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Newsletter



**Golding Centre for Women’s History, Theology and Spirituality   
Volume 12 No1 April 2012**

**[The Golding Centre is situated within the Faculty of Theo**logy and is named to honour the women Annie and Belle Golding and their married sister Kate Dwyer, women of the late 19th and early 20th centuries whose activism was underpinned by wide reading and in-depth research. Writing and public speaking were integral to their efforts to promote political and social reform. All were committed Catholics.]

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**Editorial**

**The challenge of ‘love your enemy’!**

A broad and deep study of Church History is a very consoling exercise – things have always been far worse! There has always been polarisation in the Church; there has always been tension in the Church between bishops, clerics and laity; there has always been tension between men and women in the Church; there have always been men holding high office in the Church who have sinned gravely; there has always been tension between Church and State; from the beginning it has been recognised formally by the Church that the human person is flawed and constantly struggling to live up to Christian ideals; there has always been a recognition of human persons needing encouragement to humbly recognise and name their destructive (sinful) tendencies and acts and seek forgiveness and prayerful support to grow more strongly as truthful (humble) loving people. We could go on, essentially working through the seven sacraments that have crystallised over the centuries to meet the needs of the human person!

But especially difficult has always been Christ’s injunction of “love your enemy”, most especially when that enemy is a member of the Church, especially one in authority or in a position of influence who holds a theological position different from one’s own. Simplistically, we often see the situation as those with conservative views versus those with liberal views. Depending upon where you are coming from, the conservative tag carries the implication of being destructively reactionary and the liberal view that of destructively radical.

One of the most productive fruits of the social sciences, which has served the human family well, is that of mediation in the justice system – one person respectfully trying to understand where the other person is coming from; humbly (truthfully) trying to build bridges for the common good; to understand your enemy, credit her/him with some good, and help create a more loving society.

It is appropriate to point out that there is recognition of this in the conclusion of Chapter Nine in *Woman and Man - One in Christ Jesus, the Report on the Participation of Women in the Catholic Church in Australia*, 1999. Here it is reported:

In the conduct of the Research Project, two broadly contrasting perceptions emerged concerning the participation of women in the Church in Australia, each involving a cluster of characteristics. While the following features of these two approaches are not exhaustive, they include those characteristics which can be identified with some confidence as a result of the Research Project. It is clear that these two broad perceptions of the role of women are not gender-specific. In dealing with women’s issues, as with any social problems of great complexity, it is necessary to be wary of rigid dichotomies. However, the following table of contrasting perceptions highlights a polarity which is evident in the Catholic Church in Australia and which has theological and pastoral implications.

The following paragraph lists are an adaptation of the original table presentation in the Report which paired the characteristics of the two theological positions:

**A**: Those who show satisfaction with the current role of women in the Church

**B**: Those who seek to expand the current role of women in the Church

**Characteristics of A**

\*Seek maintenance of the status quo or a return to traditional teachings, piety and values; \*stress obedience to the Pope and the hierarchical nature of the Church; \*refer to Church documents, especially the Catechism of the Catholic Church; \*emphasise authority and doctrine; \*are concerned that tolerance undermines truth; \*highlights the traditional role of women as wives and mothers and the consecrated life; \*are concerned that men and boys are not sufficiently present and active in the Church; \*emphasise concerns about worldly influences, involving secular pressures consumerism and the secular culture; \*see the Church as being in conflict with a hostile world; \*express concerns regarding the lack of Catholic ethos and sound teaching in Catholic education; \*perceive that women seeking ordination seek power and status; \*believe that feminism is incompatible with Church teaching; \*are comfortable with exclusive social language and religious imagery.

**Characteristics of B**

\*Call for renewal based on the Gospels; \*desire to see the spirit and vision of the Second Vatican Council implemented; \*refer to Scripture and the Early Church; \*stress the need to consider contemporary scholarship; \*value diversity in unity and the breakdown of discrimination; \*highlight the increasingly varied contribution of women to society and to the Church; \*display feelings of pain and alienation concerning the limitations on the role of women in the Church; \*experience as a scandal that the wider society is leading the way concerning the equality of women; \*lament the failure of the Institutional Church to read the “signs of the times” concerning the equality of women; \*identify the value of the large group of theologically educated women in Australia; \*perceive that women seeking ordination wish to be of service to the Church; \* value moderate feminism; \*call for the use of inclusive religious language and imagery and inclusive social language.

