

Consensus

Volume 20
Issue 2 *In Praise of Valiant Women*

Article 4

11-1-1994

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Recommended Citation

Marr, Lucille (1994) "Naming Valiant Women: Biographical Sketches of Three Women in the Canadian Methodist Tradition," *Consensus*: Vol. 20 : Iss. 2 , Article 4.
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol20/iss2/4>

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Naming Valiant Women: Biographical Sketches of Three Women in the Canadian Methodist Tradition

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The history of the Christian church is rich with the contributions of countless valiant, but often unnamed women.¹ Church history has focused traditionally on the hierarchy, the institutions and the clergy, which has meant that our collective memories of most women, in the words of Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, have been "edited out" of the past.² For some two decades now, feminist historians and theologians have been rewriting church history to include the other half of the churches' workers and members.³

Although little research has been done on Lutheran women, evidence of vital "shadow churches" in various traditions has emerged.⁴ In a study of Catholic women of seventeenth-century France, for instance, Elizabeth Rapley has found that women were a vital force in the Counter-Reformation.⁵ Studies of various Protestant denominations in the United States have resulted in similar conclusions. For example, Ann Douglas' examination of nineteenth century Methodist, Congregationalist and Unitarian churches in the North-Eastern United States resulted in the conclusion that these churches were "feminized" institutions.⁶ In a similar vein, Joan Gundersen found that at All Saints Anglican, a local parish in frontier Minnesota, "not only were women the majority of members, but they exercised a wide range of powers through separate women's organizations".⁷ Scholars of Canadian history also have found evidence of a "feminized" or "shadow" church in the Canadian Methodist tradition. In the face of their exclusion from the hierarchy and traditional decision-making bodies, Methodist women formed strong inter-connecting organizations of their own from which they wielded a great deal of power.⁸

Through their biographies various motives and contributions of the women involved in these organizations can be brought to light increasing our understanding of larger social dynamics.⁹ Although women had little status or power in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, similar to women in other all-female communities, they were self-aware.¹⁰ They looked to women in the past as models, at the same time determined to chart new roles for themselves and future generations of women.¹¹ Thus it is my purpose to name three valiant women in the Canadian Methodist tradition who were linked in the strong women's culture that developed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and expanded into the twentieth. Letitia Youmans, Winnifred Thomas and Katharine Hockin represent three generations, several organizations and a variety of Canadian regions as well as West China. By highlighting aspects of their respective biographies, I will attempt to show that the "shadow church" in the Canadian Methodist tradition was active and multi-dimensional.

Letitia Creighton Youmans

Letitia Creighton Youmans was born in 1827 on a farm near Cobourg, Ontario. Her parents were strong Methodists and she also adhered to that tradition. Her contributions as founder and organizer of the nineteenth-century Canadian Woman's Christian Temperance Union [WCTU] have been well-established. In a brief biography, Sharon Anne Cook has shown how Youmans single-handedly established the organization first in Ontario in 1874, then dominion-wide in 1883. In Cook's view, Youmans was "an important figure of... [the] past... an impressive but representative product of the mainstream religious culture in late nineteenth-century Ontario".¹²

Excerpts from Youmans' memoirs suggest that growing up in a tradition that had been open to women using their gifts in the public domain in its earlier years influenced her self-identity. Although female leadership was no longer common by the mid-nineteenth century when Youmans reached adulthood, she knew that women had been evangelists and preachers in the recent past. John Wesley, the eighteenth-century founder of the Methodist movement in Britain, had encouraged women to play important leadership roles in class meetings and

informal prayer meetings. Many became preachers and evangelists, some travelling to the new world to work in Canada and the United States.¹³ As the movement became institutionalized women found fewer opportunities to take on leadership roles. Nevertheless, in the mid-1800s as Youmans was maturing into young adulthood, the memories of female preachers were still vivid in the minds of some, especially elderly women.

In her autobiography, Youmans recorded Eliza Barnes' role in the Picton, Ontario revival of 1828 and 1829 based on reminiscences of residents in the area who were still speaking of it twenty years later:

The old-fashioned camp-meetings of those days were delightful reminiscences of the old inhabitants... one of the greatest attractions was the lady evangelist.... One old lady, with glowing countenance, told me of a sermon preached by Mrs. Barnes in the door of her house, the interior of which was filled with women, and the large yard in front occupied by the men of the congregation.... "The text on that occasion was from *Ezekiel's vision of the waters*.... When the preacher spoke of the spread of the Gospel, and quoted in raptured accents, '*the waters were still rising,*' " said the old lady, "I fancied I could see the waters of life flowing on until the earth was filled with the *glory of God.*"¹⁴

There is no record of Barnes preaching after 1829 in Canada.¹⁵ Youmans was aware that "among the preachers... there were many who adhered to the sentiment, that a woman should not be suffered to speak in the Church".¹⁶ Perhaps this is why she was so moved by the memories of Eliza Barnes' ministry. Indeed, Youmans also recalled in her memoirs with some glee that her first exposure to the Woman's Christian Temperance movement at an 1874 Sunday school teachers' assembly in Chatauqua, New York, the sessions were conducted by women for women: "It was understood that St. Paul's order was reversed and that a man would not be suffered to speak in the church", she wrote.¹⁷

