

social dans lequel elles vivent. Elles nous font réaliser, entre autres, qu'une femme de couleur ne serait pas isolée pour les mêmes raisons si elle vivait au milieu d'autres personnes qui ont la même couleur de peau.

Vient ensuite un examen des conséquences de l'isolement sur la santé physique et mentale des femmes. Le tableau est plutôt sombre puisque beaucoup de femmes deviennent dépressives et même suicidaires, elles ont recours aux drogues, aux pilules et à l'alcool et, conséquemment, comme les auteures l'ont constaté, leur santé se détériore. Les auteures enchaînent avec des solutions détaillées à l'isolement des femmes. Elles reconnaissent que la solution de l'une n'est pas nécessairement celle de l'autre mais en gros, ce chapitre propose un point de départ pour mettre fin à l'isolement.

Pour mieux comprendre la spécificité de l'isolement des femmes, les auteures ont utilisé une méthode très astucieuse: à l'aide de questions précises, elles ont demandé aux femmes victimes d'isolement ce qui aurait été différent si elles étaient nées hommes. Par ce petit questionnaire, les auteures ajoutent beaucoup de dimension à leur analyse et à la fin, on constate que *toutes les répondantes pensent que l'isolement se vit différemment, selon que l'on soit un homme ou une femme. Cela tient autant aux conditions socio-économiques, aux sphères d'activités respectives, qu'aux comportements, attitudes et valeurs entraînés par une socialisation différente. De plus, hommes et femmes ne voient pas leurs rôles valorisés de la même façon par la société, n'ont pas les mêmes ressources et n'entretiennent pas les mêmes rapports avec autrui.*

Les centres de femmes sont proposés comme solution à l'isolement des femmes. En fait, ces organismes communautaires et féministes gérés par des femmes existent déjà depuis une vingtaine d'années au Québec. On y offre, sans frais, une oreille attentive et un accueil chaleureux, des thérapies personnelles et de groupes, de l'information et de la documentation, des activités éducatives et des garderies sur place. Les femmes y trouvent réconfort, amitiés, entraide et solidarité et cela les aide à briser leur isolement. Cependant, quoique ces centres soient en eux-mêmes une solution formidable, ils sont limités

par des contraintes financières; les femmes qui gèrent ces centres aimeraient atteindre et aider beaucoup plus de femmes.

Enfin, quoique les auteures prétendent n'avoir rien découvert de spectaculaire, elles ont sensiblement cerné l'une des causes les plus pernicieuses du manque de santé physique et mentale des femmes, soit l'isolement social. La seule chose déplorable c'est que ces centres de femmes n'existent pas à l'extérieur du Québec et même au Québec, ils ne sont pas assez nombreux. Toutefois, la recherche des auteures peut servir d'excellent modèle pour en ouvrir d'autres et arriver ainsi à *changer la vie de milliers de femmes.*

### **PETTICOATS IN THE PULPIT: THE STORY OF EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY METHODIST WOMEN PREACHERS IN UPPER CANADA**

Elizabeth Gillian Muir. Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1991.

*by Rev. Nan Hudson*

Occasionally one reads a book of history which, while bringing to light stories from another era, casts shadows on the present by the simple telling of those tales. *Petticoats in the Pulpit* is that kind of book, in that although it makes no direct references to issues facing the church today, it lays bare some of what has, and hasn't, changed for women who seek a career in ministry at the end of the twentieth century.

At the same time, this is a book which recovers and celebrates the tremendous role of women who preached during the late 18th and 19th centuries in Canada, a contribution that was largely unacknowledged in their own time and all but lost to the historical record. Through painstaking research, Dr. Muir has gathered the surviving threads, scraps, and shreds of archival materials to weave together a story that brings some of these women, and their times, alive for us today. In doing so, their contribution is chronicled for the first time and celebrated in this

landmark work of Canadian women's history.

It is not easy to translate great quantities of research and factual information into a compilation that reads well, and this book struggles to avoid smothering in the volumes of information that Muir uncovered in the course of doing her doctoral research. It remains animated, however, in part by the clever use of snippets and quotations such as this one, from 1763: "Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

After tracing the roots of Methodist women's preaching in John Wesley's Britain, Muir documents their arrival in Canada, and their service as itinerant preachers in the Bible Christian, Primitive Methodist, and Methodist Episcopalian churches. She goes on to briefly look at their Methodist counterparts in the United States, and then attempts to document and explain why Canadian Methodist women increasingly lost ground as the 19th century progressed, eventually being all but forced from the pulpit, while American women were able to struggle on to win ordination before the turn of the century.

Why were the work and contributions of so many dedicated and gifted women all but lost in the historical record? Muir examines the "contextual blindness" of Methodist histories and period publications, and then documents the means by which women's work was obscured. One example could be found by looking at preaching circuit schedules, where women's Christian names were often referred to only with initials, thus hiding their gender. Methodist publications consistently downplayed women's preaching activities, employing euphemistic phrases to describe their ministries instead. For example, Elizabeth Dart Enyon, an itinerant preacher in Great Britain and then in Upper Canada for the better part of 50 years, was remembered upon her death in a number of publications with such phrases as "devoted Christian," a "superior woman," the "wife" of Rev. J.H. Enyon, and a "superior teacher" who "took a lively interest in the cause." No reference, however, was made to her lifetime of preaching.