Commendably the writers of the Report go on to state:

\*While the characteristics listed above highlight differing perceptions of the role of women, there are some characteristics which both groups have in common. Dominant common characteristics identified in the research include:

\*Love and commitment to the Church; \*concerns for the future of the Church, especially in relation to the alienation of young people; \*agreement that there no unjust discrimination against women in the Church on the basis of gender; \*recognition and affirmation of the great contribution of women to the Australian Church.

Let us take up the challenge of the *Woman and Man, One in Christ Jesus* Report and encourage intelligent, respectful bridge building within the Church.

**Feature**  **Essay**

**Gender, Catholicism and Spirituality**

Laurence Lux-Sterritt and Carmen Mangion (eds), *Gender, Catholicism and Spirituality: Women and the Roman Catholic Church in Britain and Europe, 1200-1900* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Pp. xvi + 204.

The editors of this book, Laurence Lux-Sterrit and Carmen Mangion, are respectively a lecturer in British History at the University of Aix-Marseilles and the holder of an honorary research fellowship at Birkbeck College, University of London. Both have published significant recent books, as well as journal articles, in the field of female religious life history. Mangion is a founder of, and is centrally active in, the History of Women Religious-Britain and Ireland network (2001+), which has held biennial conferences, usually university-based, in the British Isles and continental Europe. All the contributors in this book are acknowledged academics and have associations with this expanding H-WRBI network.

Following the thoughtful introductory essay by the editors, the ten contributors have given their articles titles explanatory of the specific issues each is dealing with. They are listed as follows: Anna Welch, “Presence and Absence: Reading Clare of Assisi in Franciscan Liturgy and Community”; Rina Lahav, “Marguerite Porete and the Predicament of her Preaching in Fourteenth-Century France”; Querciolo Mazzonis, “The Impact of Renaissance Gender-Related Notions on the Female Experience of the Sacred: The Case of Angela Merici’s Ursulines”; Elizabeth Rhodes, “Teresa of Jesus’s *Book* and the Reform of the Religious Man in Sixteenth-Century Spain”; Laurence Luz-Sterritt, “Mary Ward’s English Institute and the Prescribed Female Roles in the Early Modern Church”; Jenna Lay, “An English Nun’s Authority: Early Modern Spiritual Controversy and the Manuscripts of Barbara Constable”; Marit Monteiro, “Power in Piety: Inspiration, Ambitions and Strategies of Spiritual Virgins in the Northern Netherlands during the Seventeenth Century”; Nancy Jiwon Cho, “ ‘Martyrs of England! Standing on High!’: Roman Catholic Women’s Hymn-writing for the Re-invigoration of the Faith in England, 1850-1903” (reference to both lay and religious contributors); Kate Stogdon, “Expressions of Self-Surrender in Nineteenth-Century France: The Case of Thérèse Couderc (1805-1885)”; Carmen M. Mangion, “The ‘Mixed Life’: Challenging Understandings of Religious Life in Victorian England”.

These contributions are meticulously referenced, drawing predominantly on significant publications in the general field of religious life history from 1990 onwards, and especially from 2000. Other valuable references are to contemporary writings of the time relevant to the chosen topics. A brief Afterword by Frances E. Dolan, Professor of English at the University of California, Davis, provides a succinct and challenging analysis, picking up on a central contention of the Introduction and its final conclusion: women religious achieved ‘their goals and determined their own spiritual lives’, developing an expertise in areas ‘such as charity, schooling or nursing’, while finding a ‘specifically female voice through gendered modes of spiritual expression’ (p.15). This leads to the punch-line: ‘Yet women’s tendency to disregard considerations of status or gendered role distributions, and their ability to respond to particular sets of circumstances in a pragmatic way may invite us to reconsider the very paradigm of gender in female Catholic life’ (pp.15-16). These women ‘somewhat point to a spirituality ... in which the dichotomy between male and female [is] seen as reductive’ (p.16).

Dolan quotes and picks up on this latter statement, asserting “Just as these essays demonstrate that we cannot separate the history of women religious from the history of men religious because Catholicism was fundamentally and robustly heterosocial, so they demonstrate that one cannot separate contemplative from active lives’ (pp.184-5). We see here ‘a proselytizing, catechizing Church in which women played a zealous role ... not Catholics clinging to the past but striving to build different futures’ (p.185) – a continuing challenge for today. The active individual agency of these women indicates that a secular doctrinaire feminist critique the 1960s and ‘70s spread a paradigmatic failure to assess, in an adequate context, spiritually motivated lives.