Her awareness of such role models as Barnes must have given Youmans confidence to use her own gifts. In the 1840s she attended and taught at the recently opened Methodist Ladies' Seminary at Cobourg and later taught at another women's college in Picton.¹⁸ Even though she gave up a formal career at age twenty-three to marry and care for her new husband widower Arthur Youmans and his eight children, she did not give

up her intellectual pursuits. While raising her step-children and attending to the multitude of tasks that housewifery entailed in the mid-nineteenth century, Youmans kept an alert mind. For instance, in her autobiography she wrote of churning butter with a book propped on a rack, at the same time winning the prize for the best butter at the local fair.¹⁹ Every other opportunity for scholarly pursuit was treasured as well: "Stormy Sabbaths, when the weather was too inclement and the road too drifted to attend church, I would employ my time hoarding up knowledge and stowing away ideas for future use."²⁰ Later as Youmans organized in her community of Picton a Band of Hope, a children's organization begun in Britain in 1847 to teach children the value of temperance, she felt well-qualified. In her words, "for several years I had been reading... everything on the temperance question to which I could gain access, and it seemed to turn up in every quarter."²¹

Time for these intellectual pursuits was available to Youmans because she had no children of her own. Youmans is silent on the more intimate aspects of her life with Arthur. As most autobiographers and diarists of the period who, in Lillian Schlissel's words, "conceal[ed] information" in areas including "sex, childbirth and marital relationships",²² Youmans made no comment on her childlessness. History tells us, however, that Youmans was unusual in a time when the average Canadian married woman bore eight children and had a life expectancy of only forty-two years of age, early death often resulting from childbirth complications and lack of medical care.²³ Indeed with Youmans' youngest step-child already several years old at her marriage to the children's father, she had many years of freedom from domestic responsibilities in mid-life.

Thus when Youmans and her husband moved off their farm to the town of Picton in 1868, the youngest child was already a young adult and Youmans was just past forty, with years of life ahead of her. Meanwhile many of her peers' lives were over, or at best were still burdened by the cares of young families. Youmans responded to this gift of life by using her abilities within the constraints of the time. Becoming an evangelist like Barnes was not an option, but becoming a Sunday school teacher was. Youmans threw herself into Sunday school teaching and quickly built up a small class of teen-aged girls to become a mixed class of one hundred. She also organized a Band

of Hope of similar size. In her words, "I was... what might be called a real enthusiast."²⁴ It was this enthusiasm that led her to attend the Sunday school teachers' assembly held at Chatauqua, New York in 1874 where teachers were offered opportunities to expand their horizons and to upgrade their skills.²⁵ Here she witnessed the inaugural meeting of the American Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and returned home determined to begin one in Canada.²⁶

In this security of a women's culture Youmans gained the confidence to speak publicly and to organize. It was at Chatauqua at age forty-seven that she first heard a female speaker. Although she had heard tales of the evangelist Eliza Barnes, it was not until her association with powerful American orators such as professor and writer Jennie Fowler Willing and temperance leader Francis Willard, that Youmans experienced strong female leadership.²⁷ With these models, Youmans learned to become a persuasive speaker and organizer in her own right. On her return to Picton, she immediately established a local WCTU. Overcoming her fears of confronting town councils and making public presentations, she extended the Ontario WCTU network by establishing the first urban one in nearby Toronto the following year; two years later, she formed the first provincial organization. She travelled extensively in Ontario and as far west as Alberta, organizing and helping far-flung communities to initiate their own WCTUs. By 1883, at the age of fifty-seven, Youmans had established a national WCTU and was elected President. By her death in 1896, the WCTU boasted 10,000 members.²⁸

Unlike Eliza Barnes who faded from popular memory, Youmans was well-remembered, for she had helped to set the parameters of a strong women's culture. She was among the nineteenth-century women who challenged societal norms by stepping outside of their domestic roles, while keeping within the bounds of what was socially appropriate. Youmans and her peers took on the role of guardians of society, moving their feminine influence from the confines of their homes to the public sphere.²⁹ Within such organizations as the WCTU, Canadian women had opportunities to develop, in Cook's words, "oratorical, organizational and pedagogical skills, a forum for practising those skills, and a network of like-minded women".³⁰ No doubt many realized their true abilities as creative individuals for the first time.³¹

The flags that were hung at half mast on public buildings in the city of Toronto at Youmans' death were the mark of women's work being acknowledged in the public domain. Some three decades later the writer of *A Girl's Book of Friends*, a series of short biographies compiled for the Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) program, noted the scarcity of Canadian heroines and proudly declared that the memorial was "the first time such a tribute of respect had been paid in that city to the memory of a woman".³² Youmans' ability as a public speaker and her strong popular image caught the biographer's imagination as well:

She was constantly in demand because her great power of speech and her happy wit made a success of any meeting in which she took part. The remark was frequently made by those who heard her that she had the qualities of a statesman, and that Canada would have been well served had Mrs. Youmans been called to the halls of parliament.³³

What better modelling than this for women who finally were being recognized as persons under Canadian law!³⁴

A Girl's Book of Friends is symbolic of the "new women" who emerged out of the nineteenth-century women's culture created by Letitia Youmans and her contemporaries. Fitting neither the description of social guardian, nor having the freedom to enter the male domain, the professional women of the 1910s and '20s were aware of being in the vanguard of social change. Standing outside of society, they deliberately created fresh roles and new institutions for themselves and following generations of women.³⁵

