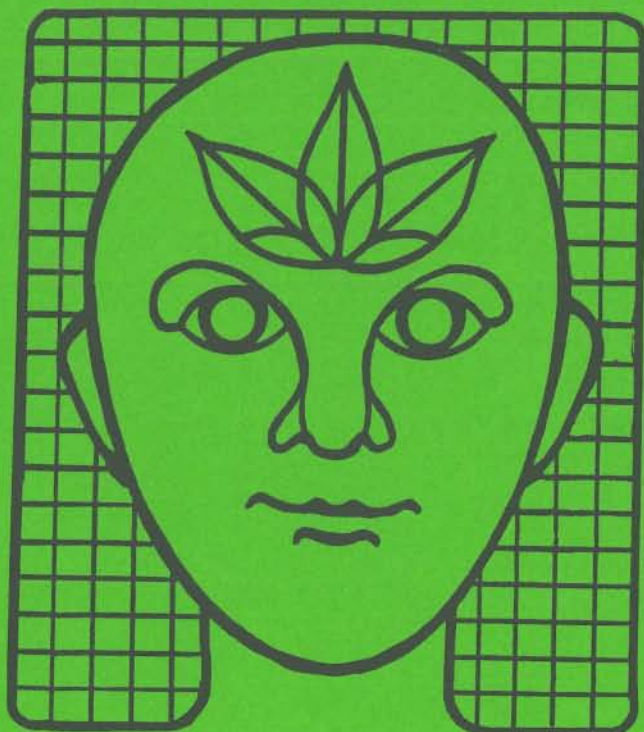


**GROWING  
TOGETHER**





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#### FURTHER READING

PRESENTING

G R O W I N G T O G E T H E R

THE REPORT OF THE UNITARIAN WORKING PARTY ON FEMINIST THEOLOGY

In 1982, the Unitarian General Assembly passed the following resolution:

This General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches resolves to set up a working party to consider possible implications of feminist theology in connection with the thought and worship of our denomination and to produce a report with recommendations to the 1984 meetings of this Assembly. This working party shall comprise equal numbers of men and women.

Soon afterwards, the GA Council set up a working party which, as finally constituted, included Ann Arthur, Joy Croft, Arthur Long, Celia Midgley, Peter Sampson and Len Smith. We six have read and written, met and deliberated for three years; and I now have pleasure in presenting our Report. Yes, this *is* a report, and precisely the sort that our subject requires.

For the feminist vision is not analytical but holistic and relational by nature, seeking the common and unifying elements in all experience. Feminist theology, like Unitarianism, sets religion in the context of our whole lives. Therefore, our Report examines not only images of God and the language of worship but the relation of women and women's vision to the church and society as a whole.

Also like Unitarianism, the feminist vision arises from personal experience. So, although we have provided a comprehensive bibliography, we have not spent much time telling you about other people's understanding of feminist theology. Instead, we have shown you ways to explore your own religious experience in this fresh context. Even where we have provided essays and articles, *your response* matters more than what 'the experts' have said. Feminist theology is something to *do*, not to read about.

So I present you with this Report. It is *yours* to use - alone, with friends, in your congregation or fellowship. Take the pages out of the folder; put them in a binder and work through them. Better still, hand them round and use them in whatever order suits you. Each sheet or pair of sheets offers one more fresh way of looking at your life. Read them, talk about them, *do* them. Learn from your own responses. Perhaps this isn't a Report after all, but rather the seeds of one. The *real* Report will emerge as we all use this material to see ourselves and our world in new ways: as we work together, learn together, GROW TOGETHER.

Joy Croft, Convener

Feminism has had a bad press among Unitarians. We are apt to assume that it is something which takes much of the old grace and elegance out of living and that it seems to be mainly concerned with playing around with our favourite hymns and chopping up the language.

It is the aim of this Working Party Report to demonstrate that this is not the case. At its best, feminism is about adding and not about taking away. It is something which adds new perspectives to traditionally male ways of seeing things, which we have been taught to think of as the *only* way of seeing.

**What is Feminist Theology?** Before we can make sense of this question, we need to know what theology is. Theology means 'talk about God': that is, talk about what we find most important - the first and final reasons for things, however we name them. Theology is not just for experts. We all use theology when we speak about the great 'WHYs' of our lives. Much of our theologising happens in our churches. In worship, we think and talk and sing about the great truths of life and about our right relation to them. At its best, church life is living theology, as we put the understanding of good living, gained in worship, into practice.

**It is always difficult to talk theology.** The issues are so vast and so important that it is hard to find the right words. So we tend to rely on the words that others have used - the tried and tested words of our Judaeo-Christian heritage. But this is where the problem arises. Just because men have always had almost exclusive control of that particular tradition, its words embody chiefly their own male understanding. It never occurred to them - and why should it have done? - that there was any other way to see things. Feminist Theology is the attempt to look at all that is involved from the feminist angle.

Nowadays we all claim to believe in the idea of sexual equality. Christians are fond of quoting St. Paul, who said that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female. But in actual fact, the idea of complete sexual equality is probably still less acceptable than the idea of racial justice. In polite society, it is still supposed to be a case of 'ladies first', but in most walks of life, above all in the realm of religious thought and practice, women are always the second sex, universally regarded as essentially inferior to men.

Feminist Theology calls upon both men and women to repudiate this pernicious notion and to reflect carefully upon all the implications of our common shared humanity. Up till now, religion has told only half the story. Feminist Theology opens the way to the other half, which Unitarianism, ever open to new revelations of truth, is uniquely free to embrace.

In practical terms, Feminist Theology operates at several different levels. One of its prime concerns (and this is something which of necessity involves women only) is what is known as *consciousness-raising*. This is the process whereby women are invited to throw off the often unrecognised bonds and shackles which even enlightened society still imposes upon them,

and to awaken to a complete realisation of what it means to be both female and fully human.

At another level, Feminist Theology is very much concerned with the so-called *degenderisation of language* - especially the language of religious thought and devotion. This is often dismissed as a trivial matter which ought not to bother truly liberated women. But all who involve themselves in Feminist Theology soon realise that it is not a trivial issue at all, and that the constant use of male terms only *does* influence our unconscious attitude to women. Feminist Theology is concerned in particular to challenge us to reflect upon the dangers of thinking of God in exclusively male terms. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, we have been so conditioned to think of God as male, that all of us - both men and women - find it almost impossible to shake off the notion. But, thanks to Feminist Theology, those of us who still want to take Theism seriously are now beginning to realise that female images of God can be just as meaningful and just as true as male ones - and this is not something which relates merely to the question of the Divine Being. So long as the divine is securely identified as male, however subconsciously, women become less divine than men - and in Christian terms, this also means less human.

Of immense importance too is that aspect of Feminist Theology which is mainly concerned to give us all, and especially men, a *deeper appreciation of feminine values and feminine concepts*, both in religion and in everyday life. It can also help us to see how grievously contemporary society is damaged by its essentially male apotheosis of violence, aggressiveness and ruthless competition.

Finally, Feminist Theology, like all other forms of radical religious thinking, is very concerned to remind us that theology is *not simply a matter of reasoning, argument and logic*. It is a process which must involve feeling, imagination and activity, something which has to be *done* and experienced, and not just thought about, something to be shared and enjoyed by all, in spite of the pain and tension which sometimes may also result, and not the exclusive prerogative of academics and intellectuals.

The relevance of all this for Unitarians surely hardly needs to be underlined. Unitarians have always claimed to be radical dissenters, committed to revolutionary ideals - which is precisely the kind of thing now reflected in Feminist Theology. Unitarians too have always argued that religion is primarily a matter of life and action, and that justice and tolerance are more important than dogma. What is more, in the past, Unitarians were often among the leading supporters of earlier forms of feminism and they were one of the first denominations to admit women to the full ministry. Feminist Theology, therefore, the contemporary expression of radical feminism, is particularly entitled to our sympathetic attention.

There is also one other matter which suggests that there could be a special affinity between Unitarianism and feminist religion, and that is in the realm of *Christology*. Unitarians have always been rightly

suspicious of the notion that Jesus can be legitimately regarded as a unique incarnation of the Deity. In the past, this was hardly a feminist issue, but it now seems set to become one. To regard any *man*, however worthy and charismatic, as the final and complete expression of the being of God, is surely an insult to womankind - and so long as Christians insist on regarding Jesus as the perfect image of God, it is going to be difficult to persuade them that God is not male!

Unitarianism can only be true to itself if it remains firmly committed to complete spiritual freedom. Feminist Theology is concerned to set men free as well as women. It aims to liberate us all from the limitations which society imposes on our potential because of our sex. In so doing, it can help us to see more clearly some of the realities of our lives and our faith. If Unitarians turn their backs on this new vision, they will be seen to be incapable of facing truth. Greater awareness often brings pain and discomfort. We hope that Unitarians will choose to encompass the truth rather than preserve an ostrich-like cosiness. Feminist Theology, in the words of Sara Maitland, one of its ablest proponents, is essentially "a vision of wholeness, humanity and unity; a balance between past and future, graceful order and apocalyptic freedom." "I believe," she says, "that this vision can be brought nearer to its concrete reality through love and honesty and sisterhood." Perhaps we only need to add that, in this context, sisterhood surely also embraces brotherhood!

Ann Arthur  
Joy Croft  
Arthur Long  
Celia Midgley  
Peter Sampson  
Leonard Smith

WHAT IS MALE? WHAT IS FEMALE?INTRODUCTION

Do this as a group activity. It is quite a long exercise, with 6 sections, A - F, so you may wish to spend 6 sessions on it.

Firstly, let each member of the group complete the questionnaire below (or just one section if you are planning to spend 6 sessions on it).

Then, guided by the suggestions for discussion (at the end) let the members of the group discuss their responses. It is advisable to appoint a sensitive leader, so that everyone can hear and be heard.

QUESTIONNAIRE

- A. Consider the following qualities. Do you think of them as belonging mostly to women or to men? Answer spontaneously, putting W for women or M for men beside each one:

gentleness	brilliance	self-esteem
strength	wit	loyalty
cleverness	charm	understanding
care	beauty	love
studiousness	leadership	pity
brashness	tenacity	self-denigration
fickleness	endurance	

- B. (1) Read the following story:

A father and son were travelling by car on an outing that took them across a railway level-crossing. Alas, the car stalled on the crossing and, despite desperate efforts, the ignition key stuck and the car refused to move before a train came and smashed into the car. The father was killed instantly but the boy was rushed to hospital and prepared for an emergency operation. But on entering the theatre, the surgeon took one look at the boy on the table and said, "I cannot perform this operation. That boy is my son."

How do you explain the surgeon's reaction?

- (2) Who, mostly, does these jobs? Again, answer spontaneously, writing W or M.

doctor	astronaut	steeplejack
nurse	refuse collector	chief constable
gardener	minister of religion	social worker
engineer	cleaner	army chief-of-staff
lawyer	milk deliverer	bank clerk
au pair	road mender	supermarket manager
dentist	T.V. programme producer	



- C. Who does these jobs in your home? Quick answers again W or M - or other answers if, for example, your experience is of single-sex households:

cleaning	mending broken machinery, etc.
cooking	answering the door
making beds	answering the telephone
washing	dealing with canvassers
ironing	decorating rooms
gardening	arranging holidays
putting things away	rearranging furniture
knowing where to find things	buying clothes
sewing	taking charge of finances
paying bills	looking after children

- D. Social behaviour: Imagine you are out for the evening with someone of the opposite sex, and you meet other men and women. Answer W or M:

Who orders the drinks?	Who does the introductions?
Who laughs loudly?	Who talks about clothes?
Who pays the bill?	children?
	food?

- E. Do you ever use the following expressions? Answer truthfully, YES or NO.

lady doctor	helping wife or mum to wash up
girl (of a woman)	thanking the ladies for making the tea
my husband thinks... or, I wouldn't let my wife do that	

- F. What do you feel about expressing emotions of love, grief, anger, etc? Think carefully about this one, then answer in one or two sentences:

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Section A. Compare similarities and differences. Note omissions.

For example:- Do the women in the group agree on (i) the women's qualities (ii) the men's qualities?

Do the men in the group agree on (i) the women's qualities (ii) the men's qualities?

Are there marked differences between the men's and the women's judgments?

Invite individuals to consider specific exceptions to their judgments (e.g. someone may consider leadership to be a male quality, but may know women who are leaders).

Can the whole group agree on any one of the generalisations?

Section B.

Is the group mostly in agreement or disagreement over these jobs?  
What points does this exercise raise?

Section C.

Share answers and talk about them.  
Are any members of the group defensive? aggressive?  
embarrassed? Why?

Sections D, E, F.

By now, the group should be able to discuss their answers without  
prompting!

Celia Midgley

REVEALING SNIPPETS

**A true story:** Some women were complaining about discrimination in bars and restaurants. There was general agreement that men were usually served before women in bars and that in restaurants, even if a party at table included only one man, it was the man who was normally presented with the bill. "Unless," added one woman whose husband had been disabled in an accident, "the man is in a wheelchair. Then the woman gets it."

What does that say about discrimination?

\*\*\*\*\*

A *Daily Mirror* headline, November 16 1984:

**Girl priests get blessing**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Queen Victoria in 1870:** "This mad wicked folly of women's rights with all the attendant horrors on which her poor feeble sex seems bent is a subject which makes the queen so furious that she cannot contain herself. God created man and woman different and let each one remain in their position."

ARE WOMEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST?

"Dear God", reads a seven-year-old girl's letter in Collins' *Children's Letters to God*, "Are boys really better than girls? I know you are one, but try to be fair". And we all laugh. How funny is it?

It will be nice one day to be able to start articles like this with the assumption that everyone likely to read them will be able to accept that there is a 'women's question'; that women are discriminated against and disadvantaged in our society; that the current debate is not solely the matter of the hysterical neurotic whinings of some unhinged (un-sexed) young women. When that is the case it will be possible to concentrate on creative solutions.

Sadly, and to be honest, to my continual surprise, it is daily brought home to me that people - of good will and informed conscience - find it very hard to accept the reality of this particular oppression. Feminists are often accused of 'going on and on': but what seems not just obvious to us, but clearly proven by the most external and objective facts, is simply not acknowledged by many of the people we try to talk to. At times this incomprehension reaches a point where it is hard not to feel that there is a wilful element in it - that we are talking to people who have ears and *will not* hear. This of course makes the position of women who do not wish to become 'separatists' very difficult. The problems of racism, or world hunger, or political violence, generate a multitude of solutions and analyses - but no-one seriously denies that a problem exists in the first place.

So with apologies to those who have heard, I shall have to begin by presenting a little of the evidence that women *are* discriminated against in our society, and do constitute what can properly be described as an oppressed group and who *therefore* have a special claim on the time and attention of the Christian Churches.

Despite the Equal Pay and Equal Opportunity Acts of Parliament, women remain under-paid in relation to men by almost exactly the same percentage as they did in 1900! (Women in full-time employment earn 68% of the average male wage). That is to say that all the anti-discrimination of this century, from the granting of the vote to the Equal Opportunities legislation of the last decade have done effectively nothing to alleviate the financial inequality that women suffer.

Despite the nominal support of all the major political parties sexual inequality is still enshrined in law. Government pension schemes, taxation laws and social security benefits do not treat women equally with men. Some of these discriminations actually deprive women of basic civil rights: married women do not have the rights to privacy in regard to their income, to establish a legal domicile, to contract certain debts or enter certain legal agreements on their own.

Women are three times more likely than men to receive psychiatric treatment in their lives. Any number of interpretations can be put on this fact (except that women are more unstable than men inherently - 'congenital' forms of insanity occur no more frequently in women), but what it is very difficult to deny is that Western society is harder for women to endure.

In a broad range of psychological tests both men and women can be shown to value 'masculinity' more highly than 'femininity'. It is not simply a question of 'equal but different', but a cultural bias in favour of 'masculine' attributes.

