being a mystical state where two become one. The soul's union with God is particularly intimate and secret because it is experienced deep under the sea, hidden from others' sight. However, the idea that God is still with the human soul, even in the depths of the sea, is from Psalm 139. 9-10, 'If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me', and thus relates to God's faithfulness as a lover as well as to his omnipresence.

The soul fulfilled with and by God abides in peace as well as love. This is described in the next verse as being like a still and beautiful water-lily:

2. As water-lily in her pool
Through long, hot hours is still and cool,
A thought of peace, so I would be,
Thy water-flower, Lord, close by Thee. (p. 13)

The water-lily is traditionally an icon for contemplation in the east; in yogic meditations, the lily on the surface of the water is understood as a symbol of the unfolding spiritual gifts. More specifically, the lotus flower is held sacred in several Indian religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism, as a symbol of harmony and spiritual enfoldment. It is thus appears that Carmichael was influenced by Indian symbolism here.[46] At the same time, in the Victorian language of flowers, the water-lily denoted 'purity of heart', while, within the tradition of western Christianity, the lily has also possessed rich meaning as a symbol of purity, innocence and beauty. Indeed, the Virgin Mary is often depicted with a lily in pictures of the Annunciation to denote her possession of these qualities. Further, Christ placed value on the loveliness of the lily in his statement Matthew 6. 28, 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' The hymn thus combines Carmichael's English influences with her Indian circumstances, and may be seen as another example of her awareness of Indian thinking and of the inculturation of her hymns. It may even be considered an example of twentieth-century cultural

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[46] 'The Language of Flowers', reprinted from *Collier's Cyclopedia of Commercial and Social Information and Treasury of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*, compiled by Nugent Robinson ([n.p.]: P.F. Collier, 1882) in <http://www.apocalypse.org/pub/u/hilda/flang.html> [accessed 24.03.2006].

hybridity,[47] as, although the idea of retreating into the inner world to rest in the loving and peaceful presence of God (as seen in Havergal's *Thoughts of God*, and 'Perfect Peace. In Sickness', and Goreh's 'In the Secret of Thy Presence') expresses the theology of the Western Holiness Movement, it is described in terms that is culturally significant for both Indians and the British.

The final message of the hymn is that, even midst the busyness, mess and noise of daily life, she would seek her rest in God, like 'Thy John':

4. And so though daily duties crowd,
And dust of earth be like a cloud,
Through noise of words, O Lord, my Rest,
Thy John would lean upon Thy breast. (p. 13)

The second line of the final verse which talks of the dust of the earth seems to be another example of the hymn being placed in the context of Carmichael's life in India where dust is prevalent in the hot and dry climate.

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In several of her books, Carmichael came to reflect on the idea of climbing a mountain as a metaphor for the Christian life. She wrote in *Rose from Brier* (1934):

> Everest has become a symbol. Everest stands for all that is highest, purest, and most difficult of attainment. As the climbers struggle gasping towards the summit they are putting heart into all who are striving upward in whatever field.[48]

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[47] Here, I refer to 'hybridity' as the mixture of cultures and different heritages said to have been effected by globalization in particular. Key theorists on hybridity are Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Gayatri Spivak, and Paul Gilroy. The writing of postcolonial and magical realist authors, including Salman Rushdie, Gabriel García Márquez, Milan Kundera and J. M. Coetzee, also engage in discussions on the idea. A crucial text in the development of hybridity theory is Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994).

[48] Amy Carmichael, *Rose from Brier* (London: SPCK, 1934), p. 67.