Winnifred Thomas

Winnifred Thomas was one of these "new women". Born in the latter 1880s in a Methodist parsonage, Thomas attended Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick as a matter of course. Not only did the university offer children of Methodist clergy couples reduced tuition, but in the Methodist tradition higher education for women was well accepted. Earlier it was noted that Letitia Youmans had attended the Cobourg Ladies' Academy in Upper Canada in the 1840s. By the early 1900s, female students also had been attending New Brunswick's Mount Allison for half a century; indeed it had been the first college in the British empire to grant

a degree to a woman when it awarded Grace Annie Lockhart a Bachelor of Science in 1875.³⁶

In Thomas' mother's generation, educated women often went overseas as missionaries where they were able to carve out careers far from the patriarchal society of their home communities. Others joined organizations such as the missionary societies, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). By the early twentieth century, however, the social climate had changed. Thomas was among the growing number of middle-class, educated young women in Canada who chose to pursue careers as teachers, nurses or social workers instead of seeking marriage partners or going overseas. With the dearth of potential husbands after World War I, independence became more socially acceptable.³⁷

Upon graduation in 1908, Thomas launched her career by teaching biblical studies and history at Mount Allison Ladies College. After eight years of teaching, she became eastern student secretary of the YWCA in 1916 and national girls' work secretary of the YWCA the following year. During her years with the YWCA Thomas was a key mover in the creation and evolution of the Canadian Girls in Training.³⁸ Similar to other women of her time, the confidence engendered by her education and work experience in women's organizations led her to believe that women could enter the world as equals to men. Thus in 1920 she left the YWCA to work for the Methodist, then the United Church of Canada in the mixed-gender Religious Education board hoping to see women working "side by side with men" in all areas of church life.³⁹ Shortly thereafter the CGIT program was passed on to the churches.

Initially Thomas' optimism about the potential for working from within the church seemed well-founded. By the time of church union in 1925 when the Methodists joined the Presbyterians and Congregationalists to form the United Church of Canada, she sat on both the executive and the sub-executive of the Board of Religious Education.⁴⁰ This high profile proved to be invaluable as Thomas strove to maintain the momentum required for building the CGIT as envisioned by the YWCA. Her first task was to remind the men on the Board of Religious Education that the CGIT program existed, for they overlooked it entirely when making their annual reports to the

United Church General Assembly. Thus she worked hard promoting the program.⁴¹ A second and equally important task was enlisting help in creating curriculum and other resources to support it.⁴² Aware of how few materials oriented to girls' needs were available, she began by convincing Marjorie MacDonald, another Methodist church worker, to edit a magazine for CGIT girls and their leaders. The release of *The Torch* in 1924 fulfilled Thomas' dreams of a magazine for CGIT to parallel *The Mentor*, which had been available for some years for boys' leaders.⁴³

Thomas turned to writing as well. Her Bible study, *The Kingdom of God*, was published in 1926. This study was based entirely on the synoptic gospels and used the method popularized by H.B. Sharman, a key figure in the Student Christian Movement. In *The Kingdom of God* Thomas aimed "to make real to girls 'the Jesus of history... to lead them to see clearly what he meant when he spoke of the Kingdom of God' and to inspire them 'to commit unreservedly to the extending of His Kingdom in the world.'" Thomas advised leaders to use "'research and discussion' and to encourage 'girls to do *their own thinking*. It is irreverent to approach the study of the Bible with a lazy mind,'" she wrote.⁴⁴ CGIT leaders used the study locally and over several summers at CGIT camps.

Thomas and her peers were also aware of the importance that role models held for girls during this era of social change. In an informative article on the first twenty years of the Canadian Girls in Training Margaret Prang, herself influenced by the club as a teen-aged girl in the 1930s, noted: "Biographies of women 'achievers' were a staple of CGIT reading lists. Perennial favourites included Elizabeth Barret Browning, Charlotte Bronte, Florence Nightingale, Mary Slessor, Frances Willard, Jane Addams and Alice Freeman Palmer."⁴⁵ As mentioned earlier, Letitia Youmans' biography was among the great women selected by the CGIT leaders to appear in *A Girl's Book of Friends* which they published in 1929. The introduction to the CGIT's collection of biographies underlines the value of such individuals in adolescent development:

We all probably realize that friendship with people of high ideals and character brings largeness of life.... There is one group of acquaintances who bring us much happiness—our book friends. In this company we may comrade with the finest, the chief requirement

being an understanding mind. . . . It is to be regretted that there is little available biography of distinctively Canadian women. A quest for information about girls and women of Canada who might become our loved book friends, would surely be an alluring task for Canadian Girls in Training.⁴⁶

In some ways ahead of their time,⁴⁷ Winnifred Thomas and her peers were also women of their time. The biographies encouraged girls to use their abilities in the public sphere, but continued to emphasize the nineteenth-century ideal of the female roles as mothers and social guardians. Thus Thomas and her peers encouraged girls to complete high school and to train for a service-oriented career, at the same time assuming that most girls would marry and devote their lives to motherhood.⁴⁸ With these values, Youmans was the perfect role model. She was the founder of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in Canada, but also a dutiful wife and step-mother.