Women are the victims of a range of crimes that men do not (with unusual exceptions) experience. One quarter of *all* reported violent crime is domestic violence - wife battering. This does not take into account women who for reasons of fear or shame do not even report their own cases to the police. There is no real equivalent for men to the crime, or the personal experience of rape - let alone the continuous sexual or quasi-sexual abuse that women experience daily on the street. Rape victims come from all classes, ages and styles of life. Moreover the fear of rape and violence inhibits and constrains many women's freedom of action in a way that is hard for men to imagine. Golda Meir tells a revealing story of her early days in the, otherwise all male, Israeli cabinet, when Tel Aviv was suffering from a serious wave of rape incidents: the Cabinet proposed as a solution that a curfew should be imposed on all women - if they were not on the streets they could not be raped. Mrs Meir suggested that it was wrong to punish the victims of a crime and that it would make more sense to impose a curfew on *all men* - if they were not on the street they could not rape people. Stunned amazement met her proposal - and then her colleagues rose up with one voice to say that this would be an unconstitutional attack on the rights of *individuals*.

I am *not* trying to argue that women are the most oppressed group that I can think of in the world. Though of course when we talk of other such groups (racial groups, the world's poor, refugees, stateless persons, prisoners of conscience, oppressed classes, the aged, the very young, sexual-preference minorities or any other) it is important to remember that all these groups are probably *more* than 50% women; more because there are simply more women in the world than men, and more because women usually end up at the bottom of the pile whatever the pile is. In times of serious famine, women are more likely, for instance, to die of starvation than men - partly because of the burdens of pregnancy and lactation, partly because most societies discriminate in favour of men whenever there is a shortage. This point is worth making because we often manage to imply - accidentally I'm sure - that women are not part of these groups and that women's demands are being made at the expense of these other oppressed groups. The Christian Aid information sheets this year told us that it was important to help the Third World Poor because a failure to do so would create widows and orphans - whereas the reality is that famine will create childless widowers.

I am *not* trying to say that women are powerless, innocent victims of male savagery. Of course women are neither powerless nor necessarily innocent. Our power, guilt and compliance compound the problem. But admitting this does not change the reality of discrimination - it only spreads the responsibility and therefore the hope of changing a situation which at present works to no-one's true advantage.

I am simply saying that there exists a discrimination against women - as women whoever they may also be - which is both public - legal,

social - and personal - absorbed into us as individuals in the form of prejudice, pain and alienation. As an oppressed group women have, like all oppressed groups, a special place in the love of God - and therefore a special claim on all Christians - a claim which in the light of the Gospel is tantamount to an absolute right: a right to be fed when we are hungry (whether physically or spiritually); a right to be clothed when we are naked and exposed and vulnerable (not stripped for men's amusement, or by moralistic fervour); a right to be freed when we are captive - not just in iron bars, but in the conventions and bondage of society (just as the Israelites in Egypt were not kept in prisons but were made to do the least attractive jobs for less than the going rates, had their cultural integrity destroyed and were denied the Civil Rights enjoyed by others around them).

The Christian record towards those oppressed groups 'outside' themselves has (despite the accusations of the world) been pretty impressive and the record of the post-reformation non-conformist churches has been particularly so...of course there have been horrible errors and omissions for which we should be - and I think increasingly are - penitent. But over several centuries Christians have demanded justice in the name of the oppressed - whether slaves, uneducated, sweat-shop workers, or orphans. And not just demanded justice, but gone and done justly. But equally it has to be said that all the denominational churches have been less ready to respond to their own members who demand justice *for themselves* from *their* church. To admit to these claims is to enter into a painful and humiliating self-examination - far harder than to accuse other people of injustice and challenge them to put their house in order. But this self-examination and repentance is precisely what Jesus made a pre-requisite for receiving the Gospel. The beam in our own eye is the real challenge.

Sara Maitland

Reprinted in *Free Indeed?* from the Department of Mission of The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, from *The Fraternal* July 1980 - an issue devoted to this whole topic.

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WOMEN IN THE NEWS - Make your own COLLAGE

As a group activity, we suggest the making of a 'collage' on large sheets of white paper, on the theme of 'women in the news' by collecting cuttings from the daily papers and from magazines, showing how women are treated in the media. This could consist of photographs, news items, articles and adverts. The group could either assemble the collage during one of its meetings - good for getting to know one another - or ask one of its members to prepare it.

When finished, there should be plenty of food for thought and discussion e.g.

- (i) How far do the items reflect the many roles that women occupy in today's world?
  
- (ii) How far do newspapers and magazines devalue women by treating them as sex objects or as other stereotypes?

Reprinted from *Free Indeed?* from the Department of Mission of The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

DOUBLE-SIDED DEBATE

FOR EVERY WOMAN THAT IS:

THERE IS A MAN:

Tired of being a weak person  
when she knows she is strongTired of looking strong when he  
feels vulnerable.

Tired of looking foolish

Tired of people expecting him to  
know everything.Tired of being called an  
emotional femaleTired of the denial of the right  
to cry and be tender.Tired of being used as a sexual  
objectTired of being concerned about his  
virility.Tired of being called not feminine  
because she is competitiveTired of competing as the only way  
to prove his masculinity.

Tired of being tied to her children

Tired of being denied the pleasure  
of paternity.Tired of being denied a satisfying  
job or a fair salaryTired of being responsible for the  
economic situation of another  
human being.Tired of being denied training in  
the mechanical details of her carTired of not being trained in the  
joy of knowing how to cook.Who has ventured a step towards  
her own liberationWho realises that the way to  
freedom has become easier.

- from "Agenda 1979" published by the Latin American Women's  
Ecumenical Council.

"Women's Lib is also about Men's lib."

Does the group agree?

Reprinted from *Free Indeed?* from the Department of Mission of The  
Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.





SEXIST LANGUAGE

One of the special concerns of Feminist Theology is the issue of what is usually known as 'Sexist Language' - i.e. the exclusive use of masculine terminology and pronouns, when the actual reference is to both men and women - e.g. "We believe in the essential goodness of all men" or "Each church member is invited to give his opinion of this statement."

Some suggest that this is a trivial matter. We are convinced that it is not. The Rev. Mary Levinson was one of the original campaigners for the ordination of women in the Church of Scotland, but even she once argued that women who worry about the masculine bias of religious language are "suffering from inferiority complexes and a lack of confidence in their own potential holiness." (SM - p.161) However, as Sara Maitland points out, it is revealing to see what happens when the boot is on the other foot:-

"Until the middle of this century it was common to refer to the primary schoolteacher as 'she' - as almost all such teachers were in fact female. When men started entering the profession, they found this insulting - bad grammar, bad politics, and bad for their egos..... If men can so easily perceive the damage done to their self-image by the simple pronoun 'she' it is curious that they do not understand why the reverse is also true. But when a Baptist Minister, the Rev. John Matthews, wrote to the Baptist Union complaining about their habit of addressing all circular letters to ordained ministers 'Dear Brother,' the response made it clear that he was simply being silly!" (SM - p. 167)

The attitude which we ought to commend is admirably summed up by Janet Radcliffe Richards in a special paragraph which she puts at the head of her footnotes at the end of her book *The Sceptical Feminist*:-

"Towards the end of writing this book, as a result of discussions with a City University class, I had to go through the whole MS removing supposedly neutral uses of 'he' and 'man'. I used to think feminists were making a fuss about nothing on this subject, but they are not. It seems to me to be clearly demonstrable that: (a) (a philosophical point) the use of 'man' and 'he' are not sexually neutral at all (see Janice Moulton - 'The Myth of Neutral Man' in *Feminism and Philosophy* eds. Vetterling-Braggin, Elliston & English); and (b) (a psychological point) the common use of these words does influence people's unconscious attitudes to women..... It is extremely difficult to make the necessary paraphrases without spoiling style. I think we have got to get used to using 'they' as a singular word. (Jane Austen does it, so it must be stylistically all right)." (JRR - p.350)

There are two separate aspects to this matter:- (1) sexist language in general; and (2) sexist language in religious thinking, especially in a liturgical context.

## (1) SEXIST LANGUAGE IN GENERAL

We do need to be on our guard against using sexist language - and we ought to urge others to be also. Very often, it is quite a simple matter. We just say 'men and women' (preferably, perhaps, 'women and men'!) - or 'people' - instead of 'men', and 'he or she' or 'they' instead of 'he'. But for grammatical and stylistic reasons, there are cases where it is more difficult. However, we ought to be prepared to make the effort. (Some suggested guidelines are included in this kit) If we believe in the equality of the sexes and the cause of impartial justice, we ought to be in favour of the degenderisation, as far as possible, of language in general.

## (2) SEXISM IN RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

Here the issue can be more complicated, but the general principle still applies. The gratuitous use of male language should be avoided. Sometimes, the issue is really a general and not a religious one - e.g. Emerson's famous charge to the new ministers at Harvard in 1838: "As new-born bards of the Holy Ghost, cast aside all conformity, and acquaint men at first hand with Deity." This passage has imaginative and almost feminine overtones, but it is spoilt by the sexist conclusion. But there is no real problem, because we can always substitute 'men and women' - or 'your people'.

How far is one justified in doing this kind of thing to something expressed in a particular way by a particular person or group at some definite point of time? This is where matters become complicated - especially where liturgy is concerned. Changing the words of hymns and liturgies is not, as some suggest, a peculiarly Unitarian vice. But it can be argued that we have done more than our fair share of it - sometimes for very good reasons. But some of us, recognising that the language of devotion is essentially symbolic anyway, have now become more tolerant. Should we therefore be prepared to retain traditional material unaltered, while at the same time introducing plenty of new material free from sexist language? But a good case can still be made out for attempting to remove gratuitous sexist language from even traditional material - whenever possible.

Maybe we need to recognise that there are cases where it is not possible - and we need to be particularly careful about degenderisation which introduces a subtle change of meaning - e.g., does not "Our parents' faith we'll sing of thee" mean something quite different from "Our fathers' faith"?

This whole question is something which we ought to be concerned about and the more debate and discussion there is on the subject the better - especially in view of the fact that there is a widespread resistance to the possibility of change. Dr. Una Kroll has suggested that there is even greater opposition to the idea of changes in liturgy than there is to women's ordination (SM, p.170). As Sara Maitland comments: "If there is this degree of resistance to 'inclusive language' to describe the people of God, it can easily be imagined how intense is the resistance to non-sexist language when it comes to talking about God."

NON-SEXIST GOD TALK is, of course, a very important matter and one which raises some far-reaching theological issues. Are Unitarians, perhaps, more open-minded on this issue than we sometimes imagine - possibly because our image of God has been less Christ-centred than that of other traditions? I hope very much that most Unitarians would be prepared to admit that God cannot really be male. It is significant that there have been Unitarians (e.g. Theodore Parker and John Page Hopps) who have suggested that we ought to think of God in feminine as well as masculine terms. One of the great advantages of Feminist Theology is that it reminds us that there must be a female as well as a male side to the being of God. Some traditional Christians now argue that this has always been met in the past by the cult of the Virgin Mary. However much it may offend our traditional Protestant susceptibilities, I think we need to take this seriously. Is it beyond the bounds of possibility that we might find something of value in Mariolatry, if it could be interpreted as the apotheosis of femininity rather than a celebration of virginity?

The introduction to an American feminist liturgy includes the following observations:-

"How we talk about God is now being answered in two quite different ways.....

The first approach points out that masculine imagery and language have been disproportionately used of God and that we need to correct the imbalance by emphasising the feminine imagery which does not exist in our tradition.....

The other argument stresses that all our talk about God is metaphorical at best.....

Two guide-lines are followed in this liturgy: (1) Whenever possible, talk to God rather than about God - e.g. 'You have filled the hungry' rather than 'He has filled the hungry.' This seems entirely appropriate in the context of worship.

(2) Use 'God' to address God. Think of 'God' as a kind of pronoun for the unspeakable referent. Yes, this does mean more repetition of 'God' than we are used to. It's worth it!"(SM,p.172).

I find these reflections extremely stimulating. If this kind of thing raises and makes more real the question of what it actually means to believe in God, and how far it is legitimate to speak of God as personal, so much the better!

#### SOME ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

1. We need to be on our guard against any suggestion that there is something superior in thinking of God as female rather than as male - or that there is no value at all in male imagery. God should include both male and female. This has always been recognised, though not sufficiently stressed, in Christian theology. (C.f. Genesis 1.27: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him - male and female." - Note how sexist language tends to obscure the implications!)

2. There is a special issue on which Unitarians could very well make a special contribution - and that is on the tricky question of Incarnation. For those who take this seriously - especially those who are also Feminists - this presents a very real difficulty. According to the traditional interpretation, when God chose to come down to earth in human form, he came as a man. Jesus was clearly and definitely male. To deny his full humanity is heresy - and his humanity was indelibly linked to his maleness. Is this not bound to reinforce the traditional concept of the inherent superiority of the male sex - if not the damnable notion not unknown in some circles, that only men are truly human?

In feminist theology, there have been some attempts to get round this dilemma - e.g. Sr. Irene Benedict CSMV, among others, suggests that while Jesus was male in his historic incarnation, in his ascension, he transcended gender. Do we really need to resort to such preposterous mythology? Does this give Unitarians a new and unique opportunity to challenge - on feminist grounds - the impossible idea of a once-for-all single Incarnation?

3. In feminist issues, as in all other theological matters, we need sometimes to look beyond the external trappings of religious symbolism, especially when we find them unattractive. The meaning may not always be what we assume it to be. The idea of the fatherhood of God does not always imply male dominance or hierarchical values. In the Bible in particular it often suggests tenderness and loving concern. It has been pointed out that in the teaching of Jesus, what he has to say on the subject of the fatherhood of God is much more akin to what we would normally understand by motherhood. (C.f. the parable of the Prodigal Son - Luke 15.) Perhaps part of the mistake has been to think of fatherhood only in terms of the father/son relationship. Our religious thinking especially needs to take account of the fact that the father/daughter relationship can be very meaningful for women - just as the mother/son relationship can be for men. One of the advantages of Feminist Theology is that it enables us to enlarge and extend our religious imagery. "God" says Sara Maitland "is ultimately Other - but the Beloved Other.... There is a deep way in which it could be natural for men to seek God through female images and women to seek God through male language - because if we abandoned the projection and denial game, that could become the natural expression of Otherness. This cannot happen while either side of the balanced difference is perceived at any level as being better than the other." (SM - p.189)

Arthur J. Long

- References
1. Sara Maitland *A Map of the New Country: Women & Christianity*,  
Routledge & Kegan Paul (SM)
  2. Janet Radcliffe Richards, *The Sceptical Feminist*, Pelican  
(JRR)

Grateful thanks to both Sara Maitland and Janet Radcliffe Richards for permission to quote from their books.

If a child lives with criticism  
she learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility  
he learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule  
she learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame  
he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance  
she learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement  
he learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise  
she learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness  
he learns justice.

If a child lives with security  
she learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval  
he learns to like himself

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship  
he or she learns to find love in the world.

by kind permission of the Scottish Health Education Group.

A SERIOUS BIT OF FUN

A version of a well-known radio game..... one-minute talks avoiding exclusively male or exclusively female language. This can be tricky and quite revealing, but it is also fun to play.

See if each speaker can talk for one minute on a given subject, without using sexist language. Look out for 'he' 'she', 'mankind', 'brethren', assumptions that babies and dogs are male, etc.. Points are gained by successfully completing a talk, or catching someone out.

The topics can be any you wish. Especially tricky are ones such as 'God', 'Heroism', 'Who does what in our congregation?'

Now see how you get on with it.

Celia Midgley

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR AVOIDING SEXIST LANGUAGE

As we make progress towards recognising and promoting the dignity of all women, we are witnessing the gradual evolution of our language: our words are a mirror, reflecting these positive changes of attitude. But language is an active force as well as a reflective one. We must, therefore, take responsibility for consciously shaping our language in order to bring about desired future change in ourselves and others.

1. WHO IS BEING REFERRED TO HERE?

EXAMPLE	ALTERNATIVE	COMMENT
Man/men/mankind	people/persons/humanity humankind/human beings/ men and women/women and men/everyone/all of us/ we/folk/friends	Generic term 'man' may refer to all persons or only to adult males. It may have the effect of excluding women from our language.
common man/layman brothers/brotherhood brethren/fraternal	the average person ordinary people layperson/laity community/kindred sisters and brothers fellowship	Choice depends on context
eg. from <i>Longing of the Heart</i> (Paul Carnes): "To that longing which makes men turn toward one another in love rather than turning away in estrangement, let us pray."	"To that longing which makes us turn toward one another in love rather than turning away in estrangement, let us pray."	First person pronoun includes all.
eg. from <i>UU Views of God</i> "Although they believe that God is spiritual in nature and more than man, they use physical and personal terms in speaking of Him."	"Although they believe that God is spiritual in nature and more than human, they use physical and personal terms in speaking of God."	Use 'human' instead of 'man'.  Omit pronoun.
"Each child should have an opportunity to respond in his own way."	"Each child should have an opportunity to respond in her or his own way."  "Children should have an opportunity to respond in their own way."	Plurals do not distinguish the sexes.

