"Do women really count?": Emily Spencer Kerby – An Early Twentieth-Century Alberta Feminist

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In 1936, the United Church of Canada ordained Lydia Gruchy, a graduate of St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon, and a long-time missionary to the Ukrainian, English and Canadian settlers in Saskatchewan. The debate over the ordination of women in the Methodist, Presbyterian and United churches had raged for more than twenty years.¹ The columns of the *Christian Guardian*, Canada's national Methodist paper, the *Presbyterian Record*, and the *New Outlook*, the paper of the new United Church, as well as secular magazines such as *Chatelaine*, presented the debate to the members of the church and to the women of Canada. Among the participants in this controversy was Constance Lynd, a Calgary writer and a foot-soldier in the religious and secular battles for women's equality.

The majority of Canadian women who were the foot-soldiers in the religious and secular reform movements within the Methodist and United Church and in Canadian society remain hidden from history.² Historians have devoted their attention to the great women of reform and literature – Nellie McClung or Emily Murphy, among others. Constance Lynd, like many other Canadian women who were authors and reformers, is not a household name in Canadian literary or scholarly circles. Her obscurity may be the result of the journals in which her published writings were scattered, mostly in women's journals, women's pages of Calgary's daily newspapers, or church journals – *Chatelaine, Maple Leaf* and the *New Outlook*. The question arises, was Constance Lynd, an obscure Calgary correspondent to the *New Outlook*, representative of the many women who

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remained silent on issue of the ordination of women in the United Church of Canada? of those who expressed themselves solely in the confines of local congregations or Women's Missionary societies or Ladies Aids?

Constance Lynd was a *nom-de-plume* of a prominent Calgary clubwoman, suffragist worker, educator and wife of a United Church minister and principal of Mount Royal College, a private United Church College. Constance Lynd was Emily Spencer Kerby, daughter of the Rev. James Spencer, editor of the *Christian Guardian* during the 1880s and minister of Methodist congregations in south-western Ontario. Her husband, the Rev. George W. Kerby, was an internationally-known evangelist, minister, church builder, orator, clubman, progressive education promoter and founding principal of Mount Royal College. The Rev. Mr. Kerby held important offices within the Methodist and United Church at the national and conference level. In Calgary, both Kerbys were prominent social activists. Both were authors and members of the Canadian Authors' Association (CAA).³

In this paper, I analyze the ideas of Emily Spencer Kerby, expressed in the fiction and op-ed writings of Constance Lynd, as a critic of Canadian society's attitudes towards women. This appraisal situates Emily Spencer Kerby's analysis of the place of women in the Methodist and United Church and Canadian society. Through an analysis of the writings of Constance Lynd, who was not a dominant literary figure in the same way as her friend and colleague Nellie McClung, *the* Canadian woman writer of the 1920s through 1940s, we will argue that she was none-the-less a representative voice for women within the Methodist/United Church tradition. In this way, we can expand our understanding of the role of religion in the social history of Canada.

Emily Spencer Kerby

In Alberta, the debate over women's suffrage did not reach the same level of antagonism as it did in Manitoba, where Nellie McClung confronted Premier Roblin and his Liberal government.⁴ The Alberta debate, in which McClung also participated, was more civil and the governments of Premiers Rutherford and Sifton were more accommodating. In her study of woman suffrage in Canada, Cleverdon remarks that while Sifton was courteous and promised a suffrage bill in 1915, a delegation of Alberta women under the leadership of Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy pressed the premier throughout the year 1915. The suffrage bill was passed by the Alberta legislature in February 1916.⁵