For "new women" like Thomas it was not easy to bridge the gap between career options and traditional roles, for they found themselves standing outside of society, in the world of neither women nor men. This is why educated women of Thomas' generation created new institutions and new careers for themselves and sought to meet the developmental needs of young women.⁴⁹ In the words of Opal McNeill, a pioneer CGIT leader in Alberta, the CGIT materials were the symbols of the on-going attempt to "find out what is missing in the life experience of a girl", and the attempt "to provide the experience for her in her CGIT years".⁵⁰

Earlier it was mentioned that Thomas had chosen to pursue these goals from the context of the male-dominated church structures. A decade of working in that setting, however, made it clear just how reluctant men were to share their power. She is remembered by one church leader as a woman "who was a real power in the church", but he also has described her as "matronizing" and "somewhat prissy", as someone who failed to understand how boys felt.⁵¹ This description is reminiscent of Smith-Rosenberg's findings that in the literature of the 1920s male novelists portrayed the single woman as a "Mannish Lesbian" or "the aging Lady in Lavender, . . . the mentor of the young woman".⁵²

Perhaps it is this ambivalence on the part of the men in the church that drove Thomas' decision to switch in 1933 from

working on mixed-gender church boards to accept the position of Executive Secretary of the United Church of Canada Woman's Missionary Society [WMS].⁵³ In this women's culture where she was perceived by younger women as "magnificent" and "awe-inspiring",⁵⁴ Thomas continued to work for the next twenty years. In her history of the Woman's Missionary Society, Donna Sinclair has summed up Thomas' work this way: much of the influence to move into "roles beyond what we were considering...was due to a remarkable figure in the WMS, Winnifred Thomas".⁵⁵ In that context Thomas acted as a mentor to CGIT leaders and their girls who were maturing to adulthood, recruiting many to work in various aspects of the church's women's culture.

Katharine Hockin

One young woman who came under Thomas' influence was Katharine Hockin. Indeed the Methodist and United Church of Canada women's culture nurtured Hockin from childhood. Hockin was born in 1910 in West China to Methodist missionary parents, but her father died when Hockin was an infant. Undaunted, her widowed mother Lily Howie Hockin applied to work as a missionary evangelist under the WMS in West China. In the words of Hockin's biographers, Mary Rose Donnelly and Heather Dau, "that Lily was a single mother was no barrier to the WMS. The organization embodied flexibility and embraced the occasion by making little Katharine the Society's youngest member."⁵⁶ Thus Hockin was raised in what she has called the "matriarchal culture" of the WMS. Hockin grew up with a working mother at a time when the metaphor for motherhood was as full-time homemaker. Similar to career women in other times and places, Lily Hockin did not have that luxury. Further, as the only mother working for the WMS, she believed that she had to prove herself.⁵⁷ In this context the Woman's Missionary Society and its daughter organization the CGIT became family for Hockin.

Hockin's introduction to CGIT came in its early years when she herself was a young teenager. In 1921, just four years after the program was launched in Canada, teachers at the boarding school for children of Canadian missionaries housed on the West China Union University campus in Chengdu introduced

the first Chinese Girls in Training group. The relatively unstructured nature of the CGIT gave staff the opportunity to develop more intimate relationships with the girls. In Hockin's words, "our relationships with adults always had some aspect of discipline or authority, but in CGIT, the leader became a friend and confidant."⁵⁸

In 1926 at the age of fifteen, Hockin was sent back to Canada to live with two maiden aunts and an aging and often cranky grandmother in Vancouver while she prepared for university. Far from her mother and the familiar WMS family, Hockin found the CGIT to be a familiar place in what was to her a foreign and unfriendly world. As in the Chengdu boarding school, the CGIT was where Hockin found a caring adult friend and peer relationships. Her on-going correspondence with two of those girls nearly seventy years later suggests the depth of those friendships.⁵⁹

Hockin has described the CGIT as "probably the most creative teenage program that has ever been put together". She credits *A Girl's Book of Friends* "with providing role models which provided me and my generation with a focus on women's gifts and potential, so that we were moulded by these stories rather than feeling pushed against impossible goals of male models or styles of female ideals as passive and subordinate."⁶⁰ For Hockin, the CGIT slogan "The Girl God would have me be" was formative. A significant goal was to be that person, to fulfil her potential. Integral to the experience were bi-weekly meetings. In Hockin's view this "was part of the genius" of the CGIT: "You met on Sunday around the Bible... and you met mid-week around your own interest, or... program units."⁶¹ In those settings, CGIT gave Hockin and her peers opportunities to develop their leadership skills in planning worship and study.

The highlight of the CGIT year was the annual summer camping experience where girls had an extended, intense period of time with their peers and the camp leaders, most of whom were single women. Using the materials created for them by Thomas and the other professional women, and modelling self-confidence and caring, leaders encouraged girls to plan the worship services and to enter into discussions. These experiences nurtured in girls what Hockin has described as "a great sense of being yourself" and "a sense of high purpose".⁶²

Hockin carried this “sense of high purpose” with her for the rest of her life. Upon completion of her Bachelor of Arts at University of British Columbia in 1933, she agreed to teach at the United Church Indian residential school at Ahousat on the west coast of Vancouver Island. There Hockin seized the opportunity to nurture girls through the CGIT much as she herself had been in Chengdu and Vancouver a decade earlier. In her words, “it gave me a relationship” as a leader of the CGIT, a connection that she could not have achieved simply as a teacher on the boarding school staff. This connection was developed in the trade-mark bi-weekly meetings where girls were encouraged to develop confidence in themselves. For instance, in “charm” discussions the groups talked about cosmetics and clothing but focused on the charm that comes from inside. In sex education, along with the biological facts, Hockin taught the girls that sexuality was the part that “helped us respond to beauty and to motivation and how this was the creative part of our bodies”.⁶³