## 2. WHAT DO I CALL SOMEONE?

Dear Sir/Mr./Miss/Ms.  
Mrs./He/She

Dear Sir or Madam  
Dear Friend  
Dear \_\_\_\_\_  
Dear Officer  
You

Be as specific as possible. Use the title the individual prefers. Name the addressee or the office held.

Second person does not distinguish the sexes.

postman/woman  
minister/poetess  
actress /chairman

postal worker/  
minister  
poet/actor  
chair/chairperson  
moderator/ co-  
ordinator

Gender reference unnecessary.  
Many alternatives possible.

"The committee is headed by three Unitarians: Mrs Richard Jones (wife of a Unitarian minister), Mrs.Emily Smith & John T. Brown."

"They are:  
Susan M.Jones,  
Emily K. Smith &  
John T.Brown."

Use parallel terms to describe women and men.

## 3. LANGUAGE WHICH DEFINES OR JUDGES WOMEN OR REINFORCES STEREOTYPES

men and women/ boys  
and girls/ etc.  
The Sunday School  
teacher.....she

women and men/girls  
and boys  
The Sunday School  
teachers...they

Vary the order.

Use plural or use specifically correct gender.

"The ladies served coffee after church."

Mary Robinson and  
Harriet Moore served  
coffee...  
Coffee was served  
after church.

Be specific or use passive.

"Ministers' wives were also present."

"Ministers' spouses were also present."

Women as well as men are ministers.

"Two pretty girls, dressed in their summer finery, lit the candles, while the boys handed out the programmes."

"Two girls lit the candles while the boys handed out programmes."

Use parallel terms or avoid describing tasks in terms of gender.

"The children lit the candles and handed out the programmes."



4. QUOTING FROM SOURCES WHICH CONTAIN SEXIST LANGUAGE

Several alternatives are possible:

- A) Quote the passage directly but acknowledge that the language is sexist by using the term 'sic'.
- B) Name the author and date of writing.
- C) Paraphrase the passage, if possible, instead of quoting it directly.
- D) Find other suitable material to augment or replace the 'troublesome' passage, if possible.
- E) Sometimes a 'silent' degenderizing may be acceptable.  
e.g. from *Hymns for Living*:

"He liveth long who liveth well" becomes "O live each day and live it well".

adapted by Peter Sampson from UUA pamphlet, 1980

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION

1. Read some passages from the Bible with the gender of God reversed, substituting 'she' and 'her' for 'he' and 'his', 'Queen' for 'King', and perhaps 'Lady' or 'Great Mother' for 'Lord'. You could try your own favourite passages, or some of the following:-  
*Exodus 15, 1-7; 1 Samuel 2, 1-10; Psalms 24, 34, 40, 111, 147; Ezekiel 30, 20-26; Romans 3, 21-31; 1 John 4, 8-16.*

How did you feel when reading those? Why? Was there any difference between your feelings about the warlike and judgmental aspects of God and your feelings about the caring aspects? Did the gender reversal make any difference to your response to God's activity? Were you at all confused when trying to distinguish between 'he' meaning 'God' and 'he' referring to a person?

2. Is the gender of God important? Why?
3. God is not male, he is spirit. What do you think about this statement? Have you noticed its inconsistency?
4. Does talking about God as an abstract concept necessarily alter our assumptions about the gender of God?

WHY WORRY ABOUT THE GENDER OF GOD?

Many Unitarians would define God as spirit, or creative force, rather than in personal terms, so why worry about referring to God as him, or addressing God as Father, as we often do in prayer? After all, the language of prayer is often poetic, or analogous (saying God is *like* a father), rather than definitive (say God is literally our father). Perhaps your reactions to the preliminary discussion will have given you some ideas about why our image of God is important.

One reason why some people are worried by an exclusively male idea of God is that this sets a higher value on maleness than on femaleness. It is used as a reason for banning women from the priesthood, and for justifying the dominance of men over women in society generally, especially in positions of power.

We have a deeply ingrained feeling about what is appropriate when talking about God. Until recently it was virtually unthinkable for Protestants to refer to God as mother rather than father, and it still seems odd to most of us. But if we believe that God is spirit, neither male nor female, or perhaps including and transcending both female and male, we *ought* to be free to use a variety of images. To limit our idea of God to maleness may well be considered idolatry because it restricts our picture of God to one particular aspect of divinity, to the exclusion of others.

THE BIBLE AND GOD

Most of our ideas and feelings about what God is like come originally from the Bible, whether or not we regard the Bible as an authority today. Last century William Ellery Channing, the great American

Unitarian minister, recognised that the Bible was written by men, for men, referring to human rather than divine agency. Now, in Channing's day, the word men could mean either men and women, or men as distinct from women. It was often deemed to include women when it was actually referring to men only. In the case of the authorship of the Bible, it seems probable that 99% was written by men as distinct from women, for a society controlled by men as distinct from women.

This can be explained by a short outline sketch of the historical background of the people in the Bible lands. At the beginning of Old Testament times, most of the settled cultivators on the plains and in the villages worshipped both male and female deities. Their understanding of the seasons and of the growth of their crops was bound up with the story of the mother goddess who created the earth, and the nature goddess who controlled the orderly procession of the agricultural year, sometimes in conjunction with a god. Both women and men took part in religious rituals, and women were revered as symbols of fertility, prosperity and power.

The nomadic herders who were to become the Israelite nation moved into the plains bringing a society in which men played a dominant role, because women and children were less able to keep up with and influence a nomadic way of life. These values were reflected in the worship of Yahweh, usually thought of as a single male god. The agriculturalists were absorbed into the more aggressive culture and a masculine society and religion developed. Worship of the agriculturalist gods, such as Baal, and goddesses, such as Asherah was suppressed, rather unsuccessfully. There are many references to the continued worship of female deities. Examples are:-

"The Israelites... forsook the Lord and worshipped the Baal and the Ashtaroath." (Judges 2,13)

"The Israelites... forgot the Lord their God and worshipped the Baalim and the Asheroth." (Judges 3,7)

"Samuel addressed these words to the whole nation: '.....banish the foreign gods and the Ashtaroath from your shrines; turn to the Lord...' " (1 Samuel 7, 3-4)

"Then all the men who knew that their wives were burning sacrifices to other gods and the crowds of women standing by answered Jeremiah, 'We will not listen to what you tell us in the name of the Lord. We intend to fulfil all the promises by which we have bound ourselves: we will burn sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pour drink-offerings to her as we used to do, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. We then had good in plenty and were content; no calamity touched us. But from the time we left off burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring drink-offerings to her, we have been in great want, and in the end we have fallen victims to sword and famine.' And the women said, 'When we burnt sacrifices to the queen of heaven and poured drink-offerings to her, our husbands knew full well that we

were making crescent-cakes marked in her image and pouring drink-offerings to her.' " (Jeremiah 44, 15-19)

It is said that Ashtoreth was worshipped in Solomon's temple. But the Israelite way of life demanded a hierarchical social organisation, with each man responsible for his household; this was reinforced by a masculine hierarchical theology. Women took no part in public worship and were forbidden to read the scriptures.

This story of the masculinisation of society and of religion has been described in detail by several scholars. There is a very readable account by Margaret Crook, who was a Unitarian minister in Norwich before she went to America, but *The Paradise Papers* by Merlin Stone is more widely available in this country.

Thus the books of the Bible were written by men, as distinct from women, and the authors understood society, and God's action within it, in terms of their own structure which emphasised the role of the men in public life, while the women's role was a more private, domestic one. So they wrote about society in terms of male experience. Women and women's experience were largely ignored, not necessarily as deliberate policy, but because they were just not part of the male tradition. It is not possible to undo this male bias because most of the female experience and wisdom was not recorded and so has been lost. What remains was interpreted and generally distorted by men. It is possible, however, to do some detective work and uncover some of the hidden female experience. For example, Margaret Crook elaborated on Miriam's part in leading the Israelites to the promised land, and Elizabeth Davis has written an *apocryphal letter of the apostle Phoebe* showing the early Christians from a woman's view. (This is quoted in *In Memory of Her* by Elizabeth Fiorenza.) Exercises like these help to redress the balance and so create a more inclusive biblical tradition, that is one which gives value to both men and women.

You could try doing this for yourself. As a start, look at the story of the crucifixion through the eyes of Jesus's women followers. Read the account in Luke 23 verse 26 to chapter 24 verse 11. Notice, "Great numbers of people followed, many women among them"... "...the women who had accompanied him from Galilee stood... and watched it all." They followed the body and "took note of the tomb and observed how his body was laid." They prepared spices and returned to the tomb on the first opportunity after the sabbath and found no body. When they went to tell the apostles the men would not believe them. How do you think the women felt about this? Why were the men conspicuous by their absence? Could you write a woman disciple's account of the Easter story? A brief extract from Eaton S. Barrett's poem *Woman*, published at the beginning of the twentieth century, may give you some ideas:-

"Not she with traitrous kiss her Master stung,  
Not she denied Him with unfaithful tongue:  
She, when apostles fled, could danger brave,  
Last at His cross, and earliest at His grave."

There is more variety than one might expect in the Bible's images of God. In the first chapter of Genesis there is an indication that both women and men were created in the image of God. However, the early part of the Israelites' story is one of hostility to female images of God. In spite of attempts to define the God of the Old Testament in line with the social organisation, some of the female divine attributes rooted in ancient tradition have survived. They are particularly noticeable in the wisdom literature. Three important Hebrew words used to describe God all have a female gender, and carry with them female associations. They are 'ruah', 'hokmah', and 'shekinah'.

'Ruah', meaning wind or breath, is used to describe the spirit of God. So when the world was created, and, according to Genesis 1,2 with "... a mighty wind that swept over the surface of the waters," or in the alternative translation "the spirit of God hovering over the surface of the waters," the Hebrew images recall the Goddess as creatrix. The idea of spirit as implying a female aspect of God continued until at least the second century AD. In the Gospel according to the Hebrews (lost apart from quotations in the fathers), Jesus speaks of "my mother the holy spirit". The gnostic gospels contain many references to the holy spirit as female.

'Hokmah' or 'Sophia' in Greek, meaning wisdom, is a female image of God found frequently in the Bible. The Wisdom of Solomon contains many such passages:-

"Wisdom moves more easily than motion itself, she pervades and permeates all things because she is so pure. Like a fine mist she rises from the power of God, a pure effluence from the glory of the Almighty; so nothing defiled can enter into her by stealth. She is the brightness that streams from everlasting light, the flawless mirror of the active power of God, and the image of his goodness. She is but one, yet can do everything; herself unchanging, she makes all things new; age after age she enters into holy souls, and makes them God's friends and prophets, for nothing is acceptable to God but the man who makes his home with wisdom. She is more radiant than the sun, and surpasses every constellation; compared with the light of day, she is found to excel; for day gives place to night, but against wisdom no evil can prevail. She spans the world in power from end to end, and orders all things benignly." (Wisdom 7, 24-8, 1)

Jesus is reported to have referred to wisdom as female:-

"And yet God's wisdom is proved right by all who are her children". (Luke 7,35)

Other writers, such as John and Paul, took over the wisdom idea and changed it into the logos, which became masculine; Paul describes Jesus as "the wisdom of God" in 1 Corinthians 1,24.

'Shekinah' originally meant dwelling or resting, but came to represent the presence of God, and took on a numinous connotation, the glory of

the presence of God on earth. She is found in the Rabbinic literature as an alternative to God's name, for example, in Deuteronomy 12,5, God's tabernacle (Leviticus 26, 11) and God's face (Numbers 6, 25). In the Haggadah Shekinah is associated with ruach hakodesh, the holy spirit, and with bath kol, the daughter of the voice, all female aspects of God indicating the presence of God in the world and God's closeness to humanity. In the New Testament the identification of Shekinah with Christ is suggested in several Pauline letters (Colossians 1, 27; 1 Corinthians 28) and in much of John's gospel.

A further set of female aspects of God can be found in the bird imagery common to both Old and New Testaments. Perhaps the best known example is the words of Jesus:-

"O Jerusalem..... How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings..."  
(Luke 13, 34)

Similar themes occur in the psalms:-

"... Hide me in the shadow of thy wings." (Psalm 17)

"Gods and men seek refuge in the shadow of thy wings."  
(Psalm 36)

"I will take refuge in the shadow of thy wings  
until the storms are past." (Psalm 57)

"The Lord... will cover you with his pinions, and you  
shall find safety beneath his wings." (Psalm 91)

Yet other passages refer to the essentially female activity of birth:-

"Lord... I account myself lowly as a weaned child clinging  
to its mother." (Psalm 131)

"You forsook the creator (or rock) who begat you and  
cared nothing for God who brought you to birth."  
(Deuteronomy 32, 18).

"I will cry like a woman in labour, whimpering, panting,  
gasping." (Isaiah 42, 14)

"Listen to me, house of Jacob...(you are) a load on me  
from your birth, carried by me from the womb:" (Isaiah 46,3)

"Zion says ... 'my God has forgotten me'. Can a woman forget  
the infant at her breast, or a loving mother the child of  
her womb?" (Isaiah 49, 14-15)

"As a mother comforts her son, so will I myself comfort  
you," (Isaiah 66, 13)

However, these indications of a female aspect to divinity do not prevent the overall impression of the Bible God conveying masculine experience.

## MEDIEVAL THOUGHT

The development of credal Christianity and canon law was very much a male dominated pursuit, but there are two aspects of medieval thought which gave expression to female images of God.

Early Christians sometimes included some female element in their understanding of the trinity, such as father, mother, and son (a gnostic trinity) or father, son, and female holy spirit. But gradually the trinity became entirely male, and in compensation Mary, mother of Jesus, achieved greater prominence. Her immaculate conception and virgin motherhood place her far beyond the possibilities for real women. The title 'Queen of Heaven', used by Jeremiah to describe the ancient goddess worship, is transferred to Mary, mother of God. She is imagined sitting next to Christ in heaven, mediating between us and her holy son.

The nurturing aspect of God is expressed in the devotional paradox of the motherhood of Jesus. In the 11th century St Anselm wrote the following prayer:-

"And you, Jesus; are you not also a mother?  
Are you not like the mother who, like a hen,  
gathers her chickens under her wings?

Truly, Lord, you are a mother for both they who are in labour  
and they who are brought forth  
are accepted by you.

You have died more than they,  
that they may labour to bear.  
It is by your death that they have been born,  
for if you had not been in labour you could not have  
borne death  
And if you had not died, you would not have brought forth.

For longing to bear sons into life you tasted death,  
and by dying you begot them.

So you, Lord God, are the Great Mother."

Perhaps the best known exposition of the motherhood of Jesus is in the 14th century *Revelations of Divine Love* by Lady Julian of Norwich. She elaborates on the wisdom of the second person of the trinity in grounding, nurturing, sustaining and saving us:-

"Jesus is the true Mother of our nature, for he made us. He is our mother, too, by grace, because he took our created nature upon himself....I came to realize that there were three ways of looking at God's motherhood; the first is based on the fact that our nature is made; the second is found in the assumption of that nature - there begins the motherhood of grace; the third is the motherhood of work which flows out over all by that same grace."

Julian's most vivid imagery concerns nurturing:-

"The human mother will suckle her child with his own milk, but our beloved Mother, Jesus, feeds us with himself, and... does it by means of the Blessed Sacrement."

#### THE UNITARIAN TRADITION

Unitarian emphasis on the unity of God resulted in the loss of the mothering images of Jesus and Mary, and often produced a monolithic paternalism. Nevertheless, some prominent Unitarian ministers have expressed their experience of God in terms of both motherhood and fatherhood. Did you notice the prayer of Ben Downing, published in *The Downing Flavour* which begins, "O Thou Spirit, who art eternal Father and Mother of us all, to Thee we turn in trust and thanksgiving"? The Khasi Unitarians of North India habitually pray to God our Father and our Mother; their tribal religion included female imagery before Unitarianism developed there.