The summit of Everest had not yet been reached by people at this time; thus, the idea of climbing Everest was a symbol for humanity endeavouring to reach for perfection. The thought is that perseverance and endurance are required on the Christian pilgrim's journey to God. For Carmichael, Everest may also have been a symbol of Asia, with its borders along Nepal and Tibet and close to India also; she may thus also have been saying in her metaphor that to claim Asia for Christ would be the most difficult but also the noblest attainment. From youth until the end of her life, Carmichael exhibited determination to serve God and help people in need. Even after the accident which rendered her an invalid for the rest of her life, she found outlets, such as writing, to continue in her service to God and ministry to his people. As such, Bishop Frank Houghton, her biographer, wrote:

> She never ceased to climb, though often she feared that she was losing ground. In November, 1935, she happened upon a line in Henry Vaughan's poems which both cheered and challenged her: 'O let me climbe when I lye down'. Then the spiritual climb could continue when physical movement was impossible?[49]

Carmichael was a pioneer missionary whose ministry was informed by sensitivity and respect for the people of India. Rather than impose a pattern of western Christianity onto the lives of Indian peoples, her work as she saw it was to be a clear channel through which God's transforming love might touch human need. Carmichael's career and service as a missionary was formidable. The way in which she established and developed the Dohnavur Fellowship, in particular, was culturally aware and forward-thinking. Her hymns are remarkable as early examples of cultural inculturation. As Myrtle Hill has observed:

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[49] Houghton, *Amy Carmichael*, p. 307.

Perhaps the greatest testimony to her leadership, however, is the fact that the community survived both the ending of British rule in India and her own death in 1951. Continuity was ensured by adapting both the ethos and the work of Dohnavur to the India of the late twentieth century, and although the fellowship members are now all of Indian nationality, the work still continues today.[50]

[50] Myrtle Hill, 'Amy Beatrice Carmichael', *Oxford DNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/59081?docPos=2> [accessed 25.03.2006].

Conclusion

Over the past fifty years, literary criticism has been transformed by second-wave feminists' reappraisals of women's writing. Until the 1970s, the established canon of 'great works' of English literature was almost exclusively authored by men. Although there were a few exceptions such as George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë, the absence of women from the canon implied that 'if few women managed to attain the highest standards of literary production it was because they rarely wrote and when they did, they simply did not write as well as men'.[1] Building on the work of early literary feminists, such as Virginia Woolf's powerful essay 'A Room of One's Own' (1929) and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), a series of brilliant 'gynocentric' critical studies emerged. However, these works have not normally considered the tradition of women's hymn writing. This thesis has attempted to address this neglect of critical attention.

For the purposes of this conclusion, it will be useful to consider the findings of this thesis in the context of some of the work that has already been done on women's writing in general. One of the early, groundbreaking works of feminist criticism was Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). Their now famous opening statement was 'Is the pen a metaphorical penis?', a question which asked if writing had been a tradition of creative generation exclusive to men.[2] They argued that a visible female literary tradition had not existed for women writers of the past; instead, for pre-twentieth-century women writers, literary foremothers had been untraceable. A consequence of the lack of an identifiable tradition was that the motherless woman writer 'struggled in isolation that felt like illness, alienation that

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[1] Tolan, 'Feminisms', p. 319.
[2] Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 3. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

felt like madness, obscurity that was endemic to their literary subculture' (p. 7). They described this condition as an 'anxiety of authorship' (p. 7). In contrast, women's hymn writing is a different model of women's writing with a recognisable foremother who was celebrated from early on in the development of the Protestant hymn. Especially for the women hymn writers of the Victorian era, Anne Steele was remembered and held in high esteem as the first who prepared the way for others to follow.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the names and dates of authors were often printed with each hymn. In some cases, an index of authors revealed how many hymns each author had contributed to the compilation.[3] Such index lists would have revealed to any aspiring woman hymn writer that she was not alone, but rather that she was in the company of a multitude of sisters, several of whom were prolific, successful, and enduring. However, it seems unlikely any serious lover of hymns would have had resort to scrutinising author indexes in order to discover the existence of women hymn writers; many were so famous that they became well known household names.[4]

Elaine Showalter claimed in *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1977), now a classic work of feminist literary criticism, that women's writing needed to be read differently. She argued that this was because women's writing was a literary subculture with its own themes, images, tropes and distinct identity. Some of the recurring themes and images she drew

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[3] It has already been seen on page 1 that Daniel Sedgwick compiled a comprehensive list of hymn authors as a separate publication.