The harshness of pioneer life was exac-

erbed by the hostility many of the Methodist women preachers met in the communities they travelled to, and the double standards of their own church structures only added to their trials. Muir documents the gross differentials in salary and benefits, in influence over church polity, in assignments of roles, duties, and pastoral charges, and in title and status (for example, "Reverend" became an increasingly common title of respect conferred upon male preachers, but never for the women with the same educational background and ministerial duties). Their perseverance in spite of such odds is testimony to their absolute commitment to their cause, although as the century progressed and pressure and hostility against women in the pulpit rose, women gradually were forced to abandon preaching. Although American Methodist women were granted ordination officially in 1889, it was not until 1936 that their Canadian counterparts would achieve the same level of opportunity through the newly formed United Church of Canada.

Elsewhere in Canada and throughout the world today, women are invited to "exhort" but never to "preach," to serve but not to be called to ordination. Dr. Muir's excellent book, *Petticoats in the Pulpit*, recovers and celebrates the courage and conviction of early Canadian Methodist women, and in the telling of their stories, we are encouraged and challenged to continue to work for change in religious institutions world-wide.

## WHAT NECESSITY KNOWS

Lily Dougall. Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1992.

## SISTER WOMAN

J.G. Sime. Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1992.

by *Laura Cameron*

Hurray for this gutsy little publishing company out of Ottawa. Celebrating its 20th birthday, Tecumseh has grown at a slow but steady pace, publishing an average of

two to three titles a year. The titles are all reprints of 19th-century Canadian literature, including short story anthologies, novels and journalism pieces. Glenn Clever, one of the founding publishers, says the impetus came when he and two fellow Carlton University professors began looking for variety and scope to offer their students. "The material was there," he says, "much of it popular and well received in its time, but all but lost except to Canadian literary historians." Hardly, it sounds, the heady stuff to stage a best-seller comeback. Clever admits that Tecumseh is not a commercial endeavour, but neither is it completely publicly funded. While they have received lump grants from the Ontario Arts Council, the revenue is generated primarily from the general and more popular titles published by Borealis, the sibling sharing the Borealis/Tecumseh imprint.

*What Necessity Knows* by Lily Dougall and *Sister Woman* by J. G. Sime are two of five titles that have been reprinted as part of the Early Canadian Women Writers Series. *What Necessity Knows* is a novel first published in Canada in 1893. It is a complex and innovative work that addresses issues as diverse as Canadian identity, the role of women, the struggle to define and shape a new social system and the conflicts unique to a colonial mentality. Unlike other early Canadian writers who often wrote in a sort of practical guide-book style for potential immigrants, Dougall's novel grapples with the more complex questions of immigration. The new world demanded new thinking. Here was an opportunity like no other—the chance for renewal and regeneration. Dougall peels into the human psyche, carefully exposing the layers of expectation, dread and determination that are the seeds of a new mythology.

Dougall's writing style is pastoral and reminiscent of British writers of the era. The modern reader might be tempted to skim the text, missing the nuances and beauty of her descriptive prose and razor-sharp reckoning of human behaviour. Her characters are decisive. The female protagonists especially wrestle openly with thorny and controversial subjects like class, gender equality, domestic equality and spirituality. A bit like a velvet hammer, Dougall takes sure and steady aim—with a featherlight touch.

*Sister Woman*, originally published in 1919, by J. G. Sime is a collection of short stories about the urban immigrant experience of women. Sime's collection focuses on female protagonists who struggle to adapt to the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the early 20th century. Set in Montreal and published only eleven years after Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, Sime's collection is a stark reflection of the struggles of lower and lower-middle class women to survive in a changing world.

*Sister Woman* is a sober tale, yet beautifully woven; a monochromatic tapestry that as a whole has a subtle and elegant style. The stories are linked in theme, tone, characterization and plot. These are working women, often alone and often lonely. Sime caused controversy by writing openly about women's changing sexual codes. Written in a documentary style, the writer does a "gentlescan" of these women, never condoning or condemning their behaviour, yet sympathetic in her treatment. Sime's writing is lean and surprisingly (for such unrelenting subject matter) witty. "Be articulate then," said he. "Did you ever try," I said to him, "to be articulate? It's not so easy as it sounds." "You talk plenty, anyway," said he, "you women." "Yes," I said, "that's the way we're learning to be articulate."

These titles were reprinted with superb introductions, by Victoria Walker (*What Necessity Knows*) and Sandra Campbell (*Sister Woman*). They provide the historical and biographical context that the current reader is lacking but steer clear from heavy academic analysis.

Although these stories are not a part of everyone's mythology they do serve in giving greater depth to the early Canadian experience. In particular they help to fill the gaps in our understanding of the development of Canadian women. Canada is still a country of immigrants and while some of the issues may differ, the spirit has not. Immigrants today must still face all the challenges, fears and expectations of a new life. Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, a Tibetan Buddhist said, "...we must peel away the layers of the heart." These titles use history completely and beautifully; giving us a chance to examine our past, use it in our present and prepare for our future.