One influential American Unitarian minister who frequently addressed God as Mother was Theodore Parker (1810 - 1860). Some of his phrases are:-

"O thou, who art our Father and our Mother, we thank thee for thy loving-kindness and thy tender mercy....We bless thee that with fatherly providence, with motherly love, thou carest for the enlightened people of the earth, and not less for those whom savage ignorance hath held blinded so long."

"O Father who art in heaven, O Mother who art near us always, we pray that.....all the work of our daily life be blameless and beautiful."

"...thy fatherly and motherly arms....."

"...thy fatherly and motherly heart...."

It seems that this was rather unusual, for he felt the necessity of explaining his words, writing:-

"I have called God Father, but also Mother, not by this figure implying that the Divine Being has the limitations of the female figure - as some ministers deceitfully allege of late, who might have been supposed to know better than thus to pervert plain speech - but to express more sensibly, the quality of tender and unselfish love, which mankind associates more with Mother than aught else beside."

Nowadays Parker's understanding of motherhood might be criticised for not extending the qualities of tenderness and patience to men as well as to women, but his efforts to include both male and female experience within his worship and his concept of divinity deserve wider recognition.

#### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Look again at the questions posed at the beginning of this section. Have your reactions changed in any way?



2. There seems to be some relation between one's image of God and the space one feels (rather than thinks) God to be. An oversimplified caricature would be as follows:- God the Father up above (in heaven?) directing operations, requiring obedience, and judging the outcome; immanent God, whose gender varies with the person (One woman wrote, "I found God in myself and loved her fiercely."); God the Mother holding us in her arms, so all around us; God the earth Mother, beneath, supporting us. Where do you feel God to be?
3. This paper relates the perception of the attributes of God to the structures of society. How far do you think this is justified?
4. How far can we reconstruct tradition to include both female and male images of God? Try working through your usual Sunday worship service, altering it to include specifically female images of God and images of women and women's experience.
5. Mary Daly wrote, **When God is male, male is God.** What did she mean? Do you agree?
6. Do you feel that the cult of the Virgin Mary adds a helpful set of female images to our concept of God?
7. Our relationship with God as Lord or Father is often described in terms of domination and subjection. What other ways of describing our relationship with God are suggested by other images of God, for example, light, sustainer, comforter, mother, companion?

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Quotations from the *New English Bible*, c 1970 are reprinted by permission of Oxford and Cambridge University Presses.

Quotations from pages 168 and 170 of Julian of Norwich: *Revelations of Divine Love*, translated by Clifton Wolters (Penguin Classics 1966) c Clifton Wolters, 1966, are reprinted by permission of Penguin Books Ltd.

ALIENATION

The term 'alienation' occurs with remarkable frequency in Women's Movement and Feminist Theology discussions and literature. It is possible, of course, that it is no more than the adoption of the jargon of sociology. If, however, it is an authentic expression of women's feelings about their relationship to society at large and the church in particular, then it deserves close attention, for a theology of the church will have to include some notion and hope of a society that is free from alienation.

It has been argued, particularly by Marxists, that alienation is the cause of our society's fragmented structure, and that sectionalization is the consequence of attempts by the alienated to reach some sort of social relevance. Within social and economic spheres this is done by people limiting their associations to those who possess roughly the same purchasing power. Our own Unitarian movement may be an aspect of this, for where are the very rich and the very poor? Not in Unitarian churches! More narrowly, within our movement it is possible that the existence, or non-existence, of sectional groups is a barometer indicating how well we are doing in creating an alienation-free society.

We could ask ourselves why sectional groups arise within our movement, and in local churches? Are they the products of feelings of alienation? Did the Fellowship of Liberal Christians arise out of a growing sense of alienation amongst a section of the movement? I would suggest it did, and can therefore be taken as a measure of feelings of estrangement.

What sectionalization is there to suggest widespread feelings of alienation amongst Unitarian women? The only recent evidence of growth in this respect is the Unitarian Women's Group which was commenced at a General Assembly a few years ago. What is its size? Is it growing? What does its growth rate suggest, by comparison with the Liberal Christians, for example? Possibly that most Unitarian women are not troubled by a sense of alienation. This is, perhaps, supported by the condition of the much larger Women's League, which, whilst it remains relatively strong, seems to have little success in attracting younger women. The League's preference seems to be for de-segregated meetings, which, again, suggests an absence of strong feelings of alienation. How can the present position of women in church and society be compared with that which gave rise to the formation of the League in 1908?

If these indications are incorrect and there is a widespread sense of alienation, why do women not seize control? A distinction has to be drawn between wider society and our own movement. In the former it would be impossible, but in the latter, where women are in the majority, it would be easily possible. Perhaps it is that most women do not envisage their emancipation, if they envisage it at all, in terms of acquiring control of hitherto masculine-dominated forms of status and authority, and thank God for that.

I suggest that alienation has not been strongly felt amongst Unitarian women because since the 19th century, at least, they have been afforded equality within church and home. The biographer of Elizabeth Gaskell (Prof. of English at Salford) has written about the significance of this status as a factor in her life. This is not to suggest that there is not much to be attended to, but perhaps we should be clear about the scene of the struggle. When Unitarian women speak about alienation, do they really feel it in relation to our movement, or is it a product of wider society?

Leonard Smith

THE WOMEN'S LEAGUE

The British League of Unitarian and Other Liberal Christian Women came into existence in June 1908. Since then it has grown from a small company of devoted women into a world-wide organisation, with a great variety of activities and interests. The objects of the League are:-

1. To quicken the religious life of our churches, and to bring Unitarian and Other Liberal Christian Women into closer fellowship.
2. To promote the formation of Branches in connection with the Churches and Fellowships.
3. To suggest ways and means of providing for the needs and extending the influence of such churches and Fellowships, and to collect and spread among the members information of liberal religious interest.

The formation of the League was the brain-child of Helen Brooke Herford, who was so impressed by the way in which the Alliance of Unitarian Women in America was helping the churches there, that it occurred to her that a similar society might be very useful in this country. That her idea succeeded is now history indeed. From 1908 Miss Herford pioneered the work of forming League Branches in England, Scotland, Wales (and later in Ulster) and in 1909 it was suggested that the League might keep in touch with any of our young women who left home to take up work in districts where there was no Unitarian Church; thus the "Fellowship" came into being, and it has developed into one of the most varied and useful aspects of the League. According to the Constitution, 4 or more Branches may form a District, and at the present time there are 13 Districts and 130 Branches in the League - in the United Kingdom.

One of the high-lights of the League calendar is the Tri-ennial Conference which in recent years has dealt with some high-powered topics such as *The Quality of Life, Communication, and World Development*. At all of the Conferences we listen to excellent speakers and spend a great deal of time discussing the chosen topic, and it is always gratifying to learn that many League members are actively involved with important projects and world-wide issues.

The Central Committee Rally which is held in the intervening years is an exercise in Public Relations, when the members are invited to a District and spend valuable time getting to know the members of that District as well as attending a service conducted by the National President. In addition to being, in many instances, the main-stay of their congregations, League members are active in a great many fields outside their particular church, but within the auspices of the League. We are represented on the Women's Advisory Council of the United Nations Association, the Society for the Ministry of Women in the Church and the National Council of Women.

Every year the League adopts a special Project, and in the past few years

has collected between £1,500 and £2,500 for the Pestalozzi Village, the Khasi Students' Hostel, The St Peter's Hospice, The Khasi Village Schools and the Hucklow Holiday Centre, to name but a few. In addition to the Project, the League Branches donate approximately £500 to the India Fund every year. The Memorial Fund, of which the Capital Fund was created by gifts of not less than £1 to commemorate past League members, whose names are inscribed in the Memorial Book is a Fund the interest of which is used as a Benevolent Fund to send gifts, in the name of the League to those in need. Sixteen members received such gifts last year. Many League members are also active members of the International Association of Liberal Religious Women, thus broadening our interest and concern with people beyond our shores, whose situation and outlook may be different from our own,

E. Margaret Evans

WOMEN AND THE UNITARIAN MINISTRY

Unitarians in England often take pride in claiming that theirs was the first denomination to open their ministry to women - the Gorings' little book *The Unitarians* (p.45) is a recent example. The reference is to the induction of the Rev. Gertrud von Petzold into the ministry of Narborough Road Free Christian Church, Leicester, in 1904. However, this event does need putting into context.

Nearly 25 years earlier Caroline Soule, the widow of a Universalist minister, was ordained into the ministry of the Universalist Church in Glasgow. Here as elsewhere the Universalists had close contact with Unitarians, and Caroline Soule preached at the Dundee Unitarian Church and had pastoral oversight there during Henry Williamson's absence in the States.

In the United States, of course, the story of women in the ministry starts even earlier, when the Congregationalists ordained Antoinette Brown in 1853, though after a few years she turned Unitarian. She inspired Olympia Brown, ten years younger and not related, to persevere in her effort to enter the Universalist ministry which she achieved in 1863. This pioneering work bore fruit in the 1880s and 1890s, especially in the missionizing work of the *Iowa Sisterhood*. Two of the Unitarian ministers centrally involved in this were Rev. Florence Buck and Rev. Marion Murdoch, worth mentioning because they were 'occasional students' at Manchester College, Oxford in 1892.

Before turning to Manchester College, Oxford, mention must be made in this summary account of Martha Turner appointed to the ministry of Melbourne Unitarian Church in 1873. Florence and Rosamund Hill heard her there and were much impressed, and when Martha Turner came to Britain, after she had resigned the Melbourne pulpit in 1883, she preached in many English and Scottish pulpits.

In England from the 1870s, when Frances Power Cobbe and Anna Swanwick had almost forced their way into James Martineau's classes, there was increasing pressure for women to have the right to attend college lectures at Manchester College. It has been suggested that it may have been the dearth of (male) students which helped the progress of women. Be that as it may, in 1892 not only were Florence Buck and Marion Murdoch students, but Mrs. Humphrey Ward (sic) was invited and 'kindly consented' to lecture on Priscillian.

No doubt all this helped to prepare the ground for Gertrud Von Petzold. Born in Prussia in 1876 she had come to Britain because she believed it offered her as a woman a better opportunity for higher education. Seven years later, having collected degrees from St Andrew's and Edinburgh Universities, she was accepted for full-time theological training at MCO. She was a cause celebre even before her appointment at Leicester and in great demand, being for instance invited to preach at the opening of the Aberystwyth church.

This didn't open the flood gates for women, and it wasn't until 1915 that another woman - Margaret Crook - began her ministerial training.

But this wasn't the only way into the ministry among Unitarians certainly who were much more adaptable and flexible in this regard than the other free churches. Less kindly, it was sometimes stated that Unitarians lacked an adequate theology of the ministry and a proper structure. Nevertheless there was much sisterhood among women ministers in the 1920s and early 30s, and no suggestion that the Unitarians were less regarded. Indeed quite to the contrary; they were respected both because they had been first in the field and because they were quite easily the largest denominational group. Even by 1933 eight out of a total of 20 churches in the United Kingdom in the charge of women were Unitarian - large even if no account is taken of the comparative smallness of the denomination.

There were, as I have hinted, other ways into the Unitarian ministry. Helen Phillips, described as 'lay visitor' at Nottingham, High Pavement, from about 1904, became lay pastor at Christchurch, Nottingham, with Ilkeston, in 1912, where she stayed three years before moving to Carlisle. Here, as if she had not already served her apprenticeship, she had a probationary year before becoming a fully accredited minister in 1916, thus becoming 'Senior Woman Minister in England', since Gertrud von Petzold had been forced by the Home Office to return to Germany by then.

Rosalind Lee was another woman who gained ministerial status after being in lay charge for two years at Treorchy, South Wales, becoming minister in 1919. She was an exception to the general rule that women did not get the plum jobs or the top pulpits, for she returned to South Wales in 1932 to become District Minister with responsibility for 15 congregations.

Wilna Constable, a convert from Congregationalism, and Barbara Thomas both by-passed college training and entered the ministry via lay leadership. Mrs. E.W. Martin, on the other hand, who had lay charge of Bury St. Edmunds in 1923 - and later of Tavistock - remained unordained, though 'minister in all but name'.

Meanwhile at Manchester College, Oxford, Margaret Crook, motivated by the desire to open the ministry to women, was accepted for full training in 1915. She was determined to serve a major congregation, and in 1918 was appointed to the influential Octagon Chapel, Norwich. It was, however, a short ministry, and in 1920 she emigrated to the United States, where she was to enjoy a distinguished academic career, returning to MCO in the 1950s as visiting lecturer. Her book *Women and Religion* published as early as 1964 surely deserves that overworked word 'seminal'.

After Margaret Crook the flood gates did open a little to "the high religious influence of cultured womanhood" and between 1920 and 1927 no less than six women - Ada Tonkin, Grace Mewhort, Connie Harris, Joyce Daplyn, Ethel Kay, Margaret Barr - trained and qualified as ministers from MCO. It must have made quite an impact upon such a male dominated domain, too much it might seem, since at this point MCO decided that it couldn't accommodate women - "too difficult to have a small group of women in a community of men"; they hoped in due course to make fresh regulations so that once more women might be admitted. Clearly, they weren't going to hurry themselves; it wasn't exactly a priority.

However, by the end of 1927 eight women had trained for the ministry at MCO, and there is pride and satisfaction to be taken in that.

The story now shifts to Unitarian College, Manchester, and here between 1928 and 1936 four women were trained - Rosamund Barker, Lily Preston, Marjorie Easton, Mabel Beames. It wasn't until 1936 that Elspeth Vallance prised open the door at MCO again, followed a few years later by Winifred Brown.

In summary, by the end of the second World War there had been 18 accredited Unitarian women ministers, of whom 14 had been college trained. Since the war, the denomination has accredited a further 19 women ministers, of whom only two have qualified through lay leadership. In addition there have been several lay ministries, and there are women currently in training.

Just a few observations by way of conclusion, relating to the 40 or so women these 80 years.

The number of women ministers actively employed rose gradually from 3 in 1920 to 15 during World War 2 (shortage of men?). Thereafter it declined to 5 in 1960 and did not again reach double figures until 1981 (women's consciousness?).

I don't suppose there's such a thing as a typical minister - man or woman - but in considering the careers and connections of these 40 women a few factors seem to emerge.

About half of the group married, and of those more than half were married to ministers. It appears in most of these cases that the husbands were an influential factor in their deciding for the ministry, and perhaps in the relative ease of becoming so. Equally it appears that their careers were generally subordinate to that of their husbands to whom they generally played a secondary role. Joyce Daplyn was unmarried but she acted as Assistant Minister to her father.

Another observation is that most of the women, married or single, as I have already hinted, occupied what were generally regarded as minor pulpits. For instance, Leicester Narborough Road had 25 years of women ministers, at different times, over three ministries. The Postal Mission inspired by Florence Hill seems to have been regarded as a woman's job; Ethel Kay, Helen Phillips, and Rosamund Barker did it for 28 years between them, though admittedly towards the end of their careers.

It is difficult to assess the importance and influence of women Unitarian ministers in Britain today and this is not the place to hazard the attempt. Although the contrast between major and minor pulpits is much less marked today, it still exists and there are many congregations which have never enjoyed a woman as minister, and maybe still a few which would hesitate to appoint one. Pulpits apart, posts like the college principals, the Inquirer editor, the GA General Secretary, and, with few exceptions, denominational posts have not been occupied by women. I can't help feeling that the ministry is a bit like Parliament; it has been open to women for long enough, but the societal conditions required to make sure they play a full and influential part in affairs are far from being fulfilled. Women may make up a large majority of our congregations,



but women ministers are still a long way from achieving equality of status, let alone representation.

There were some remarkable women among those early women ministers, and perhaps, in considering them, some of the remarkable women ministers of today will take heart.

Keith Gilley

The author would be pleased to hear from anyone who can supply further information about women in the Unitarian ministry.

*The Estlin Carpenter Papers* at MCO include the following letter from Estlin Carpenter to James Martineau. The date is given simply as 'October 15th'. It was probably written in the late 1880s, when the College was still in London.

"Dear Dr. Martineau,

I can see no objection to throwing open the College lectures to women, provided it is understood that the main objects of the lecture remain unchanged, so that freedom of conversation between the teacher and his students remains unimpaired. For my own part, I should rejoice in any step which might lead to the awakening of a larger interest in the aims and operations of the College.....