In the histories of women's suffrage in Alberta and other Canadian provinces, attention is devoted to the high profile leaders of the campaign – Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy and Irene Parlby – the "Triumphant Trio."⁶ Other participants are ignored by historians and by chroniclers of the movement. Emily Spencer Kerby was one of the women who "joined forces" with Nellie McClung and Emily Murphy in their campaign to bring to Alberta women's suffrage. Indeed, according to *The Albertan* of 18 April 1936, Kerby was one of "the two women of Alberta who perhaps had the leading parts in piloting women's suffrage along a none-too-smooth road . . ." Alice Jamieson, the second individual, was the first woman appointed as a police magistrate in the then British Empire.⁷ Identified as "one of Calgary's pioneer advocates of equal franchise," Kerby should be viewed as prominent and important a player as McClung and Murphy and other colleagues who waited upon Premier Sifton in the meeting of 2 March 1915.⁸

And like Nellie McClung, Emily Spencer Kerby was not a one-issue crusader. Also like McClung, Kerby was a devout Christian. Kerby, in her mature years in Calgary, was a prominent clubwoman - a charter member of many of Calgary's women's associations including, among others, the YWCA, the Local Council of Women, Women's Research Club, Women's Civic Organization, the Women's Canadian Club and the Mount Royal College Educational Club. She was also a member of national organizations, serving two years as a Vice-President of the National Council of Women (1922-24) and hosting the Calgary meeting of the NCW in 1923. Her years of service to women's organizations in Calgary brought her into touch with issues of importance to women: the franchise, immigration, the servant problem and the issue of a living wage for domestic workers, prostitution and education. As an active member of the Methodist and United churches, Kerby was not silent on women's place within the church spiritual and administrative structures.9 Finally, as an author, writing under the pseudonym of Constance Lynd, Kerby brought her opinions and views to the Alberta and Canadian women.¹⁰ It is her writings on issues of women that will be the highlighted in this article.

Emily Spencer Kerby was a product of the British Protestant society of late nineteenth-century Ontario. Born 26 March 1859 and raised in south-western Ontario, Emily Spencer was of United Empire Loyalist stock, the daughter of the Rev. James Spencer, professor at the Methodist Victoria College, Cobourg, and editor of the Christian Guardian. Following her public and high schooling, Emily attended the Toronto Normal School, graduating in mid-1880s, and became principal of a public school in Paris, ON. It was in Paris, I expect, that she met George W. Kerby during one of his summer placements as a preacher, perhaps at the same church at which her father was pastor.¹¹ Following his graduation from Victoria College and ordination in 1888, Emily Spencer and George Kerby were married. Emily relinquished her teaching position, as the tradition of the period demanded, and accompanied her husband to his first pastorate in Woodstock, ON. Emily, as with most wives of Methodist preachers, became the "help-meet" to her husband at his various stations, participating fully in the life of the church and the community, and moving children and household every two to three years. During the years 1900 to 1903, Emily was the sole "parent" to their two young children - Helen Javiera and Spencer, as George Kerby devoted two years to evangelistic service with the Rev. George Turk. These men were "conference evangelists," by which was meant that they held no pastorate with a specific circuit but were "on call" to hold revivalistic services throughout the various conferences of the Methodist Church in Canada. As discussed elsewhere, service as a conference evangelist meant that George Kerby was away from his family for vast stretches of time, travelling as far as California and British Columbia to conduct evangelistic services. Even when closer to home, at that time in Toronto, Kerby and Turk were often away at revivalistic meetings for periods up to a month (e.g., two weeks in St. Mary's followed by two weeks in another small city). As a result, even with correspondence, Emily was required to care for the children and the household.

After a series of appointments in southwestern Ontario (Woodstock, Hamilton, St. Catherines, Brantford and two years in evangelistic service) and Montreal, the Kerbys accepted the call of Central Methodist Church, Calgary, in 1903. Central Methodist Church was the only Methodist Church in Calgary. Because of his prominence as an evangelist and his reputation as a spell-binding preacher, the original Central Methodist Church soon proved to be inadequate to meet the ever-increasing congregation – indeed it is not clear that Rev. Kerby used the old Central Methodist Church for his Sunday services preferring instead the more spacious environment of the Opera House which was usually filled to capacity. A new church, capable of seating 1,000 persons was completed in 1907. In addition, George Kerby became a central figure in the Calgary volunteer and men's club circles, becoming a charter member of some and a member of others. When in 1910, Calgary Methodists determined to establish a coeducational college, George Kerby was selected as the principal. This created new opportunities for both George and Emily. For her, it expanded her role as a "help-meet," by giving her the added task of "matron" of the College, advisor to the many girls and young women who enrolled as day and residential students, and as an unpaid instructor of some of the junior classes.