This spiritualization of sexuality reflects a pattern observed in women’s communities in other times and places.⁶⁴ Some of Hockin’s relationships were similar to the “highly public crushes” that Martha Vicinius found to be typical of young women in nineteenth-century Britain. During the CGIT camps at which Hockin counselled for several summers, her protégés expressed their admiration by “wanting to hold her hand, competing to sit by her at campfires, and being especially good during worship services in exchange for Katharine’s promise to tuck them in bed at night”.⁶⁵ Nor were these spiritual relationships confined to campers. During the summer of 1937 Hockin became intimate with the camp director, twenty-nine-year-old Mattie Moscrop, known as Bunny. When Hockin described the friendship in a letter to her mother, she expressed some anxiety and ambivalence: “At first I was almost afraid of it—it seemed a bit overdue and extravagant.” She went on to explain how they slept together, “out of doors, and have done more observing of trees and stars and of talking than of sleeping”.⁶⁶

Throughout the years Hockin would develop a number of close relationships.⁶⁷ This pattern of female friendships provided a substitute to traditional family life for women in the Woman’s Missionary Society network. When Hockin moved to Toronto in the mid-1930s to further her education at the United

Church Training School, a number of former Woman's Missionary Society workers who had known her in China, treated her as they would have daughters of their own.⁶⁸ As Hockin has pointed out, "what the WMS missionaries conveyed... was a sense that it was natural and normal to be single, that 'family' did not always mean husband and children. Women could live in other configurations."⁶⁹

Always within the context of these other friendships and networks, Hockin's mother remained her closest and most intimate relationship. And indeed, Hockin was among countless Woman's Missionary Society missionaries and other professional women who were influenced by and supported by their mothers.⁷⁰ Although separated from her mother by the thousands of kilometres separating West China from Canada for much of her life, a regular correspondence nourished the relationship. For instance, in 1926 on the eve of a gallbladder operation, Lily Hockin wrote to her daughter: "Moreover about your future life and work be sure you follow the Divine leading then life will go on from glory to glory."⁷¹

While this kind of encouragement must have given Hockin confidence as she set her career direction, it probably also added to a sense of obligation. Similar to other children of her mother's generation of missionaries, as she matured into adulthood Hockin felt pressure to continue the work in West China. At the same time she felt a great deal of ambivalence about the mission field for Hockin had more options open to her than had her mother's generation. When Winnifred Thomas, that mentor of young women, approached her about returning to Sichuan, Hockin recalls feeling "quite uncomfortable, and not at all ready to make any commitment". Sixty years later she was "still grateful for [Thomas'] matter-of-fact and friendly response: 'Well, there's no particular reason that a missionary's child should be a missionary!'"⁷² Thomas' empathy illustrates her important role as a guide to the women of Hockin's generation.

In 1936, the year that Hockin started her training at the United Church Training School, women achieved the right to be ordained in the United Church of Canada.⁷³ Hockin supported egalitarian roles for women and had she gone the ordination route, she would have had more options open to her in the changing climate in the United Church. A personal tragedy

placed her more firmly in the United Church women's culture, however. Her mother was shot in a bus hold-up in Sichuan that same year; this tragedy triggered Hockin's decision to join her mother in China as a WMS missionary. Although the Japanese invasion of China meant a delay of four years, the decision to follow in the footsteps of her mother affected the rest of her life.⁷⁴ Her resolution to become an unordained WMS missionary meant that she would find herself outside of church structures, for the WMS was close to its demise. Hockin's terms of service, 1940 to 1946 and 1948 to 1951, marked the end of the WMS' tenure in West China.

As one of the last WMS missionaries to China, Hockin left a great legacy. During her two-year furlough in the mid-1940s, Hockin completed the first WMS-sponsored doctorate. Her studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York brought together the two major associations in her life, her relationship with her mother and their role in China through the WMS. Lily Hockin moved to New York, helped her daughter research her topic on missiology and gave Hockin emotional support as she wrote her dissertation. Together mother and daughter discovered how far mission work, as they had practised it, was from Chinese culture. Hockin completed her doctorate with a desire to learn to know and appreciate the Chinese on their own terms. Despite the growing danger with the political climate and international tensions of the 1940s, in 1948 Hockin returned to China and was able to complete a last three-year term before all missionaries were forced to leave.⁷⁵

Hockin's education and relationships with the Chinese in their own culture gave her a role as an expert on necessary changes in mission strategy. For instance, her intimacy with Xiji, a Chinese woman, illustrates her growing appreciation of the Chinese culture for what it was. Katharine's biographers put it this way:

Lily's generation had kept a physical and emotional distance from the Chinese.... Katharine, on the other hand, had intellectual and spiritual equals among the Chinese. She could not ignore the measured counsel of her closest friend nor fall back on an outdated paternalism that claimed the missionaries knew what was best for such a proud, refined culture.⁷⁶

Her friendship with Xiji illustrates Hockin's belief that Canadians needed to move from an "elitist position of evangelizing the world, to sharing, as friends, in the struggle to change oppressive structures everywhere".⁷⁷