Believe me

faithfully yours,

J. Estlin Carpenter."

It is good to know that Carpenter was in favour of admitting women - even though the implication of some of his comments remains somewhat cryptic!

UNITARIAN WOMEN MINISTERS

\*\*\* A complete list of Unitarian Women Ministers compiled from the Essex Hall Year Book and the GA Directory, with information on education and/or training (where available) and the congregations and organisations served. The initial date indicates the year when the name first appeared on the list under the category of 'minister' though in some cases this might cover an earlier appointment. Owing to changes in the regulations governing the Essex Hall roll, some discrepancies in dating may occur.

1. GERTRUD von PETZOLD - 1905 - St Andrews & Edinburgh Universities - Leicester (Narborough Rd), Birmingham (Waverley Rd).
2. Mrs T.B. BROADRICK - 1907 - Lewin's Mead Domestic Mission, Bristol
3. HELEN LOUISE PHILLIPS - 1917 - Carlisle, Newbury, Moseley & Tamworth, Dundee, Poole, Central Postal Mission.
4. MARGARET BRACKENBURY CROOK - 1918 - MCO - Norwich. (subsequently moved to USA).
5. E.ROSALIND LEE - 1919 - Cambridge Univ. - Treorchy, Melbourne, Leicester (Narborough Rd), Hackney, District Min. South Wales, Stourbridge.
6. WILNA CONSTABLE - 1921 - Edinburgh Univ. - Warwick, Vancouver, Auckland, Cape Town.
7. ADA TONKIN - 1924 - MCO - Dewsbury, Victoria and Vancouver BC, St. Helens.
8. GRACE MEWHORT - 1925 - MCO - Banbury, Boston, Carlisle, Nantwich and Crewe.
9. BARBARA THOMAS - 1926 - Cheltenham, Cirencester, Gloucester.
10. JOYCE DAPLYN - 1926 - MCO + Bedford College London - London (Golders Green).
11. ETHEL KAY - 1927 - MCO - Whitby, Warwick, Stepney, Acton & Richmond, Dover, Central Postal Mission.
12. ANNIE MARGARET BARR - 1928 - Cambridge Univ. & MCO - Rotherham, Khasi Hills India.
13. MARY CONSTANCE HARRIS - 1928 - MCO - Aberdare (Highland Place), Sidmouth, Derby.
14. LILIAN SCOTT PRESTON - 1932 - UCM & Manchester Univ. - Choppington, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Birkenhead, Horwich.
15. ROSAMUND HAWKSWORTH BARKER - 1933 - Liverpool, Cambridge & Manchester Univs., UCM - Malton, Gloucester, Tavistock, Stratford (London), Central Postal Mission.
16. GLADYS MABEL BEAMES - 1933 - UCM & Manchester Univ. - Guildford, Godalming & Chichester.
17. MARJORIE ELLEN EASTON (Harmon) - 1935 - UCM & Manchester Univ. - Kilburn, Yeovil.

18. ELSPETH ROSALIND VALLANCE - 1939 - Oxford Univ. & MCO - Salford, Urmston.
19. WINIFRED ELSIE MAY BROWN - 1943 - Oxford Univ. & MCO - Ipswich.
20. WINIFRED JOYCE LYNETTE HAZLEHURST - 1953 - Oxford, Columbia (NY) & Manchester Universities & UCM - Horwich, Birmingham (Waverley Rd), Tamworth, Birmingham (Kingswood), Oldbury.
21. ANNE McCLELLAND - 1962 - Leeds Univ. & MCO - Padiham, Accrington, Bury & Ainsworth, Bethnal Green, Richmond & Putney.
22. VERONA MARGARET CONWAY - 1963 - Cambridge Univ. & UCM - Lancaster.
23. JUDITH ANN WALKER-RIGGS (URQUART) - 1964 - Warrington, Reading. (subsequently moved to USA).
24. OLIVE JOAN EVANS - 1965 - Leicester (Narborough Rd).
25. MARGARET RICHMOND DICKIN - 1966 - Crewkerne.
26. FLORENCE WHITBY - 1968 - Manchester & London Univs. - Cirencester, Malvern, Cotswold Group.
27. DAPHNE MARY ROBERTS - 1971 - UCM & Manchester Univ. - Manchester Failsworth, Liverpool (Gateacre & Hope St).
28. PATRICIA STORR (RICHARDSON) - 1971 - UCM & Manchester Univ. - Wythenshawe, Manchester (Gorton), Lincoln Group.
29. DENISE BOYD - 1975 - UCM & Manchester Univ. - Accrington & Padiham, Tutor at UCM, Manchester District Minister.
30. PENELOPE FRANCES LAWS - 1976 - MCO - West Midlands Group, Dean Row, Styal & Hale.
31. JOY GAIL GRANITE CROFT - 1978 - Cornell, Buffalo & Toronto Univs. & MCO - Lewisham, Norwich.
32. ANN CAROL BURROWS - 1980 - UCM - Aberdeen.
33. LENA BAXTER - 1981 - Queen's Univ. Belfast, Manchester Univ. & UCM-Cairncastle & Glenarm, Ballymoney. (1st woman minister of the NSPCI).
34. ARDROY HELEN CAMPBELL - 1982 - Adelaide Univ. & MCO - Banbury.
35. ANN LATHAM - 1983 - UCM & Manchester Univ. - Oldham, Rochdale & Todmorden.
36. PATRICIA WOMERSLEY - 1983 - Oxford Univ. & MCO - Torquay & Plymouth.
37. GABRIELLE WINIFRIDE BENNETT - 1984 - UCM - Ashton-in-Makerfield (Park Lane).
38. CELIA ANN MIDGLEY - 1984 - UCM & Manchester + Open Univs..

compiled by Arthur J. Long

THE RELEVANCE OF RADICAL DISSENT TO THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN  
1780 to the 1850s

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Much of what is written about the emancipation of women concentrates on the period from about 1850 onwards but the groundwork for the Women's Movement had been laid in earlier years, especially by Radical Dissenters. Their work largely referred to and affected women of the middle-class, albeit this covered a fairly wide spectrum ranging from very wealthy business and top-ranking professional families to those of clerks, better-off shopkeepers and low-paid Dissenting clergymen!

The position of women was very inferior in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Politically, women had no rights; legally, a married woman with a living husband did not exist economically, women had become *more* dependent upon men, the agricultural and industrial revolutions having removed from the home many of their former functions. Increasingly, middle class women were expected to do no more than marry, have children and stay at home being 'perfect ladies'. Such an ideal was difficult for many to achieve both economically and psychologically, but it pervaded their lives.

The complete economic and political dependence of women on men was sanctioned by religion, any pleas for greater rights for women usually being countered by scriptural sanctions for female subservience laid down by Genesis and St. Paul. Such conservative thinking was strengthened in this period by the Evangelical Movement with its emphasis on obedience and submission and its stimulus of emotional rather than rational religious fervour.

Such attitudes were reinforced by social pressure and the type of education given to girls. The lack of any education for girls beyond basic literacy and superficial accomplishments where these could be afforded was justified by the widely-held belief that the female intellect was little capable of mental exertion. Besides girls were not to receive anything like a boy's education since they were not expected to develop independent or self-reliant characters or to know much about the world. Classics, the basis of a gentleman's education, were banned from his sisters in case they harmed her purity of mind.

There were people with different attitudes and who educated girls so that they were able to develop opportunities for a more responsible and satisfying role in society. A key group among such people were the Radical Dissenters. The very nature of Radical Dissent allowed new views of women. The rejection of our original sin and essential depravity - the blame for which was usually shifted onto women's shoulders - led to a fresh, more generous view of the humanity of all, a view strengthened in the era of the Enlightenment and French Revolution by an optimistic belief in the progress of civilization and the possible perfection of humankind. Belief in the power of reason and our ability to learn the various laws of the universe and thence banish outdated notions and superstitions was applied to the Scriptures, which from Priestley's time on were perceived to be anhistorical as well as divine record. It was realised, therefore, that scriptural notions about women were related to the time in which they were written.

All Dissenters, as followers of Locke, emphasised that understanding, discrimination and judgment etc were not innate but learnt through appropriate education. Radical Dissenters reinforced this strongly by their acceptance of the philosophy and psychology of David Hartley whose *Observations on Man* were popularized by Joseph Priestley. Hartley's scientific explanation of human thought and behaviour postulated that all our mental, emotional and moral life was based on the association of ideas. From this it followed that people were almost entirely the product of their upbringing and environment and thus, from birth, education in its fullest sense, for good or for evil, formed the adult. Furthermore, intellectual, physical and moral education were seen as interdependent and if promoted together, led to the love of God and the development of the good man or woman.

This had many implications for the status of woman. If inequalities were the result of education and upbringing then women were not innately mentally inferior and their disadvantages were social and modifiable. If moral development was dependent on corresponding intellectual development and health then women had as urgent a right to the latter two as men. The moral influence of 'respectable' women was not a new concept in Christendom, but that women needed a good intellectual education for this was revolutionary. So was the Hartleian emphasis on the self-development of each individual. Thus Unitarians objected to the usual contemporary assumption (and that of Rousseau) that female virtue was formed through social religious restraint. Equally radical in those days was the emphasis given to healthy physical development as a necessary counterpart to moral and intellectual development. Lant Carpenter and others demanded sensible clothing, fresh air and exercise for girls, John Aikin saying that sickly helpless women were an aberration of nature.

Thus woman was to be well-educated for her own salvation. Hartley's argument, however, that both belief in God and self-realisation grew out of the filial affections and that associationism meant that children could be "formed or moulded as we please" meant that women's importance as mothers and teachers of small children was incalculable. Women thus, according to Radical Dissenters had a moral obligation to develop themselves by education, particularly in mental philosophy, for their maternal and teaching roles. Such an obligation would negate the charge that deep study was unfeminine.

Hartleian ideas were very important, therefore, for radical views on womanhood. Unitarians kept such views, however, when their ideas were redirected under the influence of William Elléry Channing since they also formed part of his elevated concept of humanity.

Such beliefs were further strengthened by the keen desire of Unitarians to achieve much greater power for the middle-class (especially the new industrial and commercial bourgeoisie) and to become their enlightened leaders. In the light of their educational philosophy this made women's role as the first teachers and chief influence on the children all the more important. Women had to be well-educated in liberal and radical ideas including those of Rational Dissent itself if their children were to understand clearly these principles, and, it was hoped later support them.

It must be remembered that many Unitarian educationalists were seeking a radically different progressive education for middle-class males to suit their educational philosophy and the demands of a new scientific and industrial age. Alongside more humanely taught classics was a new emphasis on English, modern history, geography, modern languages and science, all taught by methods which would, it was hoped, stimulate clear, systematic, rational thought. Such education, including politics and political economy was given to many girls as well as boys either at home or in the excellent schools run by Unitarians. Unitarian women were actively involved in the dissemination of this modern education whilst some Unitarian men pioneered formal higher education for women and Mrs Reid established Bedford College in London in 1849. Although she was beaten in the field by the establishment of Queen's College a year previously by the Christian Socialists, Bedford's ties with Radical Dissent were illustrated by the much greater power that women had in its running.

Letters and biographies illustrate the much higher expectations that Unitarian men had of their wives as rational companions and the informed interest that Unitarian women took in political, religious and social questions. Many Unitarian homes such as Mrs Taylors in Norwich became local cultural centres where leading men and women of the day, including many non-Unitarians met.

At the same time the stress on the maternal role was, and was seen to be, limiting, though an almost inevitable limitation, given the number of years many women spent bearing and rearing children. The earnest desire evinced by many Radical Dissenters, however radical in other matters, to follow conventional rules of propriety also restricted women's activities. Furthermore, despite having far higher expectation of women's mental capacities than was normal even Unitarian educationalists, e.g. Lant Carpenter, often believed that physiological handicaps would prevent women reaching the intellectual heights scaled by men.

On the other hand many Unitarians, both men and women, early and consistently strove to obtain better rights for women, and generally their radical attitudes to women and their better education of them enabled Unitarian women to take advantage of existing opportunities and thereby prove a higher standard of female capabilities and to expound radical views. In the fields of education, translating, writing and social work Elizabeth Rathbone, Anna Swanwick, Elizabeth Gaskell and Mary Carpenter are just a few of the many outstanding examples of this. Such work was particularly important at a time when many middle-class women were in fact unmarried and unsupported and the 'respectable' occupations of teaching and sewing were oversubscribed, underpaid and lacking in status. Concern for this, coupled with a desire to secure better rights for women at home, in education, in work and in politics stimulated a group of intellectual and energetic women in London who in the 1850s, founded a women's paper *The Englishwoman's Journal*, and started the first employment bureau for women. Barbara Leigh-Smith and Bessie Parkes, both of Unitarian descent, led the group and many Unitarian women, such as Clementine Taylor and Frances Power Cobbe belonged. This was the beginning of the so-called Women's Movement.

The implications of the philosophy and psychology of Radical Dissent also held true for the underprivileged working-class although concern that mothers should be at home to educate their children led some Unitarian educationalists, such as I.R. Beard to speak harshly of working wives. The adherence of many middle-class Radicals to political economy increased class bitterness between them and the working-class. Nevertheless, Radical Dissenters did much to extend educational opportunities to the working-class, both male and female although there were often fewer places for girls in their schools, working-class girls were educated only to do traditional feminine jobs, women teachers were paid far less and adult education for women was always a secondary consideration. The London Working Women's College established by Elizabeth Malleson in the 1850s, however, was one of the best examples of the Unitarian ideal, partly because she, like Elizabeth Gaskell, promulgated the radical view that working women derived independence and dignity from their labour.

Not all Unitarians were completely enthusiastic for radical views on women. Unitarians anyway were a disliked, even feared group and were small in number. They were not alone in having progressive views on women. Many of their ideas were shared by Quakers, Philosophical Radicals, Owenites and progressive educationalists such as the Edgeworths in the late eighteenth century and George Combe in the 1820s and 1830s. Such people were rational, radical and often linked with Unitarians in various ways. Most of their ideas were too radical for the majority of people and there was fierce opposition to them. Liberal Churchmen later had reformist views as did various individuals once the Women's Movement had started. Few, however, either as individuals or as a group, so early and so consistently, and on such deep principle advocated such a radical view of womanhood as the Radical Dissenters or educated women so highly, thus enlarging their self-respect and mental horizons and enabling them to lead much fuller lives and provide important precedents in what women could achieve.

Ruth E Watts

Ruth Watts produced her M.A. thesis on *The Unitarian Contribution to Female Education in England in the Nineteenth Century* and is currently working on a Ph.D thesis on *The Unitarian Contribution to Education in England from c. 1786 to 1853*. She would welcome comments and criticism on her article.

The UNITARIAN CONTRIBUTION to FEMALE EMANCIPATION

R.V. Holt in his book *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England* has a brief section on the part played by Unitarians in the cause of freedom for women (pp.147-155), which begins with the following observation:-

"Probably no religious body except the Quakers has given such whole-hearted support as the Unitarians to the cause of women's freedom in all its forms."

This view is supported by the judgment of R. Strachey in his book *The Cause*.

Though it can perhaps be argued that Holt, as elsewhere in his book, sometimes allows his enthusiasm to run away with him and claims as Unitarians those whose connections with the movement were somewhat tenuous - and also, curiously enough, that he sometimes fails to mention Unitarians who made an important contribution - the section is a good summary of the prominent part undoubtedly played by Unitarians in the cause of women's liberation in the 18th and 19th centuries. Many of the early women pioneers in the cause, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Somerville, Harriet Martineau, Mary Carpenter, Frances Power Cobbe and Florence Nightingale, were either committed Unitarians or came from a Unitarian background, and they were frequently supported and encouraged by prominent Unitarians, both lay and ministerial.

The part played by Josephine Butler in the bitter campaign against the notorious Contagious Diseases Act is well known. But it is often forgotten that the other leader in this unsavoury story was a public spirited Unitarian layman, James Stansfeld, who sacrificed his prospects of political advancement by a single-minded devotion to this one cause, which brought him unprecedented public opprobrium. Holt gives two whole pages to this remarkable episode and refers us to J.L. and Barbara Hammond's biography of him, which was published under the sub-title of *A Victorian Champion of Sex Equality*.