[4] The number of best-selling biographies and memoirs published would indicate this. Furthermore, verses of hymns by writers including Havergal were disseminated throughout the globe on picture postcards (see Introduction, p. 16). Many children were brought up on the hymns of women such as Ann and Jane Taylor, and 'Mrs C. F. Alexander'. D. H. Lawrence wrote in 'Hymns in a Man's Life' about the abiding power of hymns learnt in childhood. Mentioning some very great poems, he wrote, 'all these lovely poems woven deep into a man's consciousness, are still not woven so deep in me as the rather banal Nonconformist hymns that penetrated through and through my childhood': *Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. A. Beal (London: Heinemann, 1956), pp. 6-11, p. 6.

attention to included incarceration, secret spaces, madness and dreams of escape. Such images seem to have emerged from the social and mental oppression experienced by women whose opportunities in the world were often limited. It has been seen that a preoccupation with space and a desire to break out also occur in women's hymn writing. Specifically, Dora Greenwell's 'Veni, veni, Emmanuel' displays a preoccupation with spatial enclosure and the desire for 'light, [...] space, [...] breadth and room / For each thing fair, beloved, and free, / To have its hour of life and bloom',[5] and Frances Ridley Havergal's preoccupation with the ideas of song and singing correspond with Isobel Armstrong's assertion that music often represented 'the imprisoned life of emotion seeking to escape' in Victorian women's poetry.[6] More generally, it has been seen that, for much of the nineteenth century, women's hymn writing displayed a preoccupation with the desire to escape the confines of the domestic life into active service in the world outside.

The yearning to break out to search for one's purpose and place in the universe was often expressed in highly emotional terms. Of women's poetry during the Victorian era, Isobel Armstrong asserts in her now seminal *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (1993) that the tradition was an expressive and affective one.[7] The qualities associated with female-authored verse were, as she observes, 'feeling, emotions, sentiment' (p. 320). Of Letitia Landon (1802-1838), Armstrong has written of a 'search for an "impassioned land", a space for the expression of emotion. Brought up on Hume, she was fascinated by the nature of sensation (often isolating moments of sensation in a narrative), and with the pulsation of sympathy' (p. 326). Armstrong suggests that Victorian woman poets used sympathy and solidarity with pain and

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[5] Greenwell, *Carmina Crucis*, p. 133.
[6] Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 337.
[7] See Chapter 12: 'A Music of Thine Own: Women's Poetry -- An Expressive Tradition?' in Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, pp. 318-377.

sorrow as a means of engaging with social and political issues in their writing, especially matters relating to the oppression and suffering of the poor (p. 336). It has been seen that women hymn writers also privileged feeling as an authoritative means to make comment on the human condition; the eighteenth-century women, Steele and Harrison, who wrote within the contemporary conventions of sensibility, employed affective writing with an impulse to move their readers to conversion, and to a deepening of faith; Dora Greenwell saw feminine feeling as power, and her interpretation of Christ's passion on the Cross as 'a solemn *witness to God's sympathy* with *man's sorrow*' is manifest in the compassionate theology of her Christmas carol 'If ye would hear the Angels sing' and visionary hymn 'Veni, veni, Emmanuel'.[8] Frances Ridley Havergal also urged English women to fight for their heathen brothers and sisters with the language of zeal and emotional urgency in 'Tell it Out' and 'Sisters'. The ardent religiosity of women's hymn writing has meant they have often been unjustly neglected by literary critics in the past; it is therefore encouraging that in recent decades, the academic community has become more sympathetic to nuanced readings concerning the place of religion in the lives of men and women.