During this same period, Emily Spencer Kerby extended her participation in women's clubs and influence among Calgary's women. It was in Calgary that she became a prominent clubwoman, published author, and out-spoken champion of women's rights.

The Equal Franchise

There is limited information on Emily Spencer Kerby's participation in the struggle for the vote for women in Alberta and Canada. The local press identified her as "one of Calgary's pioneer advocates of equal franchise" in a 1916 story on "The Seven Prominent Alberta Women Who Have Worked Hard for the Bestowal of the Franchise on Members of Their Sex." In a story published in 1936 on the Alberta legislature's approval of the woman suffrage legislation Kerby and Alice Jamieson were recognized as the two Alberta women who contributed greatly to the success of the "none-too-smooth" campaign.¹² These women paid tribute to the essential role that the Women's Christian Temperance Union play in the agitation for the vote. Emily reminded The Calgary Albertan not to "forget to give the WCTU credit for having been the first to start the agitation," while Alice Jamieson noted that "it was the WCTU who first came to me, as president of the Local Council of Women, to ask if the Council would take over the leadership in this work." The Council proved the idea and Alice Jamieson, Emily Spencer Kerby, who was first vice-president, and Mrs. Fred Langford, also a Calgary court judge, were appointed as a committee to visit Premier Sifton in Edmonton.13

In the small and intimate community that comprised Alberta in the first decades of the twentieth century, it is not surprising to learn that these women knew the premier personally. Arthur Sifton, according to Emily, "had been a life-long friend," so she felt able to "put the matter squarely up to him. She told him that if he wanted to make a name for himself, he had only to give the suffrage to Alberta women, and reminded him Alberta would be the first to have it." Her confidence in the Premier was such that "I knew Arthur Sifton well enough to know that when he said 'You'll get it,' he meant it."

The rest of the story has been told many times. Sifton argued that the Calgary women should enrol the support of their "rural sisters," a task that Louise McKinney of Claresholm undertook only to be told upon their return that "the moment was not opportune." When the vote was held on 19 April 1916, of the Calgary women only Alice Jamieson was able to attend. She, with Emily Murphy and Nellie McClung, became known as the "Triumphant Trio." Unfortunately for Sifton's place in history, Alberta was the second, not the first, province to enact suffrage for women.

But Emily's status as a leader of reform is not based solely on this one incident. In an undated letter to the editor of the Calgary Herald Woman's Page, in the mid-part of the second decade, Kerby disclaimed any interest to participate in the municipal aldermanic campaign or school board elections, but did question the holding of an election costing large sums of money when the city was experiencing financial hardship: "The men who have been handling the affairs ... ought to be given a chance to work out the problem since they are naturally more conversant with conditions than inexperienced women, no matter how zealous they are, could possibly be." She did look forward to the time "when women will hold office, and ... believe[d] they will do it creditably, but this is not the time for experimenting, spending valuable time and the people's money in learning how to legislate. I hold that any woman who has time to spend electioneering would put that time to better purpose doing patriotic work." From her perspective, women should have the vote and should have the right to govern. But efficiency and financial propriety were, in a time of war, more important.

The Club Woman

In the obituaries prominently printed in Calgary's daily press, Emily Spencer Kerby's contributions and achievements were highlighted. *The Calgary Albertan* of 4 October 1938 called her a "Pioneer Clubwoman." She was a charter member of the Local Council of Women, the Young Women's Christian Association, Mount Royal Educational Club, the Women's Civic Organization and the Women's Research Club. In addition, she continued her role as a member of the Central Methodist Church, acting as a class leader, and, during the First World War working "indefatigably" with the Red Cross. She served as the president of the Local Council of Women (1916-1917), first vice-president of the LCW (1915-1916) and the convenor of the LCW's Immigration Committee; as first vice-president of the National Council of Women (1922-24); and as one of the central promoters of the YWCA's Banff hostel.