Holt also reminds us that prominent Unitarians were among the early supporters of the campaign for women's suffrage. He mentions, among others, the Rev. William Shepherd and Sir George Philips, Bt., both of whom advocated the cause in the late 18th century, and such 19th and early 20th century champions as M.D. Hill, MP, G.P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*, H.G. Chancellor, MP (the first treasurer of the Men's League for Women's Suffrage), F. Pethick Lawrence, MP (later Lord Pethick Lawrence) and the Rev. Henry Crosskey of Birmingham. He might also have mentioned the Rev. S.A. Steinthal of Manchester and the Rev. Fred Hankinson of London.

Arthur J. Long



.....POST SCRIPT .....WELL DONE.....AND NOT SO

WELL DONE.....

In 1840, women were refused admission to the Anti-Slavery Convention "in accordance with the Word of God", and so the guest of honour, William Lloyd Garrison, the famous American abolitionist, went up into the gallery to share their exclusion.

- reported by R.V. Holt in *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress*

It has to be admitted that not all Unitarians have favoured female emancipation. Joseph Hunter (1783-1861), a member of a family prominent in the history of Upper Chapel Sheffield, in a book, *Gens Sylvestrina* dealing with another branch of his family, has a comment on the Carter Lane Presbyterian congregation in London, where there had been a succession of notable ministers. He concludes: "Yet the charm methinks was a little broken when a woman was seen perched in the pulpit which had been graced by the presence of such venerable men. But these things are to be expected when the administration of religious affairs is committed uncontrolled to the judgment of the individual mind."

- reported by the Rev. Peter Godfrey in *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, April 1984.

WOMEN AND THE MINISTRY (I) QUESTIONING OUR ASSUMPTIONS  
 A PROMPTER FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS

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There are two interwoven strands to the women's movement:

- (1) The campaign for equal rights and opportunities
- (2) Consciousness raising, which aims to increase awareness of the nature of womanhood and its power

Both have their place in any study of women and the ministry.

ORDINATION OF WOMEN

The first of these two has been receiving considerable publicity, as Anglican women campaign for the right to ordination as priests. Could we be nearing the happy ending of a long sad story?

A SHORT SAD STORY

Judith L. Weidman opens her introduction to the American anthology *Women Ministers* with this account of a turn-of-the-century Methodist preacher:

Myrtle Saylor felt the call to preach at age ten as she listened to the lofty words of the communion ritual. When she got home from church that day, she burst into tears, explaining to her concerned father, "I'm crying because I'm not a little boy." Somehow she knew.

In a fifty-year ministry that spanned all the deliberations on the ordination of women in the Methodist Church and its predecessor bodies, she was never made a full member of the ministry. \*

The arguments for the ordination of women are clearly outlined in *Yes to Women Priests*, together with critiques of the arguments against. \*\*

DISCUSSION What do you know about movements for the ordination of women in the Anglican and other churches?

Should women have an equal right to be priests or ministers?

N.B. In *Yes to Women Priests*, Hugh Montefiore writes, "In the secular world, there has been a call for 'women's rights'. But no one has a right to be ordained. It is a calling from God. Women do however have a right for their calling to be tested."

\* Judith L Weidman, ed., *Women Ministers*, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1981.

\*\* Hugh Montefiore, ed., *Yes to Women Priests*, Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1976, p.9.

DISCUSSION A central argument for an exclusively male priesthood in some orthodox Christian denominations is that the priest represents Christ, and Christ was a *man*. What do you think about this argument?

#### UNDERSTANDING OUR OWN SITUATION

Of course, the question of women's right to the ministry has been answered in the Unitarian Church.....or *has* it?

DID YOU KNOW? Even though about 60% of Unitarians are women, only about 10% of Unitarian ministers are women.

DISCUSSION Why do you think this is so? Is it as it should be? If not, how can the situation be changed?

A PAT ON THE BACK Nevertheless, our record is better than most. Among Methodists, for example, while the number of women ministers is higher, the proportion is worse: only 2.6% of ministers are women.

ROLE PLAY Several of you are a church committee, interviewing a woman and then a man as candidates for your pulpit. Choose an observer to note any differences in questions asked of the two candidates, responses received, assumptions made, formality, etc. Discuss the experience. Should there be a difference in the two interviews?

#### THE MINISTER'S ROLE

A REAL MINISTER Many a minister has a steady stream of callers at the manse door, wanting a couple of pounds or a cup of tea. All pretty predictable, but one of our women ministers reports that there's often a momentary diversion, when she says who she is, and they reply,

Yes ma'am. But can I see the *real* minister?

A MAN IN A DOG COLLAR WITH NO SENSE OF HUMOUR -- this is a common social stereotype of the minister. As John Midgley suggests, our images of people influence the expectations we have of them. When you hear the word 'reverend', what image first comes into your mind? DISCUSS this. Better still, draw pictures.

The figure in the dog collar, however caricatured, is likely to be a man. And women find the popular images and expectations a poorer fit even than most men do. To make a real place for women ministers among us, we need to lay aside our pictures of the minister as father or schoolmaster. Answering these last questions may help you see how easy or hard it will be for you to do this.

DISCUSSION What are the most important things a minister does?  
What 'womanly' and 'manly' qualities does a minister  
need?  
Make two lists. Are some items mutually contradictory?

Would you prefer to talk to a man or a woman minister about

- (1) the death of a loved one
- (2) the birth of your first child or grandchild
- (3) a marriage problem
- (4) a question about the Bible
- (5) loss of your faith
- (6) a problem with the church roof
- (7) conducting a civic service?

Joy Croft

#### TWO VIEWS

From *The Times*, Nov. 16, 1984:

##### "RUNCIE FAVOURS WOMEN PRIESTS

The Archbishop of Canterbury gave his support yesterday to the appointment of women priests within the Church of England.

But Dr Robert Runcie said that for the sake of church unity any such radical change had to be gradual. The Archbishop, speaking during a debate at the General Synod on the ordination of women, indicated that despite his view he would vote against a motion to ordain women priests.

'I have been convinced that the arguments for the ordination of women now tip the balance favourably, but a decision by the Church of England depends upon more than archiepiscopal theological opinion. Against what all admit to be a radical change must be balanced both ecumenical reticence and the internal unity of the Church of England..... I therefore urge the synod to adopt the doctrine of gradualism as an argument of principle, not expediency.' "

\* \* \* \* \*

In a recent BBC *Any Questions?* programme, Mr Norman St John-Stevas, MP, a leading Roman Catholic layperson, said: "I see no insuperable theological objection to the ordaining of women, and I personally believe that the suitably qualified should be free to seek ordination to the Priesthood."

We are grateful to Mr St John-Stevas for allowing us to quote him to this effect.

WOMEN AND THE MINISTRY (2) A WIDER VISION

"Let me admonish you, first of all, to go alone; to refuse the good models, even those which are sacred in the imaginations of men, and dare to love God without mediator or veil. Friends enough you shall find who will hold up to your emulation Wesleys and Oberlins, saints and prophets. Thank God for these good men, but say, 'I too am a man.' "

This advice to new ministers comes from Ralph Waldo Emerson's oft-cited *Harvard Divinity School Address*. Chosen as a reading for my first induction service, it taught me an early lesson in the wider implications of sexist language. Emerson was urging me to be my own *man*, and there was no question of 'Man embraces Woman' in his solitary, intellectually powerful male model. Nevertheless, we used the passage in the end because there was (and is) no comparable passage about being one's own *woman*.

How far have we come in the century and a half since Emerson's stirring sermon? The young ladies no longer have to sit on the sidelines, gazing admiringly at their brothers and beaux, as they did on the day Emerson spoke. Women are now welcomed into our ministry, yet womanhood is largely excluded. Do you remember those statistics in the last paper? -- two-thirds of Unitarians are women but only one-tenth of Unitarian ministers. One cause of this discrepancy may well lie in the exclusively male model of ministry we have. This means our career ministry attracts only that minority of women who are good at 'making it' in a man's world: good organisers, analytical thinkers, effective public speakers, skilled at working with committees, self-contained and determined. Our forms of organisation, decision making and worship are certainly not attuned to the gentle spirit and the tender heart.

Consider the point which Roman Catholic theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether makes about sermon-centred worship. She is not particularly impressed that churches in the Protestant tradition are ahead of the Catholic ones in ordaining women. The woman minister conducting Protestant worship is not disturbing or challenging because she has no opportunity to act as a woman in this male context:

"Traditionally, the symbol of Logos or Word of God has been male and hierarchical in Christian imagery. The word descends from above the passive body of the people from the high (phallic?) pulpit. One speaks of the 'seminal' word, and the attitude of the laity receiving it to be one of passive receptivity." \*

If our literal Unitarian minds quail at the imagery, we nevertheless cannot ignore the challenge, if we aim to minister as whole people to whole people. How much room does our well-ordered, intellectual worship give to nurturing, serving, laughing, grieving, sharing?

\* Rosemary Ruether, "The Preacher and the Priest" in *One More Eve*, Christian Action Journal, Spring 1982, pp. 20-22.

In his contribution to this pack, John Midgley urges us to develop new models of leadership to meet the needs of present and future. That we anti-authoritarian Unitarians should look for leadership at all seems something of a paradox. This may be why we so often kick against the leaders we ourselves have chosen. Yet our non-authoritarian nature and our need for direction may be reconciled if we consider the fresh possibilities of non-authoritarian leadership to which the feminist vision points.

Whether by nature or nurture, women have insights and strengths, often overlooked or trivialised, which could add much to the prophetic, priestly and pastoral power of ministry. Once we begin to value them aright, these gifts might transform our church and give it a prophetic role for this new age. Indeed, such a transformation has already begun among us, and not just for feminists. For the feminist vision has the power to liberate all the women in our churches to self-awareness and self-respect, and all the men to appreciate and use the womanly qualities within themselves. This power is already here, waiting to be tapped. Here are some of the directions it might take us:

#### LIBERATION

With feminist awareness, necessarily comes indignation at the loss of liberty, opportunity and a history which women have suffered through the centuries. Understanding of their own situation makes feminist women liberators of all who are oppressed and deprived. This spirit alive in our churches may make it once again a force for liberation and social reform.

#### IRREVERENCE

Recognising the injustice of a sexist social order which has kept them powerless, on its margins, has made feminists sceptical of hallowed assumptions. Every institution is open to question and must prove its value. The injection of such a healthy irreverence would give us a new power as critics of religious and political doctrine and help us create a faith for our time.

#### WHOLE PERSONS

Women, more than men, know that they have feelings, imaginations and bodies as well as minds. This insight can help us evolve forms of worship and fellowship which do honour to all the facets of our humanity. And, as the best mothers are those who let their children grow up, our churches will be homes where we all grow in self-knowledge and the capacity for leadership.

#### FROM FAMILY TO CHURCH

The world which most women know best is the family. Drawing on that expertise, we can find new ways of governing our churches which give everyone a full voice; bring the preacher down from the pulpit into a family circle of worship based more soundly on participation and sharing; let church worship and church life encompass the full range of human emotion and experience, with space for laughter and tears, argument and

consensus. We do not yet see clearly enough how essential good relationships are to living church community.

#### UNIFIERS

We are brought up to analyse our world by looking for the distinctions, differences, limits, divisions. So our usual way of seeing things is divisive. There is a complementary perspective, sometimes called holistic, which is familiar to many women but which we are encouraged to think of as 'woolly-mindedness'. It seeks out the connections, the common and unifying factors. The cultivation of such a mode of thinking will help heal the divisions among us and make our church prophetic, preaching reconciliation to a world divided against itself.

Joy Croft

WOMEN AND THE ROLE OF THE MINISTER  
 A PERSONAL VIEW

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Elsewhere, Joy Croft has mentioned the view that the popular image of the minister is "a man in a dog-collar with no sense of humour". I think there is much in this, and I would add to it the popular stereotype of the minister - conveyed by such comedians as Dick Emery - as a man with a permanently sweet smile on his face, full of sincerity, very well-meaning and probably slightly (or very) stupid. The fact that comedians can still get a laugh from such a stereotype is not without significance.

One useful way of getting into the whole question of the role and image of the minister is to look at some of the words that are used.

VICAR Strictly speaking this means a representative, of God. It almost always applies to the Church of England, and also has associated with it the fact that vicars do have some authority as representing the established church. It is not a term that could be used by Unitarians, though some folk may feel that their minister represents God in some ways.

PRIEST This term signifies one who officiates at rites and sacraments and is a holy person, set apart to act as a channel between God and human beings. This is not really appropriate for Unitarians, though sometimes a minister may feel, for example at funerals, that the role has a priestly feel to it. But on the whole Unitarians do not regard God as so distant or so holy as to require a sacred person to act as intermediary. In other eras there were 'priestesses', but certainly not in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

PARSON Interestingly enough, this word was originally simply a variant of 'person', which may give it some attraction. The idea of being a person, a fully whole human person, has much important significance in our kind of religious thinking and feeling. However, the word parson has some unfortunate connotations, making it rather dated and unsuitable. We have only to think of the term 'parsonical' to realise its inappropriateness. I have never heard this word parson used to describe a woman.

PASTOR This word is fairly familiar to us, though usually applied to lay people, when we refer to our Lay Pastors. The term comes from the tradition that speaks of churches as flocks with a shepherd, though the word has acquired a wider and important meaning in such terms as pastoral care and pastoral counselling, often used in other institutions, such as schools. My own feeling, however, is that pastor has a dated sound to it, and the imagery which describes a congregation as a lot of sheep could be very unpopular, and in my view is inappropriate.

A few other terms I could mention are easily dismissed, such as Padre, and Father-in-God, which are certainly masculine and could never be used by women ministers. I rather like the term Rabbi; the role has many similarities with a Unitarian concept of the minister's role and status, but alas the term is very much the property of the Jewish community.



Almost all the terms we use have strong masculine overtones, largely because they have in the past almost always been used for men. In the minds of many people the role is still a masculine one, and this even applies to the women ministers we and some other denominations have. When I have occasionally seen women priests, American Anglicans, dressed in traditional clerical robes, it has struck me that this is a woman somehow acting out a male role. I feel much the same when I have seen our women ministers wearing dog-collars, or styles of clothing very close to the conventional masculine clerical grey. It is as though there is a masculine image that must be conformed to.

On the whole we are best off with the term **minister**, though it has its short-comings. It is to be found in politics as well as religion, and to be clear, one has to say **minister of religion**. The origin of the word is of one who makes himself or herself less, implying a servant-role. To many people this is highly appropriate. Our ministers serve congregations, and should be servants of all. There is a strong Christian background to this. However, I can see considerable dangers in this way of thinking. A servant can soon become a lackey, at everyone's beck and call. A highly undesirable state of affairs for any man or woman. 'Servant' easily becomes 'servile'. More urgently, I believe our congregations are seeking leadership, and hope to get it when they appoint a minister. Can a servant-lackey be a leader?

We must look very carefully at the idea of leadership. There are many kinds of leader, and I would stress that leadership does *not necessarily* mean being an authoritarian boss. A leader can initiate, or delegate, or facilitate, be an agent or catalyst, or generally create the kind of supportive climate of relationships in which others may develop their skills and talents and put them to use. If this is what the ministry is all about, then the old titles fall away as inappropriate, since almost all of them not only imply a masculine role, but also suggest some sort of authoritarian status.

The kind of ministerial leadership that I have described, the supportive and facilitative type, is of necessity non-authoritarian, which chimes in with our non-authoritarian approach to all matters. To move towards this kind of ministry is to move towards a role and status that is highly appropriate for both women and men without favour or distinction.

John Midgley

WHERE CAN FEMINIST THEOLOGY TAKE US?

The 'womanly' mission, I believe, is to convert swords into ploughshares. We have to prove on a massive scale that we are not afraid of 'enemies'. Governments say they are doing what they are doing (e.g. employing people to manufacture weapons of war) to provide employment, improve trade figures and defend us against our enemies. They are doing it 'for my benefit and for the benefit of the national family'. But suppose the family knows about politics, and knows too about material deprivation; just as children would back their parents' principles even though it meant hardship, so too we might back a national 'risk'. We don't want to be 'protected' if the 'protection' is in bad faith, if, in fact, that protection is blackmail, *blackmail* since only some members of the human (as opposed to the 'national') family could ultimately be saved.

Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable may, in fact, call the bluff of our supposed enemies and aggressors. Of course to some it may not be much of a consolation to be on the side of Jesus! But is it not arguable that in the unlikely and rare event of actual aggression, those who have not 'prepared for war' even in self-defence are actually better human beings, better since they bear witness to a higher value than mere 'enlightened self-interest'?

We need always to be very careful in our choice of metaphors concerning peace and creativity. Beware of language using you! (e.g. metaphors like 'penetrate' and 'thrust' instead of 'embrace' and 'hold'. Sportsmen are always talking about 'attack' and 'aggression'.) There is an obvious connection between the assertive and creative impulses and we may well like to think of peace-making as active and not passive: it is inspiration, not just breathing. But Being can be as dynamic as Doing and may be spiritually more valuable.

The idea of 'making war on war' is an appealing one but one which I believe we must reject. Power for good may also be power for evil. The makers of the money which good needs often create the destruction we all have to pay for. Good ends can never justify evil means since the evil proliferates too rampantly for the good to keep pace with it. (We don't want that *acquisitiveness*, anyway.) It's arguable that our capitalist consumer society has made the Third World into the exploited subservient Woman.

However, there is clearly a need in our current context to address ourselves to the apparently intransigent 'macho' instinct to succumb to our fear and go for 'attack as the best means of defence'. Peacemakers, burning with the passion of life-affirmation, must endure, hold on, sit down, not go away. Their conviction could transform stereotyped masculine aggression by defusing it.

Not that that is enough; it could be interpreted as simply 'dumb insolence'. We have to keep on showing that war destroys fertility, is the antithesis of everything that grows and we have no time in our lives for that which says 'no' to life since we are busy constructing, creating, recognising beautiful and significant things, fruitful human relationships, a sure faith in our one world.

The collective insult that has been endured by women, the dirt that has been done to life, over the centuries may seem to justify anger and resentment. But anger is a disease like nationalism, a violent response to violence. 'Righteous indignation', it may be argued, is not the same thing: that would be creative because "love is added to the anger". But I believe we have to give full sway to our instinct for *altruism*, which will entail humility, self-control, even self-effacement (in the Buddhist sense of recognising that the isolated ego does not exist). Involved in this process the Feminist vision is merged into a pervasive religious vision of International Kinship and Peace.

Peter Sampson

ANGER AND HUMILITY

The theological virtues of liberation for the oppressed must be seen as the complementary opposites of the virtues of humbleness and gentleness that are necessary for the conversion from false power for the powerful. The sins of the oppressed are not pride and aggression but apathy and self-hatred. Hence it is necessary to preach the virtues of self-confidence, self-love and moral indignation to the oppressed. Anger corresponds to the power to transcend apathy and resignation, and to break its chains; to no longer accept evil systems of power as necessary or inevitable. Self-esteem corresponds to the exorcism of demeaning self-images and the re-establishment of an authentic sense of one's personhood in the image of God as the ground of one's being, out of which one has the confidence to struggle against the de-humanisation of the self or others.

Superficially this preaching of anger and self-esteem appears to negate the traditional Christian virtues. But the virtues of self-abnegation and humility are the correctives to the sins of the powerful, not the sins of the powerless. The mistake comes in confusing moral indignation and healthy self-love with that pride and hatred that exalts oneself by refusing community with others. That pride is called *superbia* and its corollaries of hate and jealousy absolutize the self at the expense of others. By contrast, moral indignation and self-esteem are rooted in community feeling. One is indignant at oppression because it denies the common humanity that underlies each person's self-affirmation. One affirms a humanity made in God's image not to negate others, but to recover that common humanity that can unite us with others. Anger in the service of love and justice places all oppressive systems under judgement. For the oppressed self-esteem resurrects the original and good nature underneath the distortions of self-hatred and demoralisation wrought by denigration. Anger and self-esteem in this sense are theological virtues in the same way that faith and hope are theological virtues. They are the virtues that empower us to rise out of the present situation and set us on the way to a newly-redeemed humanity. But they are not the final virtue of fulfilment. On the other side of the self-transcending wrath and reaffirmation of the humanity of the oppressed and the repentant conversion of the oppressors there remains love, the virtue of reconciliation and community. The ultimate theological virtue of love is not only eschatological, it is also primal. It represents the truth of community distorted by brokenness and sin. We could scarcely begin to struggle for it if we did not believe that this power of forgiveness and love was not already our authentic ground of being. Nevertheless, reconciliation cannot be used as cheap grace to enforce passivity and acceptance of status quo power systems. It can be taken for granted only by those who understand forgiveness, not as a mandate to do nothing, but as an empowerment to struggle against oppression and to remain restless and dissatisfied until "every tear is wiped away." Christians too often have used the preaching of forgiveness as a legitimisation of present evil powers; forgiveness and reconciliation are preached as a pacification without the Cross. The virtues of humility and meekness are preached not to the oppressors but to the oppressed, reinforcing their oppression.

When Christian virtues are preached in this way they become a slave ethic, inculcating servility and enforcing acceptance of powers and principalities. Christianity becomes the religion of Caesar and ceases to be the Gospel of liberation.

For the oppressed, anger and self-esteem are transcendent and not expressions of the status quo. They represent the miraculous, the power of the new being that breaks in from beyond their present condition, while at the same time restoring them to their true selves, the ground of their being. In this sense we can speak of the experience of anger and self-esteem for the oppressed as the presence of power and grace. Anger and self-esteem break the bonds of apathy and spring loose the trap of pacification and acceptance of evil. Anger and pride are the power for exodus, for disaffiliation from the bondage of male definition and use. This nay-saying is also a yea-saying, an ecstatic leap of consciousness, an elan of liberated power to be, transforming the basis of existence. Woman is empowered to depart from and define herself out of that subjugation to immanence of a male-centred transcendence that reduces the others to objects of domination. This exodus is a rebellion against the dead world of *I/it* relationships, reducing persons to things for exploitation and use by the sovereign ego of the master in whose image he made his God. It is the revelation of the possibility of cohumanity for the first time.

Rosemary Reuther

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HUMILITY AND POWER

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"It isn't true that, if we wait patiently, the oppressors will eventually feel ashamed of their conduct and relinquish their power to enslave us."

Black Theology

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The Bible contains a finely balanced tension between humility and power.

Jesus said: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."  
 Matt.10:34) Then Jesus said to him: "Put your sword back in its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matt.26:52)

The historical Church has been dominated by a hierarchical, authoritarian power structure. At the same time it has exhorted the people to 'noble' servitude. The Church has often been on the side of the oppressors - preaching the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class-compelling the poor, the black and women to believe that the attitude desired by God is submission to their lot, as a humble recognition of God's divinely instituted order. Religion, with its divine stamp of authentication, is particularly damaging for those who do not want to leave the Church but who cannot reconcile or equate their physical or mental sufferings with their own understanding of the Gospel.

For the most part, the Church has stood with the opposition whenever the oppressed have begun to agitate for their rights. These are the instructions given by a preacher in the nineteenth century:

"What matters is to stimulate the attachment to the old constitution, to alert the people against a freedom and an equality applied to themselves, to show the need for differences between social conditions and to lend influence and authority to our words by means of intelligent allusions to the consequences of the furious passion for freedom of the French Revolution."

This was the image of the Church that Marx was reflecting when he articulated: "Religion is an instrument of the oppressing classes; the workers have no more use for it."

Many silently left the Church when they found that the Church no longer had anything to say to their needs; seeing the Church only as a class enemy.

Many women feel that the Church today stands with the opposition against women whenever they express their demands for equality and human rights. Many women are silently leaving the Church, unable to overcome the alienation they feel because of the Church's attitude towards them.

Christianity has helped take away woman's self-respect and self-value. (Jewish Orthodox women from the earliest days had to contend with their husbands' thanking God every day that they were not created women.) Unless we value ourselves, we cannot value others. Relations between

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two people break down if one always dominates the other; a relationship relies on an authentic two-way interplay, and unless there is respect for each other as equals, love is no more than pity. If we try to control another person's life, we have denied the possibility of Christ's identification with us, because Christ identifies with the oppressed, not the oppressor.

"...At the heart is the realisation that the most potent weapon on the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. If one is free at heart, no man-made chains can bind one to servitude."

We must insist that it is an insult to God if we think of ourselves, and let others think of us as inferior. It is insulting the God who created me a woman to feel second-rate, if God created me in her image.

"If people are made to live without self-confidence and respect as human beings; and live in perpetual poverty and humiliating circumstances, they will never really understand why God created them, or what God intends for them by redeeming them in Christ."

Authoritarianism is the structure in which some people are regarded as having the right to exercise control over the lives of others, by virtue of the position they hold within that structure. Apart from the unlimited suffering caused by the imposition upon other people, enshrined power structures promote struggles and bitterness between people aspiring to those offices.

If we reject sexism in the Church which is a prejudice that rigorously excludes women from the 'aspired' positions, but leave authoritarianism untouched, we may change the sex of those in office, but it is unlikely that we will change the hierarchical structures that determine and govern decisions that rule our Church lives.

What could we put in place of authoritarianism in our organisations? They could be as broadly based as possible. As many as possible could share in making the important decisions which they would then be responsible for implementing, and the structures should be flexible enough to change with changing situations and opinions. The structures should be seen as being there simply to make it possible to carry out a particular activity. Our organisation should be marked by its openness to people.

Has the Church over-endorsed the role of 'noble' servitude to the oppressed, allowing evil to prevail? But has the Church taken seriously Christ's claim: *The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve?* Have we taken seriously this command to serve, and identify with people, to be sensitive and not patronising to what they feel, and doing for them what they cannot do?

Caroline Smith

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FEMINIST THEOLOGY IN THE MAINSTREAM CHURCHESA PROGRESS REPORT

Early this year (1984), a photo appeared in the *Times*, which celebrated an historic moment in the progress of ecumenical relations. It depicted the meeting of Roman Catholic bishops with leaders of Anglican and Free Churches to consider opportunities and obstacles to Church unity. It made one very striking visual point. For whatever problems the churches face on the way to unity, they seem effortlessly to have reached consensus on what 'authority' looks like in the Church. Every single leader in the picture was white, middle-aged and male.

Perhaps a decade ago, the photo would have evoked no comment; it would have felt normal. But a question is now beginning to be asked with increasing urgency by many (not only women): **Where are the Women?** And its implications are being thoughtfully researched in a range of areas of church and community life. However, it is still being countered by others (not only men) with the rival question: **Why should we care?**

EMOTION AND THE DENIAL OF EMOTION

One thing is certain: the issues concerning how women and men presently relate to each other in church and society are not academic and dispassionate. They are highly emotional and engage people deeply. Women who feel a loyalty both to the church and to the women's movement speak of being 'pulled apart'. In some cases, women have become so alienated that they have been driven to leave the church in order to worship God with integrity. Even those who describe the issues as 'trivial' or 'irrelevant' normally express their views with considerable vehemence. A Methodist woman told me about the talk on 'Sexist Language' she was asked to give to her local preachers' meeting. Opposition to her comments came back thick and fast; she emerged feeling rather battered. But it was pointed out later that the meeting, which normally suffers from people sloping off early, had to be forcibly stopped at a late hour. After the publication of *Bad Language in Church* (a United Church of Canada document on guidelines for inclusive language in church) I received a heavy postbag, with many eager suggestions of items I could more profitably spend my time on.

Now, the fact that a significant number of women find their situation in the church dissatisfying, painful or even unbearable, should be sufficient to indicate an urgent pastoral need; but the strength of explicit resistance to confronting this issue would in itself suggest that the churches need to take stock.

IS DIALOGUE POSSIBLE?

In asking of our culture, 'Where are the women?' it is no longer possible to deny a strong current of change. The change that has taken place is not that women are now 'equal' with men or indistinguishable from them (in fact, relative female earnings and representation are in some places deteriorating). It is that a fundamental split in our society has begun to be painstakingly explored. A male-defined culture has projected onto



women not just any old stereotypes, but those qualities which it does not wish to 'own' and value: weakness, tenderness, vulnerability, sexuality, emotion. Correspondingly, 'real' political activity has been characterised as aggressive, hard-nosed, ruthless and rational. Many women (and men) now perceive this process of 'splitting' and projection as destructive to individuals and suicidal for our society.

In order to be relevant to a society with such a changing consciousness, the church must engage in dialogue. This should start with an attentive listening to the women's movement's critique of the church, although those of us who are committed Christians will find it both demanding and painful. For not only does the church parallel many other institutions of society by placing men in powerful positions and women in receptive ones; it has historically been one of the most influential purveyors of the 'split' ideology:

"The churches have tended to be the last refuge of male dominance. They have given male chauvinism not only a practical expression, but also a theological and divine legitimation."

Tissa Balasuriya,  
*The Eucharist and Human Liberation*

Status has been accorded to men, while Christian virtues of meekness, humility and sacrificial service have usually been enjoined upon women, contributing to their oppression, rather than liberating all human-beings from the struggle for domination.

If the church is perceived by many secular feminists as irredeemably patriarchal, it is also true that 'feminist' is regarded with suspicion by a good many church people, and women sometimes consciously avoid the label 'feminist'. While this gulf in mutual respect should not be underestimated, we should also note the despairing assumptions that lie behind any philosophy of ultimate separatism. The CWMC group has discovered some of the most creative dialogue being generated at the place of maximum discomfort -- among those exploring the meaning of Christian feminism. Christianity, at its most profound, can offer hope and wholeness, despite the church's own collusion with oppression. As one woman CWMC member commented,

"Christian faith is about catholicity; I need the rest of humanity to make me whole and human. This includes not only those whom I marginalise or ignore, but also those whom I define as my oppressors."

Another woman pointed out that to take the demands of the women's movement seriously and recognise the authority that women bring from their different experience of the world could recall the church to its own first principles of Christlike poverty, powerlessness and sacrifice.

A WOMAN'S PLACE

"When Monsignor rings up... it's always, "It's the feast of St. Whatsisname, could you come down to scrub the church?"... The time the bishop came we scrubbed for a solid week but on the Sunday, where did we finish up? It's always the same -- "you women can go kneel at the back of the church", the whole of the front is for men.

Comment from a Roman Catholic Woman,  
*Why Can't a Woman Be More like a Man?*

Not all women would express their 'place' in the church in quite the same blunt terms as the quotation above. But many would echo a sense of having their contribution undervalued, or being almost 'invisible'. Work traditionally done by women in the local church (which reflects their domestic role) - cleaning, flower arranging, providing refreshments, caring for children - is frequently regarded as peripheral to the real concerns of the local Christian community. This low valuation extends to perceptions of church women's meetings (often the most flourishing regular groups and also the most efficient fund-raisers), about which the rest of the church may well be dismissive. Even at national level, it is the same.

Throughout the structure of the churches - at local level, on committees and delegations and in the bureaucracies - a similar pattern is revealed, that is with women in the majority, but in the servicing roles; while the male minority (with a few women) are clustered around the representative and decision-making posts. Women, it seems, do not readily press for a share in the policy-making part of church life. This may be because there is a tendency to accept a low estimation of themselves; or it may be that the manner and structure of our decision-making processes are presently 'male-shaped'. It is also an area where the clergy/laity split is significant. In many church bureaucracies, posts are only available to ordained candidates, and this in itself sets the balance against women.

Whatever the reason, women have a tendency to gather within the church in a marginal position, sometimes creating a sort of 'para-church' in their traditional or Christian feminist groups. Nowhere is this division more apparent than in the painful question of women's ordination. Not only is this issue a major stumbling-block to ecumenical progress, but within the denominations which do not ordain women to the full ministry, the internal split is acute. In the Anglican church, a recent protest by women in the context of an ordination ceremony was expressed in the form of a Wilderness Liturgy outside the cathedral. The sense of being in a place of wilderness, outside the church, was strongly felt. Another common metaphor used by these women is that of being 'starved', unnourished by the church they love.

Whatever the stance on women's ministry, however, the CWMC group has found that a crucial factor in women's sense of alienation is that of language. The language of worship makes marked use of male generic forms: 'man', 'Brethren', 'sons of God', etc.. And imagery referring

to God is overwhelmingly male. It is virtually impossible to find the experience or identity of woman explicitly celebrated or affirmed in traditional church language. Recently, however, the World YWCA has published a resource book for women and worship, *No Longer Strangers*; and the CWMC group has recommended publication of a British worship book, containing material inclusive of the whole community of women and men. As material turns up for this new book, we note that alongside the expression of pain and isolation comes also a strong theme of hope. Many women are discovering energy and excitement in responding to the Bible afresh, and seeking authentic words for worship of God. Confronting the reality of division may prove to be an important work for unity in the church.