Merger of the WMS with the United Church General Board of Missions in 1962 closed doors for professional women like Hockin, who preferred to work within the women's culture of the church rather than become ordained and enter the masculine structures. Indeed the era that had shaped the leadership of Letitia Youmans, Winnifred Thomas and Katharine Hockin was over. While integration suggests movement towards equality in the church, Hockin mourned the end of the strong matriarchal culture that had shaped her and generations of women before her. Working within the patriarchal structures was difficult for her, as it has been for many women.⁷⁸

Conclusion

The legacy of Youmans, Thomas and Hockin as representative of three generations of a strong women's culture in a patriarchal church is significant for women today. Theirs was a theology of friendship and nurturing which embraced relationships with other women in their organizations and between generations. Organizations such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church and the Canadian Girls in Training were created by women as agencies where they could serve in a patriarchal society that excluded their contributions and experiences. In these institutions, the model was not one of hierarchy, but of shared leadership. For instance, Hockin described her work in the WMS thus: "You never felt you were an employee. You felt you were all sisters. We were all basically servants of the Kingdom."⁷⁹

Although the idea that a role model is key to success is relatively new in psychological literature,⁸⁰ the creators of *A Girl's Book of Friends*, on which Hockin was reared, were aware of the significance of friendships and role models in women's development. As scholars probe the realities of women's experiences in the past, they are recognizing the significance of this theology of friendship to women's lives. For example, Jeanne Speizer has noted in her 1973 study that "[g]raduates of... women's colleges were at least twice as likely to become achievers as women from co-ed institutions".⁸¹ Mary Hunt notes similar patterns in *A Fierce Theology of Friendship*: "Women friends making change is not a new phenomenon.... It is hard to find

an example of a woman who made social change apart from a group of friends.”⁸²

Hunt’s further observation that “calling [women’s friendship] what it is and celebrating the creative model that it provides for society’s moral norms” is an important new phenomenon, is significant to this study. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has observed that to reconstruct women’s past, it is essential “to listen to women’s own words and self-definitions”.⁸³ It is important to re-write church history to edit in women’s experiences, from their perspective. This look at the links among the lives of three women in the Methodist tradition illustrates the active and multi-dimensional nature of the female “shadow church”. All three of these women were nurtured by the security of women’s culture and role models within that culture. There is also evidence that they, in turn, served as role models for other women.

Biographical sketches such as these aid us in our quest to discover who we are. As women continue to find their place in the church, it is important to look back at models in history as did the women before us. Letitia Youmans was inspired by evangelist-preacher Eliza Barnes; CGITers like Katharine Hockin were fed stories of Youmans’ successes and had living role models such as Winnifred Thomas. It is crucial for all women to have role models as they live their lives. It is also important to look for models in our own traditions. I leave readers with this challenge. What has shaped the women’s culture in the Lutheran tradition? Who are the key players in the women’s associations? the missionaries? the Sunday school teachers? the female clergy? Let us continue to name the women in our past and weave their stories into the tapestry of our history.

Notes

- 1 Carolyn Heilbrun points out the important role that unnamed women have played in history in *Writing a Woman’s Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988) 121.
- 2 Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, eds., *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979) 16.
- 3 See for instance, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York:

Crossroad Publishing Co., 1987); Lois Miriam Wilson, *Telling Her Story: Theology out of Women's Struggles* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1992); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Marguerite Van Die, "'A Women's Awakening': Evangelical Belief and Female Spirituality in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada," Paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, June 1991.

⁴ Joan R. Gundersen coined this term in her article, "The Local Parish as a Female Institution: The Experience of All Saints Episcopal Church in Frontier Minnesota," *Church History*, 55/3 (September 1986) 322.

⁵ Elizabeth Rapley, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).

⁶ Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, second edition (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

⁷ Gundersen, "The Local Parish as a Female Institution," 322.

⁸ M. Lucille Marr, "Church Hierarchy and Christian Nurture: The Significance of Gender in Religious Education in the Methodist, Presbyterian and United Churches of Canada, 1919-1939," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Waterloo, 1990. See also Rosemary Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist Women Missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), Ruth Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) and Wendy Mitchinson, "The WCTU: 'For God, Home and Native Land': A Study in Nineteenth-Century Feminism," in Linda Kealey (ed.), *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s* (Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1979) 151-167 and "Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century: A Step Towards Independence," *Atlantis* 2/2 (Spring 1977) 57-75.

⁹ For instance, see the collection of biographies in R.B. Fleming (ed.), *Boswell's Children: The Art of the Biographer* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992), especially, Fleming, "The Two Solitudes of History and Biography," p. 265 and William Baker, "The Significance of Biography in Historical Study," p. 242.