Many of her companions in the many Calgary women's clubs were, like her, from southern Ontario, Protestant and middle-class. To these women, such attributes and the moral standards that they represented were signs of achievement and progress. With their husbands they had participated in the great march of progress - the industrialization of southern Ontario, the movement of Ontario, British-Protestant values and institutions to the emerging western provinces, and a conviction that the civilization in which they lived represented the highest level of progress of Christian civilization. However much their civilization had progressed, they acknowledged, much remained to be accomplished, as social evil in many forms permeated all cities and towns: prostitution, drink, sabbath desecration and the exploitation of women and children. Recent scholars have questioned the efficacy of the approach of the Anglo-Protestant middle-class women reformers who focused their energies on the reform of existing social institutions, the studying of social problems, and the education of and training of women and children of the lower classes or immigrant populations into the Anglo-Protestant religious and social values. There was little, if any, doubt in the minds of these women about the need for their participation in reform efforts and the value of such efforts for their "clients" and for the nation.

As a member of the Local Council of Women (LCW), Kerby held a variety of posts, including first vice-president, president and convenor of the Committee on Immigration. While her participation in the meetings of the National Council of Women appear not to be too prominent, at least as recorded in the published proceedings of annual conferences, her activities as a member of the LCW brought her into the mainstream of promoting the acquisition of the franchise for women. Rather than focusing on that particular issue, I wish to outline her other activities in the LCW, notably her participation in two issues that confronted the LCW in the early 1920s: the domestic servant problem and immigration. As other historians have discussed in greater detail, middle-class Canadian women confronted a major problem in obtaining and holding on to domestic servants in the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁴

Domestic service, perceived by the middle-class as respectable and safe employment for single women, was rarely attractive to the women whom the middle-class designated for such employment. The problem was the nature of the work – it was tedious, arduous (before the introduction of "labour-saving" devices), poorly paid, and, not infrequently, insecure (from the perspective of job security ad well as safety from sexual overtures). Moreover, domestic servants did not have control over their hours of work and working conditions, and compared to other occupations available to women, especially service in restaurants and secretarial work, offered little opportunity for leisure time. These problems, although not unknown to the middle-class matrons of the LCW, were brought to the attention of the Calgary LCW executive in April 1919 when a Miss Manning spoke on the aims and objectives of the Housekeepers' Association:

Better recognition of the dignity of housekeeper; Efficiently [*sic*] of help, Shorter hours, Community House, Minimum and Maximum Wages, Uniform for trained workers, etc. An appeal was made . . . t[o] help remedy present conditions on these lines.

Emily Kerby urged the LCW executive to encourage the Housekeepers' Association "to bring in a definite scheme in regard to their society & that when approved by the Council, that we stand behind them & assist them in achieving their desires." After a clause by clause discussion of resolutions presented by the Housekeepers' Association to its meeting of 16 May, the Executive resolved that LCW members "co-operate with the objects" of the Association. Of the three resolutions presented to them by the Housekeepers' Association presented to them by the Housekeepers' Association, the Executive of the Calgary LCW, on motion of Emily Kerby, agreed unanimously with I and II, the third was carried and the last clause was referred "to the girls themselves for settlement up."

I. To urge upon all employers of domestic help to make it possible for workers to have a certain number of hours daily and that they be permitted to leave their employers' house for their own homes when they have finished, if they so desire; no reasonable emergency overture ever being refused.

II. That girls be advised to extend their course of domestic training in the schools in order to take up domestic work as a profession.

III. The establishment of a community Home under responsible management to serve as a residence for women and girls engaged in housework both in the city and country.