Many of the hymns examined in this study stir up emotion and excitement, for the authors writing as much for as their readers. For some modern readers, the affectivity of some women's hymn writing may be a disincentive to further reading, and difficult to accept as anything less than performance. What can be observed is that writing religious verse was a way of connecting with contemporary sentiment about exemplarity and ideals of what and how humans should be. If women aspired to claiming holy identities, it may be seen that, as certain forms of public preaching and ministry were barred for women, their exaltation frequently had to turn inwards to

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[8] Dorling, *Memoirs*, p. 124.

emotion. As Virginia Woolf noted of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, restricted by her sex and by her invalidism, 'She had lived shut off, guessing what was outside, and inevitably magnifying what was within.'[9] The women who wrote hymns, often unmarried and restricted from active work in the public sphere, also had to 'inevitably magnify[y] what was within'.

For many women, who were unable to have experience in and knowledge of the world outside, the unrestricted depths of the inner world could become the more familiar dwelling place to inhabit. Indeed, for the three earliest women hymn writers of this study, whose opportunities for formal ministry in the church were most limited (in the case of Susanna Harrison and Eliza Westbury owing to their class as well the social conventions of their times), their hymns are mostly about Evangelical theology, internal faith, and the journeys of their spiritual lives. Yet in the hymns of the later hymn writers, Charlotte Elliott, Dora Greenwell and Frances Ridley Havergal, who increasingly sought to find purpose and usefulness in work, the messages of their hymns were increasingly about the need to serve God actively in the world, although they still wrote contemplative hymns as well. Elliott's 'Christian, seek not yet repose', Greenwell's 'A Christmas Carol' and Havergal's 'Sisters' are all examples of writings urging immediate, active responses to the need for God's work in the world.

This kind of verse writing, charged with emotional hunger, and longing to be consumed for and by God, was drawing from the tradition of the psalms in which the soul panted for God like the hart for the water brooks (Psalm 42. 1), and yearned to find rest under the shelter of his wings (Psalm 36. 7). Indeed, the words 'languor', 'languid', and 'languish' which recur in women's hymn writing,[10] often appear in the

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[9] Virginia Woolf, 'Aurora Leigh' in *The Common Reader*, second series (London: Hogarth Press, 1932), p. 208.

[10] According to the database English Poetry Online, Steele uses 'languor' 7 times; Elliott uses 'languor' 6 times, and 'languish' 8 times; Greenwell uses 'weary' 30 times.

tradition of metrical psalms which predates modern English hymns.[11] From this point of view, the language of women's hymns may be considered conventionally pious, drawing from the longer history of devotional verse writing. Additionally, as activism has been identified by Bebbington as one of the key characteristics of British Evangelicalism, women's privileging of active service in the hymns of the mid-Victorian period may be understood as a conformist and predictable Evangelical response. However, I suggest another possibility, a deeper under-layer, like the doubleness suggested of Victorian women's poetry by Isobel Armstrong,[12] in women's actual lives. For the women of this study who strove to be Christ's disciples (a role which, when interpreted through the lens of their Evangelical theology, would require active work for God), the emotional frustration and restlessness frequently displayed in their hymns, the preoccupation with languor, and the accompanying feelings of uselessness and guilt, may also be related to the fact that women's activities were restricted by social conventions and lack of opportunities. If active responses to the world's needs were privileged by Evangelicals during the Victorian period, it was perhaps especially valued by the women, precisely because it was a response they could not easily make. Elizabeth Cosnett's statement that, 'Self-fulfillment must [...] be part of the Christian picture and no-one understands this better than those who are conscious of being denied it' provides some nuanced insight as to why activism may have been especially costly, in both senses of the word, for women.[13]

It is striking, therefore, that when, as in the case of the final three women hymn writers of this study, their desires for ministerial service were satisfied in their

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[11] For examples see: Philip Sidney's 'Psalm XIII. *Usque quo, Domine?*'; Thomas Wyatt's 'Psalm 6. *Domine ne in furore*'; and Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke's 'Psalm 44 Deus, auribus'.
[12] See p. 12.
[13] Cosnett, 'A (Female) Bookworm Reads Some Hymns', pp. 177-8.

vocations (in the case of Havergal, in her active 'ministry of song', and in those of Goreh and Carmichael, in their missionary works), their hymns demonstrate a return to the inner life and contemplation. However, there are differences from the hymn writing of the eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century women. They do not display the restless longing for a God still not quite within touch, as in the hymns of Harrison and Westbury; instead, Goreh and Carmichael's hymns about internal faith are characterised by the contented joy of abiding in the presence of the beloved.[14] This shift is likely to have been an effect of the Holiness Movement on hymnody as well as the greater degree of self-fulfilment in the lives of the later women hymn writers.