The final article, Carmen Mangion’s “ The ‘Mixed Life’: Challenging Understandings of Religious Life in Victorian England”, stresses a developmental approach to the emergence of a seemingly ‘new’ mode of religious life for women at this time. Following her challenge, the present reviewer would like to make some further contextual points. Firstly, Church officialdom did not create the religious life nor establish its basic outlines – these originated through the private enterprise of spiritually motivated individuals, both men and women. Monasticism for women with their chosen life-style, drawing largely on that of the upper-class women who chiefly provided their personnel – together with the call they felt to radical Gospel living – shaped itself for centuries before any canonical pronouncements regarding it, while these tended to confirm what had already evolved. Thus, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) sought to clarify who were religious and to accord them a legal category, identifiable by specific requirements and recognised in the equally developing civil law of Western Europe’s emerging nation states. Just as for marriage, this category was established by the pronouncing of solemn vows, that is, public vows to which one could be legally held. By the end of the century, enclosure, a concept attached to female religious life from its origins, also became a legal requirement. This enactment was re-affirmed by the Council of Trent in 1563 when much social confusion and consequent criticisms and scandals became rife amid the claims and counter-claims in a religiously riven Europe.

At the same time, increasingly documented from the 12th century onwards, were many other movements of spiritually motivated women - as illustrated in several of this book’s articles - who chose celibate, non-enclosed modes of living, becoming a familiar part of the medieval landscape. See, for example, Roberta Gilchrist’s *Contemplation and Action: The Other Monasticism* (Leicester University Press, 1995), where, for the British Isles, she marshals widespread evidence of the nursing sisters (*sorores*) associated with the Military Orders, anchoresses and communities of pious women given to charitable works, especially care of the sick. If they made vows, these were described as simple or private, outside the ambit of legal codes, civil or ecclesiastical. There were also the tertiaries of the newly founded mendicant orders, some of whom grouped together in celibate communities or lived individual celibate lives. On the Continent were beguines, *bizzoche, beatas, filles séculières* and other designations, a further progression from the ubiquitous, religion-suffused guilds, sodalities and companies open to lay people in general. As these spread, declined or took new shapes, they were the progenitors of the spectacular emergence of simple-vowed, actively engaged, congregations of women in the 19th century to which the Church, under changing circumstances, came to accord canonical status. The legal concept of solemn vows, with renunciation of property – the vow of poverty - was becoming untenable as modern states, such as the United States and revolutionary France, ignored or disallowed their validity. Solemn vows hence became ecclesiastically ‘in-house’, reserved only to traditional monasticism.

For the simple-vowed, the necessary corporate recognition in law was sought from the local bishop and the local civic authority - this dating back to the first legal enactment regarding monastic communities with the former requirement, proposed by the Emperor Marcian, being endorsed at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. For Mary Ward, in a time of climactic change which led to the Council of Trent, there was no problem with her teaching communities continuing with episcopal approbation, both before and after the definitive rejection of her desire for a papally approved institute of solemn vows. It is worth noting that several errors continue to be propagated, for example, a claim, recently read by the writer, that solemn vows and enclosure were imposed by Rome on the Irish Presentation Sisters; these women insisted on applying for solemn-vow status in their local circumstances, which was reluctantly acceded to. This is apparently the final case, in 1805, of solemn vows being accorded to a group of actively engaged women, despite some later requests. {See my *A Dynamic of Hope: Institutes of Women Religious in Australia* (Sydney: Crossing Press, 1996, 2002.)} It goes without saying that some knowledge of the evolution of canon law for religious is a necessary base for religious life studies.

In a recent issue of *The Australasian Catholic Record*, October 2011, the Australian Catholic University’s Professor Anne Hunt, in her lead article, ‘Immortal Diamonds: The Lives of the Saints as Locus Theologicus’, calls for recovering the existential lived example of the saints – situated realistically without hagiography in the centuries-long evolving panorama of the Christian experience – as a needed aspect of the study of theology and regretting how neglected this dimension has been in the field of Christian witness and reinforcement of faith. The H-WRBI has played a central role in recovering these lives by creating a network of professional, informed and contextually aware historians, both men and women. ACU’s Golding Centre for Women’s History, Theology and Spirituality has developed contemporaneously with this network and in active contact with it.

Rosa MacGinley

**Best wishes to Professor Anne Tuohy**

Very best and warm wishes to Anne Tuohy, firm friend of the Golding Centre, who in March was formally welcomed to her new role as the inaugural Director of The Catholic Institute of Aotearoa New Zealand. It was reported that Dr Tuohy’s family, along with Bishop Peter Cullinane, representatives of the local Maroi community, the Catholic Institute staff and board members and the Interim Principal, Paul Ferris, attended the whakatau held in the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. Anne was appointed Director of The Catholic Institute last year while she was a Senior Lecturer at the Australian Catholic University’s School of Theology in Strathfield.