#### THEOLOGY: METAPHORS WE LIVE BY

An earlier section of this paper considered the sense of exclusion experienced by women in the church. It is interesting to note in this connection that the new Methodist hymn book, *Hymns and Psalms* which has amended some of the more male-dominated hymn texts, refers in its preface to the pastoral reasons behind this. However, what is at stake here is much more than the hypersensitivity of a few individual women. Underlying the question of exclusive language are some far-reaching theological implications. As the preface to *the Anglican Alternative Service Book* points out:

"Christians are formed by the way in which they pray, and the way they choose to pray expresses what they are."

On the whole, the way the church chooses to pray is so as to resist any inclusion of the feminine within its perception of God. One might ask, 'Where are the women?' in considering our understanding of God's nature and purpose. It matters a great deal to Christians whether God is to be *identified* as 'Father'; or whether this is one metaphor among others; or whether it is consciously to be distinguished from our human perceptions of fatherhood. The heat of the recent debate in the Church of Scotland following the publication of a study document on *The Motherhood of God* shows that this is not a hair-splitting issue by any means. This whole debate raises once again questions of Biblical authority and interpretation, and these are areas of ecumenical struggle we cannot afford to ignore. Is the 'patriarchal' tone of the Bible and the teaching on women's subordination part of God's revelation or a distortion of it?

A good deal of thought needs to be given to what it is that exclusive language is determined to exclude. It seems probable that resistance to affirming the feminine in God is linked with the 'split culture' identified earlier. Qualities our culture has associated with women include powerlessness, vulnerability and passivity; a traditional 'patriarchal' God is the antithesis of these. Do we want to continue to depend upon a God who sits easily at the top of those pyramidal structures in which our churches rejoice, or are we able to see God as embodying our vulnerability as well as our strength? It seems unlikely

that we shall achieve a community which can offer healing to the world until we have questioned the assumptions and healed the divisions.

Janet Morley

Janet Morley is Hon. Secretary to the Working Group on the Community of Women and Men in the Church, an interdenominational panel set up by the British Council of Churches in 1982.

GENERAL: WHO DOES WHAT?

Unlike certain other denominations, Unitarians have no ban on women being active in any sphere of church meeting, worship or other activities, the only possible exception being a meeting specifically for women, which men would attend only by invitation (as women would attend a meeting for men only by invitation).

In theory, therefore, all activities and jobs in our congregations are open to both men and women. The situation is not unusual, however, where people who perform certain tasks outside the congregation are asked to take on similar tasks inside it. An accountant, for example, is appointed church treasurer. A builder is asked to take on structural repairs. A parent at home with small children during the week runs the creche on Sunday. And so on.

Some people's response to this will be something on the lines of "What a blessing!" And so it may be - but two possible questions may be raised against this situation: 1. Is it perhaps the case that these workers are doing their jobs dutifully but wearily? 2. Is it not most likely that the first two will be men and the third a women? If the answer to both of these questions is Yes, then we might be led to consider how to bring about changes that will relieve the burdened and perhaps open the way for others to discover or rediscover their talents, or to learn for the first time a new skill.

At this point - a word for those in very small congregations. Do not be put off. Even tiny changes, or even discussing how to make a small change, may help towards greater involvement and growth.

Try this 'audit' of your congregation:

1. - How many members?
2. - Number of females?
3. - Number of males?
4. - Does a man or a woman chair the congregation/committee?
5. - By what title is this person known?
6. - Is the secretary male or female?
7. - Is the treasurer male or female?
8. - Is the person who runs the Sunday School (creche, etc.) male or female?
9. - Is the person in charge of the music male or female?
10. - What is the balance of males and females on the main committee?
11. - Do men or women normally do repairs to fabric and furniture?
12. - Do men or women normally take charge of catering?
13. - After the answers to questions 5-8 put in brackets the number of years they have held the post.

That was a simple exercise. If you wish, change it or add to it to suit your own situation. Having completed the exercise have a discussion about its *implications*. What are you happy with? What would you like to see changed?

Here is another exercise in two parts:

1 - Consider the various members of your congregation. What gifts, talents, skills, resources do they have that are not being used? Ask them, if you do not know. Find out whether they would like to be more active.

2 - For people to do on their own - Ask *yourself*, What would I like to do in my congregation that I am not already doing?... And what is stopping me?

If women and men are to be helped to make a choice to play a responsible part in the life of a congregation, it will help greatly if there is a willing communal spirit to bring this about. The congregation needs to have the courage to make its structures more flexible, and even to allow for mistakes to be made. An awareness, too, of people's handicaps and fears is needed - People with dependent relatives, such as the very young and very old, may need help, if they are to play their part; people afraid to do a job on their own may need to share it with someone else.

All of this is not about pushing people into doing things they do not want to do. That is not the intention. It is about choice, participation, sharing and sensitivity to need. Why not make a start now?

Celia Midgley

AN EXERCISE FOR A COMMITTEE MEETING

Invite someone who is not on the committee to attend one of the regular meetings and note the answers to the questions below, afterwards sharing the observations with members of the committee:

1. Who speaks a lot?
2. Who speaks a little?
3. Does anyone keep silent?
4. Who initiates discussion?
5. Who tries to solve problems?
6. Who proposes action?
7. Whose ideas are accepted?
8. Do people (a) listen to one another?  
(b) interrupt one another?
9. What is the atmosphere of the meeting (e.g. friendly, dull, acrimonious, etc.)?

What have you learned from this exercise?

Celia Midgley

BEING A MINISTER'S SPOUSE

"I've been asked to write an article on being a Minister's wife," I said to my friend at work.

"The joys of it?" she asked, then said, "Are there any joys in being a Minister's wife?"

Well, yes, there are, believe it or not. It can be hard work, just like being the wife of any other working man; it can also be very funny. I could give you a list of words describing it: frustrating, exasperating, touching, pleasing, satisfying, and poverty-stricken! Especially poverty-stricken!

It can make life difficult, but, although money isn't everything, a sufficiency of it wouldn't come amiss.

"But just what does a Minister's wife DO?" I hear you ask. I'll tell you.

(Could we have a few violins playing discreetly in the background here, please?)

A Minister's wife is not just a wife. She's a private secretary who types up all the Minutes of his meeting, answers not a few of his calls (especially on his day off) and makes appointments for wedding couples and baptisms. She's the Mother Figure who comforts and listens to all HIS woes and troubles, quietly and sympathetically, and tries to put him together again after hostile committee meetings have destroyed and demoralised him. A Minister's wife listens to OTHER people's worries as well, sometimes able to give advice, often just listening. She's the mother of her children, sometimes practically bringing them up single-handed. She puts the bread in their mouths and the clothes on their backs, because the Minister gets paid such a lousy stipend. She keeps the manse clean and warm, takes the animals to the vet, tries to understand her teenage children and acts as a buffer between them and a sometimes exasperated father. She happily joins in the social activities of the church and quite often shakes a wicked leg at dances, loving live entertainment and crying with laughter at Drama Group comedies. This particular Minister's wife does not go to church, but not because she does not believe in a Higher Spirit, but because she feels much happier making her devotions wherever she happens to be, at whatever time the feeling overtakes her (most especially in the country, and even moreso on the brow of a noble and ancient hill).

That's what it's like being a Minister's wife.

(You can cut the violins now!)

It's just like being married to anyone else, pretty ordinary, really!

Fay Parker



WORSHIP

Organise a meeting the day following a service of worship and discuss the service in the light of male and female. Discuss, for example:

1. The *theme(s)*. Were they inclusive (e.g. Did a service on saints focus on female as well as male saints?) ?
2. The *images of women and men* in the hymns/readings/prayers/address.
3. The *language*. Was it male/female inclusive? Any other comments on the language?
4. *Worth*. Were people as males/females left feeling enhanced/the same/diminished? Let each person answer.

Celia Midgley

## FURTHER READING

There are many books and journals on women's issues available now. This list includes some of the books which we have found helpful.

### WOMEN IN SOCIETY, FEMINISM

*Half The Sky*, Bristol Women's Studies Group, Virago, London, 1979, reprinted 1984.

An extremely useful introduction to the scope of women's studies.

*The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan, Penguin, London, 1963.

An early 'classic' which has been very influential.

*The Sceptical Feminist*, Janet Radcliffe Richards, Penguin, London, 1982. A philosophical analysis from a moderate point of view.

*The Body Politic*, ed. Michelene Wandor, Stage 1, London, 1972.

A comprehensive selection of writings from the British Women's Liberation Movement.

### LANGUAGE

*The Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing*, Casey Miller and Kate Swift, The Women's Press, London, 1981. A British guide for writers, editors and speakers.

*Bad Language in Church*, ONE for Christian Renewal, ONE Publications, London, 1981. A 28-page pamphlet suggesting inclusive alternatives to traditional exclusive language.

*The Liberating Word*, ed. Letty M. Russell, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1976. An American guide to non-sexist interpretation of the Bible.

*Man Made Language*, Dale Spender, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1980. A feminist study of language and the way it is used.

### THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY and WOMEN IN THE CHURCH.

*Free Indeed?* The Baptist Union, 4, Southampton Row, London WC1B 4AB, 1982? A study pack with discussion material on the role of women and men in the church. (Out of print at the moment)

*The Single Woman in the Family of God* Margaret Britton, Epworth Press, London, 1982. Christian attitudes to single women and their feelings about themselves.

*One More Eve* Christian Action Journal, Spring 1982.

An issue on feminist theology with an interesting range of articles.

*Circles of Community*, Margaret and Rupert Davies, British Council of Churches, 2, Eaton Gate, London SW1W 9BL. A 15-page study guide on women and men in the churches. (The BCC has other useful material.)

*Dispossessed Daughters of Eve*, Susan Dowell and Linda Hurcombe, SCM Press, London 1981. An Anglican study of the Church's attitudes to women.

*Our Stories* The Feminist Theology Project, FTP Publications, 142, Shakespeare St., Coventry, CV2 4NG, 1983. A moving collection of material from the project.

*In Memory of Her*, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, SCM Press, London, 1983. A scholarly feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins.

*Walking on the Water* ed. Jo Garcia and Sara Maitland, Virago, London, 1983. Women's accounts of their own spiritual experiences show the development of a distinctive spirituality.

*Compassionate and Free* Marianne Katoppo, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1971. Available from the BCC. An Asian woman's theology, rooted in experience.

*Flesh of my Flesh* Una Kroll, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1975. A sensitive discussion of sexism in Britain.

*A Map of the New Country* Sara Maitland, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1983. An examination of the experiences of Christian feminists over the last 20 years.

*The Gnostic Gospels* Elaine Pagels, Penguin, London, 1982. A scholarly study throwing light on women in the early church.

*Sexism and God-Talk* Rosemary Radford Ruether, SCM Press, London, 1983. A coherent and comprehensive feminist theology from a Catholic theologian.

*To Change the World* Rosemary Radford Ruether, SCM Press, London, 1981. Christology and cultural criticism from a liberation theology perspective.

*Woman's Groan* Studies in Prophecy No.4, SCM publications, Manor House, 40, Moat Lane, Birmingham B5 5BD. An interesting collection of 'tales'.

*Choosing Life* Dorothee Sölle, SCM Press, London, 1981. A powerful account of the process of liberation theology.

*A Chance to Change* Betty Thompson, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1982. Available from the BCC. Based on the consultation on *The Community of Women and Men in the Church*. The WCC has published other material on this.

BOOKS ON THIS SUBJECT PUBLISHED IN AMERICA - useful, but hard to get.

*Diving Deep and Surfacing* Carol P. Christ, Beacon Press, Boston, 1980. An examination of the spiritual quest of several women writers.

*Womanspirit Rising* ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, Harper and Row, New York, 1979. A collection of articles making an excellent introduction to the study of feminist religion.

*Women and Religion* Margaret Brackenbury Crook, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964. Out of print, but well worth reading. (By a former English Unitarian Minister.).

*Beyond God the Father* Mary Daly, Beacon Press, Boston, 1973. Not easy to read, but an influential book on a philosophical approach to religion.

*Flame Cartoons* Joann Haugurud, Coalition on Women and Religion, Seattle, 1978. A marvellous book of cartoons about women and religion.

*Behind the Sex of God* Carol Ochs, Beacon Press, Boston, 1977. A philosophy working towards a new consciousness which transcends matriarchy and patriarchy.

*Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective* Letty M. Russell, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1974. A comprehensive feminist liberation theology.

*The Spiral Dance* Starhawk, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1979. An inspiring re-creation of Goddess religion; its rituals can be adapted considerably.

#### WOMEN AND HISTORY

*Woman's Creation* Elizabeth Fisher, Wildwood House, London, 1980. A study of the pre-history of the Middle East, showing the changing position of woman in society.

*One Hand Tied Behind Us* Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, Virago, London, 1978. The rise of the women's suffrage movement in the North of England.

*Strong Minded Women and other Lost Voices from Nineteenth Century England.* ed. Janet Horowitz Murray, Penguin, London, 1984. A stimulating historical anthology, contains an extensive bibliography.

*The Paradise Papers* Merlin Stone, Virago, London, 1979. The history of goddess worship and its suppression from 25,000 BC to 500 AD.

#### WORSHIP MATERIAL

*Honour Thy Womanself* Audrey Drummond, Skinner House, Boston, 1982. Traces the development of the Women's Collective round the Arlington Street Unitarian-Universalist Church in the early 1970s, through the experience of the women involved. A record of their songs is also available.

*No Longer Strangers* ed. Iben Gjerding and Katherine Kinnamon, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1983. Available from the BCC. A resource for women and Christian worship.

*Sistercelebrations* ed. Arlene Swidler, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1974. Nine worship experiences and the stories of their creation.

*Stopping Places* Mary Lou Thompson, Unitarian-Universalist Association, 1974. The 1974 meditation manual, a collection of poems and meditations by women.

*Seasons of Woman* ed. Penelope Washbourn, Harper & Row, New York, 1982. A collection of poems, stories, etc, about women's lives, from birth to death.

A volume of *Women's Spiritual Insights* is currently being prepared by the Worship Sub-committee of the Unitarian General Assembly.

#### MINISTRY

*Feminine in the Church* ed. Monica Furlong, S.P.C.K., London, 1984. Explores ways in which the life of the established Church would be enriched by the introduction of women into its priesthood and 'feminine' elements into its liturgy and theology.

*Women Ministers* Judith Weidman ed., Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1981.

Contributions by eleven women ministers show how they are redefining the traditional roles of ministry and church.

#### PEACE

*My Country is the Whole World* Cambridge Women's Peace Collective, Pandora Press, London, 1984. An anthology of poetry and prose reflecting women's responses to war and peace from 600 BC to the present.

*Over Our Dead Bodies* ed. Dorothy Thompson, Virago, London, 1983. Women's reactions to the nuclear threat, the nuclear age, and the war-making mentality.

*Peacemakers: Christian Voices from the New Abolitionist Movement* ed. Jim Wallis, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1983. Women and men of various religious backgrounds explain their personal commitment to peacemaking in the nuclear age.

#### NOVELS AND POETRY

Novels and poetry by women are an important way into articulating and understanding women's experience. Virago and The Women's Press publish a great deal.

## RESOURCES

Christian Women's Information and Resources, c/o Blackfriars, St.Giles, Oxford OX1 3LY have a library and a useful catalogue. Members may borrow books by post.

Christian Women's Resource Centre, 36, Court Lane, Dulwich, London SE21 7DR sells books and has a catalogue.

Two London bookshops which usually have a selection of books on feminist theology and will send books by post are:-

Sisterwrite, 190 Upper Street, London N1.

Compendium Books, 240 Camden High Street, London NW1.

The Essex Hall Bookshop at Unitarian Headquarters, 1-6 Essex Street, London WC2R 3HY, also provides a mail order service.

The British Council of Churches, 2, Eaton Gate, London SW1W 9BL has some useful material, and also stocks World Council of Churches publications.

compiled by Ann Arthur