The three stages of hymn writing by unmarried British Protestant women which have been identified in this thesis are remarkably similar to Elaine Showalter's pattern of feminine, feminist, and female writing, as suggested in her classic gynocritical work, *A Literature of Their Own* (1977). This was not anticipated at the start of the project and was especially surprising as the theory is now considered outmoded and problematic in its suggestion that women's writing and experience is continually progressing with linear time. Although the stages are not identical[15] (not surprisingly when considering the difference between religious hymns and secular novels), several of Showalter's points resonate with the findings of this thesis. Showalter asserted that:

> Whereas the feminine novelists had expressed female cultural values obliquely and proclaimed antifeminism publicly, the feminist novelists had a highly developed sense of belonging to a sisterhood of women writers, a kinship that conveyed obligations as well as privileges (p. 182).

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[14] For example Goreh's 'In the secret of Thy Presence' (see pp. 308-312) and Carmichael's 'As John Upon His Dear Lord's Guest' (see pp. 363-5).

[15] Such as the idea that the post-First World War female aesthetic 'applied feminist ideology to language as well as to literature': Showalter, *Literature of Their Own*, p. 240.

Of the first 'feminine' stage, it is true that the earliest women hymn writers did not take overtly feminist stances, and that they did sometimes participate in emphasising conventional, and therefore arguably restrictive and anti-feminist, ideas about femininity. Steele's pseudonym 'Theodosia', on one level, served to do this, as did the frontispiece to her first volume of *Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional* which depicted a graceful, ethereal lady in a garden scene with a Bible held open in her left hand, while her right hand points up to heaven. In relation to Showalter's thoughts on the second, 'feminist', stage, it can be seen that Havergal's 'Sisters' and Goreh's 'Who Will Go for Us?' both support the idea of sorority and the responsibilities that go with it.[16]

Of the final stage, the 'female aesthetic', Showalter said, 'One detects of this generation clear and disturbing signs of retreat: retreat from the ego, retreat from the physical experience of women, retreat from the material world, retreat into separate rooms and separate cities' (p. 240). It has already been noted above that it is that the hymns written by the final two women hymn writers of this study are often contemplative, and retreating from the material world into secret, hidden rest with God. Havergal is particularly significant as a hymn writer in this study, as it is possible to trace the shift from the feminist desire for activity to the movement inwards for inner peace in her writings; indeed, the chapter devoted to her is the longest for this reason.

Another question to address in this conclusion is whether it is fair to categorise spinster women hymn writers as a distinct type separate from their married

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[16] Showalter's time divisions for the three periods of writing are also slightly different to those that have emerged with this study. Loosely, Showalter sees the feminist period as emerging in the 1880s and 1890s and the female period as starting after the First World War. The second phase of women's hymn writing seems to emerge earlier (in particular, with the Victorian era) in this thesis. Eliza Westbury's hymns from 1825 fit the feminine model whereas Charlotte Elliott's hymns from the 1840s onwards mark a new preoccupation with active Christian work. The third phase of women's hymn writing during the period 1760-1936 seems to emerge from the 1880s when the doors of opportunity were beginning to open for women in the church.

counterparts. Their considerable contribution to British hymnody is undeniable. Regarding this phenomenon, I suggest that Olive Anderson's point about the significance of the 'surplus' women problem on the development of female preaching in mid-Victorian Britian may also be applied in relation to women's hymn writing as another form of female ministry:

> The demographic and cultural changes which created a pool of middle-class spinsters in need of occupation in this period [...] are probably at least as important here as they certainly are to the spread of women's work in the churches in general.[17]

For unmarried women, their hymn writing was not only an expression of the love they found in God (Samuel Crossman (1623-1683)'s phrase 'My Song is Love Unknown' (1664) comes to mind)[18] but it could provide an alternative vocation to the traditional female roles of wife and mother. This can be gleaned from Havergal's title for the first collection of her poetry, *The Ministry of Song*. Hymn writing became a significant and prominent field of female ministry, especially for unmarried women who sought meaning and purpose as well as consolation in their faith. The biographies often suggest that their experiences as single women were difficult. Consequently, their zeal in striving towards the 'love unknown' of God is not only understandable but particularly poignant.[19] At the same time, for the woman truly seeking God, singleness could be an empowering state. Freed of the time that married women had to devote to their husbands, children and the running of a house, religious single

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[17] Olive Anderson, 'Women Preachers in Mid-Victorian Britain: Some Reflexions on Feminism, Popular Religion and Social Change', *The Historical Journal*, 12 (1969), 469-484 (p. 474).
[18] Samuel Crossman, *The Young Man's Meditation, or Some Few Sacred Poems upon Select Subjects, and Scriptures* (London: J. H. & c., 1664).
[19] The phrase is used by Elliott in 'Just as I am, Without One Plea'; Rose Terry Cooke (1827-1892) in 'SIBI' in *Poems* (1888); Greenwell in 'Redemption' in *Songs of Salvation* (1873); Havergal in 'I have no birthday gifts to bring' and 'By Thy Cross and Passion' in *The Poetical Works* (1884); Ann Rebecca Hunt (dates unknown) in 'Mab' in *In Bohemia and Other Studies for Poems: by Mrs. T. Sterry Hunt* (1900); Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894) in 'Like as the Hart desireth the Water Brooks' (1893) *in The Complete Poems* (1979-1990).

women could concentrate on the development of their spiritualities in the manner suggested by St Paul (I Corinthians 7. 8).[20] The hymns examined in this thesis are the fruits of the concerted efforts for spiritual development by these women.

That so many of the hymns of women hymn writers have been consolatory also requires comment. While it could be said that such hymns perpetuated the stereotype of women as meek and mild comforters in supportive roles, it is also clear that their desire to be with the suffering in their times of sorrow was an assertive effort to minister to God's people. Ministry has been defined by the devotional writer Henri Nouwen as 'Being-With':

> Ministry happens when you participate in the mystery of being-with. The whole incarnation, God-with-us, Emmanuel, is first of all being with people. [...] Ministry means that we lift the incarnation -- we lift the God who says 'I will be with you.'[21]

Through their verses, women hymn writers have been able to be with and minister to countless souls in times of joy and of sorrow. That the power of women's hymns could sometimes be greater than the male ministry of priesthood can be gleaned from Henry Venn Elliott's statement about the success of his sister Charlotte's 'Just as I am' that (as previously stated, see p. 167) 'In the course of a long ministry, I hope I have been permitted to see some fruit by my labours; but I feel more has been done by a single hymn of my sister's'.[22] The enduring success and popularity of many hymns by women today demonstrate their abiding power as expressions of human experience, which, although shaped by the women's specific concerns, can minister to all of humanity.

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[20] It has been observed that even today married women are often more fully able to develop their own spiritualities after their children have grown up. From a conversation with the Reverend Robert Lawrance, Diocesan Director of Ordinands for the Diocese of Durham.
[21] Henri Nouwen, 'Parting Words: A Conversation on Prayer with Henri Nouwen', in *Sacred Journey: The Journal of Fellowship in Prayer*, 47 (1996), 8-20. Cited in *Beauty of the Beloved: A Henri Nouwen Anthology*, ed. Robert A. Jonas (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002), p. 198.
[22] Bateman, *Life of the Reverend Henry Venn Elliott*, p. 207.

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