The official report of the occasion stated: ‘Dr Tuohy is originally from Wellington and has had a distinguished career of teaching and research in Catholic theology and in the formation of leaders of institutions in a pastoral and educational outreach and response. She has taught across all levels of the educational system in New Zealand, England and Australia.’ Her publications, conference papers and workshops have explored themes such as religious education “beyond the school gates”, new models of formation, the discipleship of equals, and maintaining the dignity of the human person in disability services.

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference established The Catholic Institute to provide formation for those involved in education and pastoral ministry in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the opportunity to engage in research and discussion in all areas of the Church and its ministries. The six diocesan bishops are the trustees of The Catholic Institute. It may be noted that Bishop Cullinane has made a significant contribution to Church history in general and women’s history in particular by writing a piece in the 2003 Australasian Catholic Record highlighting the fact that, in the spirit of “Faith Seeking Understanding”, we need to do more research on the tradition of the reservation of priestly ordination for men in order to understand it more fully.

**Letter from London**

H-WRBI will celebrate its tenth anniversary at our annual conference in Dublin this year. It seems like yesterday that Caroline and I decided to host our first conference at St Mary’s in Twickenham wondering if anyone would come! This year’s conference, themed ‘Vocation, Education and Care: Histories and Archives of Women Religious’ will be held at the School of Education in University College Dublin on 21-22 June 2012 and is being organised by Dr Deirdre Raftery and Dr Louise O’Reilly. We have an exciting programme of speakers, with topics including medieval nunneries and South African Anglican sisterhoods, as well as the usual Irish and British religious institutes. And, of course, a strong presence from Australia in the form of two papers on Australia’s Spanish Benedictine Mission and the Australian archives of the Loreto sisters.

The Who Were the Nuns project (2008-2011) managed by Dr Caroline Bowden and funded by the AHRC has come to a close. The website, http://www.history.qmul.ac.uk/wwtn/, provides valuable biographical details of the approximately 4,000 women who entered religious life in the English convents in exile in France, Flanders, Portugal and America. Thanks to the valiant efforts of volunteers, transcribed primary source documents continue to be updated on the website. In addition, there are still several publications in process. Three of the six volumes of English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800, on history writing, spirituality and life writing, have been published by Pickering and Chatto.

The remaining three volumes, on life writing, convent management and convents and the outside world, will be published in early 2013. These are volumes of documents from the English convents in exile dating from 1600 to 1800, most of which have never been published and have been seen by few scholars. They will provide a rich source of detail on early modern social, cultural and political life for early modern scholars for years to come. Please encourage your university libraries to purchase these volumes (www.pickeringchatto.com/convents).

In addition, selected conference papers from the 2011 H-WRBI conference will be published in *Communities, Culture and Identity: The English convents in exile*, *1600-1800* edited by Caroline Bowden and James E. Kelly and to be published by Ashgate in 2013.

We have reached an important moment in the life of a new organisation: that juncture when it ceases to be ‘new’ and looks to the future. How can H-WRBI put down enough roots to survive, develop and change with different people able to take on these challenges? We have heard papers over the years about how convents and congregations dealt with comparable questions; we need now to apply the ideas to ourselves. Ideas and input, from around the globe in this digital era, are welcomed!

Dr Carmen Mangion, Birkbeck College, London

**Conferences**

**Australian Historical Association 31st Annual Conference, 9-13 July 2012, University of Adelaide**

The theme of this conference is Connections. The organisers are interested in proposals for papers, and panels exploring historical connections, past, present and future. The conference seeks to explore the myriad ways in which human societies have connected over past centuries, and the ways these interactions in time and space and cultures inform present historical debate. Historians of all times and places are welcomed.

The keynote speaker will be Professor Sir Christopher Bayly, Vere Harmsworth Professor of Imperial History, University of Cambridge, author of a number of books including *The Birth of the Modern World: Global Connections and Comparisons 1780-1914* (2004) and most recently *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire(2011).* The keynote address will be on Tuesday 10 July.

For more detail: aha12@ sapmea. asn.au

**Women’s History Network Annual Symposium 12 July 2012**

The theme for this symposium is “Connections, Made and Broken: Intimacy and Estrangement in Women’s History”. It will be held in association with the annual Australian Historical Conference, University of Adelaide.

Keynote speaker: Professor Penelope Russell, University of Sydney.

Papers may explore cases of connection, intimacy or estrangement between mothers and children; daughters and fathers; individuals and places; friends; lovers; women’s organisations; leaders and their constituents; employers and employees. The particular relationship could be analysed through lenses such as the history of immigration; colonisation; manners; sexuality; etc.