¹⁰ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," in Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 53-76; Deborah Gorham, "A Woman at Oxford: Vera Brittain's Somerville Experience," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation*, 3/1 (Spring 1991) 1-20; Martha Vicinius, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

- 11 Although Jeanne Speizer, "Role Models, Mentors, and Sponsors: The Elusive Concepts," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and History* 6/4 (Summer 1981) 693, has noted that "the concept of role models is new to the literature, the term 'role models' first appearing as a category in most fields only in 1973," other scholars have found female models to be important in female development. See, for instance, Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman as Androgyne" in *Disorderly Conduct*, 247.
- 12 Sharon Anne Cook, "Letitia Youmans: Ontario's Nineteenth-Century Temperance Educator," *Ontario History* 84/4 (December 1992) 312, 330, 340; see also Cook, "'Continued and Persevering Combat': The Ontario Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism and Social Reform, 1874-1916," Ph.D. Dissertation, Carleton University, 1990.
- 13 See Elizabeth Gillan Muir, *Petticoats in the Pulpit: Early Nineteenth-Century Methodist Women Preachers in Upper Canada* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1991) on the tradition of women preachers in Methodism. Mitchinson has outlined how attitudes to women's public roles had closed by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. "The WCTU," 159-160.
- 14 Letitia Youmans, *Campaign Echoes: The Autobiography of Mrs. Letitia Youmans* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1893) 65.
- 15 Gillan Muir, *Petticoats in the Pulpit*, 109-112.
- 16 Youmans, *Campaign Echoes*, 65. In his book on itinerant preachers, historian John Carroll wrote that "Eliza Barnes was tolerated as a preacher." John Carroll, *Case and His Contemporaries*, Vol. I (Toronto: Samuel Rose, 1867) 223, quoted in Gillan Muir, *Petticoats in the Pulpit*, 111.
- 17 Youmans, *Campaign Echoes*, 100.
- 18 Cook, "Letitia Youmans," 332; For further information about the Cobourg institution see Marion Royce, "Methodism and the Education of Women in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," *Atlantis*, 4/2 (1978) 130-143.
- 19 Youmans, *Campaign Echoes*, 78-80.
- 20 *Ibid.* 96.
- 21 *Ibid.* 92; Cook, "Letitia Youmans," 334.
- 22 Lillian Schlissel, "Diaries of Frontier Women: On Learning to Read the Obscured Patterns," in Mary Kelley (ed.), *Woman's Being, Woman's Place: Female Identity and Vocation in American History* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1979) 54.
- 23 Margaret Conrad, Toni Laidlaw and Donna Smyth, *No Place like Home: Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women, 1771-1938* (Halifax: Formac Publishing Co., 1988) 13-14.
- 24 Youmans, *Campaign Echoes*, 82-87.
- 25 There is an abundance of literature on Chatauqua. See for instance Edwin Rice, *The Sunday-School Movement, 1780-1917, and the American Sunday-School Union, 1817-1917* (Philadelphia: American Sunday

School Union, 1917) 373-375. See also Sheilagh S. Jameson, *Chatauqua in Canada* (Calgary: Glenbow Institute, 1979) for the story of this movement's influence in Canada.

- 26 Youmans, *Campaign Echoes*, 91, 97, 100, 104. Anne Boylan has suggested that Sunday school teaching prepared American women for organizations and benevolent work. "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: The Role of Women in the Sunday Schools," *Feminist Studies* 4 (October 1978) 75. On the Canadian context, see my article, "Sunday School Teaching, A Women's Enterprise: A Case Study From the Canadian Methodist, Presbyterian and United Church Tradition, 1919-1939," forthcoming in *Histoire sociale/Social History*.
- 27 Cook, "Letitia Youmans," 330, 331; Alison Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988) 174; Youmans, *Campaign Echoes*, 100-101.
- 28 Cook, "Letitia Youmans," 339; Youmans, *Campaign Echoes*, 41. Alison Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History*, 173-174; Mitchinson, "The WCTU," 154.
- 29 Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman as Androgyne," 264. See Kealey, *A Not Unreasonable Claim* on nineteenth-century Canadian women's views of themselves as social guardians.
- 30 Cook, "Letitia Youmans," 337; Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman as Androgyne," 256-257.
- 31 Mitchinson, "The WCTU," 160; Ruth Bordin, "'A Baptism of Power and Liberty': The Women's Crusade of 1873-1874," in Kelley (ed.), *Woman's Being, Woman's Place*, 290.
- 32 *A Girl's Book of Friends* (Toronto: National Girls' Work Board of the Religious Education Council of Canada, 1929) 5, 42.
- 33 Ibid. 41.
- 34 Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History*, 281-282.
- 35 For an analysis of the new professional women and their relationship with the organizational women of the nineteenth century in the United States, see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman as Androgyne."
- 36 Lee Stewart, *It's Up to You': Women at UBC in the Early Years* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990) 13-14; Neil Guppy, Doug Balson and Susan Vellutini, "Women and Higher Education in Canadian Society," in Jane Gaskell and Arlene McLaren, eds., *Women and Education: A Canadian Perspective* (Calgary, AB: Detseelig Enterprises Ltd., 1987) 172; Mary Rose Donnelly and Heather Dau, *Katharine* (Winfield, BC: Wood Lake Books, 1992) 16-17.
- 37 Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English-Canada, 1919-1939* (Mississauga, ON: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988) 103.
- 38 Margaret Prang, "'The Girl God Would Have Me Be': The Canadian Girls in Training 1915-1939," *Canadian Historical Review* 66 (June 1985) 157, n. 12; See also my article, "Church Teen Clubs, Feminized