For more information: Catherine.Kevin@flinders.edu.au

**Ninth Triennial Conference on the History of Women Religious, June 23-26, 2013**

This conference will be held St Catherine University, St Paul, Minnesota. The planning committee invites proposals for papers or panels that address questions, themes or issues which have shaped, and/or continue to influence, the evolution of congregations of women religious.

Examples of possible foci: community governance; ethnic, linguistic or racial tensions; demographic composition; inter-congregational cooperation; changing ministries; relations with clergy, church hierarchy and secular institutions; spiritual traditions; emerging models of religious life.

Disciplinary approaches may include history, sociology, anthropology, theology, religious studies, literature, communication, cultural studies, art, architecture and material culture.

Proposals for papers in the form of a one-page abstract accompanied by a one-page C.V. are requested by 15 August, 2012. Send all proposals to Elizabeth McGahan, Chair, Planning Committee, Department of History and Politics, University of New Brunswick – Saint John Campus, PO Box 5050, Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada, E2L 4L5. Email : [emcgahan@nbnet.nb.ca](mailto:emcgahan@nbnet.nb.ca)

**Of Interest**

**Nineteenth Century Gender Studies**

There is being produced a Summer 2012 special issue of the above journal titled: “Gender and the Law in Nineteenth-Century England”. Deadline for submissions: May 15, 2012.

The nineteenth century was a period rife with watershed moments in the history of law and gender in England. It is also a period marked by contradictions: legislation that granted women greater rights under the law took place in fits and starts, and it was never unaccompanied by cultural and social backlash. The period began in 1801 with a national census that revealed that women outnumbered men by 400,000, and ended with the repeal of the discriminatory Contagious Diseases Acts (1866) and the passage of the First Married Woman’s Property Act (1870). Debates about the relationship between women and the law, and their attendant questions (e.g. were women legal persons? Could they be?) permeated the legislation, court cases, newspapers, serials, and novels of the day.

The roles and legal power of English men were also in flux during the period. The rise of industrialism, as well as the middle class, challenged the masculinity of the landed and leisured aristocrats. Laws which granted women greater rights in marriage, divorce, and ownership of earnings and property, served to challenge the centrality of the male patriarch in traditional family structures. In turn, masculinity became increasingly defined by both state-sponsored and independent imperial ventures in the colonies.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a new version of manhood came into being. The rise of the aesthetes, as represented by the publicity surrounding Oscar Wilde, and the criticism of aesthetes as symbolised by his rather public trial, serve as the most infamous example of events that brought to light growing anxieties about masculinity, sexuality and the law.

This special issue of NCGS invites scholars from across the arts and humanities to contribute essays on the intersection between law, gender, femininity, and sexuality. Topics that might be addressed:

Queen Victoria; \*Marriage, Motherhood, and/or Families (including the Child Custody Act and the Matrimonial Causes Act and the Married Woman’s Property Act); \*Governesses and their relationship to legal families; \*Property and Inheritance; \*Authorship and the International Copyright Act; Education (including the establishment of Queen’s College, London; Bedford College; and Girdon College); \*The “ödd” women (singletons); \*Women and reform movements (including the voting Act and the Equal Franchise Act); \* Labor Laws (including the Ashley’s Mines Act and the Factory Act; \*Health Care and the Contagious Diseases Act; \*Masculinities.

Send papers (5,000 - 8,000words) electronically for consideration to the guest editoes: Prof. Katherine Gilbert and Prof. Julia Chavez: [kgilbert@drury.edu](mailto:kgilbert@drury.edu); JCavez@stmartin.edu

**Louisa Lawson and the Dawn Newspaper**

As was indicated in a previous Newsletter, the initiative was being taken to digitise The Dawn, a newspaper first published on 15 May 1888 by Louisa Lawson, mother of Henry Lawson and a significant leader of the woman suffrage campaign in New South Wales. This paper, written, edited and printed solely by women was persecuted by men printers who saw the women as unwelcome invaders and would not permit them to join their union. Louisa responded to an occasion of petty tormenting by pouring a bucket of water over the culprits! The Dawn was read widely and not only by women. It continued to be published until 1905 when discontinued owing to Louis’s ill-health. It is now available online through Trove: The Dawn: A Journal for Australian Women. This most commendable development is due to the efforts of Donna Benjamin, who persuaded a number of scholars to contribute funds to the project for the National Library to add The Dawn to their digitising program.

[This Newsletter is produced by the Centre for Women’s History, Theology and Spirituality. Please address all correspondence to the editor Dr Sophie McGrath rsm. Email:sophie.mcgrath@acu.edu.au]