- Organizations? Tuxis Boys, Trail Rangers and Canadian Girls in Training, 1919–1939,” *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d’Histoire de L’Education* 3/2 (Fall 1991) especially 254ff.
- 39 United Church of Canada Archives, Victoria University, Toronto (hereafter UCA), United Church of Canada (UCC), Deaconess Order, Box 1, Winnifred Thomas, “Impressions of Western Trip”; Smith-Rosenberg, “The New Woman as Androgyne,” 295.
- 40 UCA, UCC, Board of Religious Education, Minutes (18 March 1926); (10 September 1926), 55–56.
- 41 I have dealt with these issues elsewhere. See “Church Hierarchy and Christian Nurture,” 72–73.
- 42 See Gertrude E. Griffith, “The Girl,” *Encyclopedia of Sunday Schools and Religious Education* (New York & London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1915) I, 450. In Griffith’s words, “... the problem of the boy has demanded... attention... As a consequence of... widespread interest, a wealth of material on... this subject has been produced... That such material concerning the girl in her teens is not equally available, has been the cause of real concern among persons actively interested in... the adolescent girl.” See also Prang’s article on the history of the Canadian Girls in Training, “‘The Girl God Would Have Me Be’.”
- 43 Molly Hewitt, *Sixty Years of CGIT, 1915–75* (Toronto: The National CGIT Committee, c. 1975) 6.
- 44 UCA, Winnifred Thomas, *The Kingdom of God* (Toronto: National Girls’ Work Board, c. 1926); Prang, “‘The Girl God Would Have Me Be’,” 166–167.
- 45 Prang, “‘The Girl God Would Have Me Be’,” 169–170.
- 46 *A Girl’s Book of Friends*, 5.
- 47 Sixty years later, in *Writing a Woman’s Life*, Heilbrun has pointed out the on-going paucity of role models for girls. See especially pp. 25–31.
- 48 Prang, “‘The Girl God Would Have Me Be’,” 169–170.
- 49 Smith-Rosenberg, “The New Woman as Androgyne,” 252, 256–257.
- 50 Hewitt, *Sixty Years of CGIT*, 8; Donna Sinclair, *Crossing Worlds: The Story of the Woman’s Missionary Society of the United Church of Canada* (Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1992) 67.
- 51 George Tuttle, interview with author by correspondence, 17 June 1990.
- 52 Smith-Rosenberg, “The New Woman as Androgyne,” 282.
- 53 Smith-Rosenberg has discussed men’s reluctance to share power with the new women of the 1920s and 1930s. See *Ibid.* 296.
- 54 Catherine McKeen, interview with author, Mississauga, Ontario, 25 August 1991. Katharine Hockin, interview with author, Toronto, Ontario, 16 May 1991.
- 55 Sinclair, *Crossing Worlds*, 65–66.
- 56 Donnelly and Dau, *Katharine*, 35–36.
- 57 Hockin, interview, 16 May 1991; Donnelly and Dau, *Katharine*, 16–18, 86; Sinclair, *Crossing Worlds*, 21.
- 58 Hewitt, *Sixty Years of CGIT*, 20.

- 59 Dau and Donnelly, *Katharine*, 43–44; Hockin, interview, 16 May 1991.
- 60 Hockin, letter to author, 2 July 1991. Hockin had expressed similar sentiments earlier as well. See Hewitt, *Sixty Years of CGIT*, 20.
- 61 Hockin, interview, 16 May 1991; presentation at Ontario Women's History Network, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto, Ontario, 2 February 1991.
- 62 Hockin, interview, 16 May 1991.
- 63 Hockin, interview with author, Toronto, Ontario, 2 February 1991; interview, 16 May 1991; letter to author, 2 July 1991.
- 64 Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Hull House in the 1890s: A Community of Women Reformers," *Signs* 10 (Summer 1985) 660; Vicinius, *Independent Women*, 187; Mary Hunt, *A Fierce Theology of Friendship* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1992) 146–147.
- 65 Donnelly and Dau, *Katharine*, 71.
- 66 *Ibid.* 72.
- 67 *Ibid.* 136–138.
- 68 *Ibid.* 77.
- 69 Sinclair, *Crossing Worlds*, 19.
- 70 Rosemary Gagan, "The Methodist Background of Canadian WMS Missionaries," *Canadian Methodist Historical Society Papers* (1989) 120. Patricia A. Palmieri also writes about this phenomenon in "Here Was Fellowship: A Social Portrait of Academic Women at Wellesley College, 1895–1920," in Alison Prentice and Marjorie R. Theobald, eds., *Women Who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teaching* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) 239. Indeed Smith-Rosenberg has pointed out that "an intimate mother-daughter relationship lay at the heart of the female world". "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Disorderly Conduct*, 64. See also Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) on this topic.
- 71 Donnelly and Dau, *Katharine*, 58.
- 72 Sinclair, *Crossing Worlds*, 94.
- 73 Hockin, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (January 1988) 30; Donnelly and Dau, *Katharine*, 79, 87.
- 74 Sinclair, *Crossing Worlds*, 94; Hockin, interview, 16 May 1991.
- 75 Hockin, interview, 16 May 1991; Donnelly and Dau, *Katharine*, 80, 121–122.
- 76 Donnelly and Dau, *Katharine*, 138.
- 77 Sinclair, *Crossing Worlds*, 35.
- 78 *Ibid.* 22; Donnelly and Dau, *Katharine*, 171–172.
- 79 Sinclair, *Crossing Worlds*, 12.
- 80 Speizer, "Role Models, Mentors, and Sponsors," 693.
- 81 *Ibid.* 701.
- 82 Hunt, *A Fierce Theology of Friendship*, 147.
- 83 Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 11.