IV. That a new relationship be established between employer and employee in domestic life and that the Local Council be asked to establish a minimum wage, a standard day's work and proper housing accommodation for all those who live in the employers' house.

This collaboration between the employing class and employees revealed the tensions that existed in the world of management of middle-class homes in Calgary, indeed all Canadian cities, in the first quarter of the twentieth century. It also brings to the fore the restrictive conditions under which the "housekeepers" or household servants worked. It is intriguing that while Kerby participated in these discussions and moved the motion that urged more regularised working conditions, supported the better training of domestic servants in the school system, and the establishment of a safe residence for domestic workers "under responsible management," there is no evidence that she employed domestic servants, although it would not be an unreasonable assumption.

As with many members of the middle-classes, the issue of immigration was one in which Emily Spencer Kerby took great interest. As a member of the Woman's Missionary Society (WMS) of the Methodist Church, a subscriber to the WMS journals, and reader of the *Christian Guardian*, she would have been familiar with the debates in the WMS, the Home Mission Board, and the Church generally about the desirability of immigration into Canada, and particularly western Canada. She would have been familiar with the missions to the Chinese in Calgary and the Crow's Nest Pass region, with the WMS-financed and managed missions to the Ukrainian population north and east of Edmonton,¹⁵ and those to the Scandinavian populations in central Alberta. One might also expect that immigration was a topic discussed in the home with her husband, George W. Kerby. In period 1919-1923, Emily served as the convenor of the Calgary LCW Immigration Committee. Following the Great War, there was a general distrust of immigrations, especially with the emergence of labour radicalism in Winnipeg and Calgary and the apparent growth of "nationalism" and the influence of "reds" among Eastern European immigrants in the western provinces. The Methodist WMS and Home Mission Board devoted much attention to the apparent lack of conversions to evangelical Protestantism among the Ukrainian population in spite of many years of service of Methodist missionaries, teachers and nurses and doctors among them. In her report to the General Meeting of the LCW on 13 June 1919, Kerby reflected the fears that were common among Anglo-Protestants in Canadian main-line churches. After providing some "figures" on the number of enemy aliens interned during the war and following the war, "many of them, the most undesirable, being shipped home," Emily lamented that Canada was "now paying the penalty for her [unrestricted] immigration policy" of the pre-war era.¹⁶ In January 1922, as the LCW Convenor on Immigration, Kerby claimed that "the greatest problem of today is immigration." Canada was, she stated, "grappling earnestly with the problem of bringing over English-speaking people as the backbone of our settlement." As with the majority of Anglo-Protestants in Canada, Emily and her LCW companions wanted "a common tongue without which we cannot hope to impress Canadian ideals on the people." While it was expected that "any number of settlers will come & good ones too from the States & Scandinavia but we want British blood first." Canada, she argued, did not "want to make the mistake others have and allow foreign settlement all over the country." The fear was, as had been argued in the pre-war era, that many foreign settlers would "become a charge upon the state" and contribute to the growth of crime, especially in urban areas. Again, while Canada had an enviable reputation as a haven and had permitted more immigration than "the rest of the world put together," she feared "the menace of immigrants segregating in our cities and towns." The LCW adopted her report.¹⁷

Tied in with the issue of immigration was the "The Domestic Problem," that is the lack of domestic help for middle-class homes and the difficulty of obtaining such help from England. On this problem, Emily read a letter from the Honourable J.A. Calder, Minister of the Interior, which stated that, in the immediate post-war period, "domestics could not be sent out . . . on account of shipping space, which is needed to return to Canada, soldiers, munitions workers, wives and former residents." While this was a reasonable response, the middle-class women of Calgary experienced no relief with the problem of obtaining domestic help. The frustration experienced by Calgary women over the problem of domestic help, in the context of government immigration policy and the "greediness" of central Canadian women, was a regular topic in executive and annual meetings of the Calgary LCW. At the 29 August 1919 meeting, Emily Kerby reported on a meeting with Miss Potts and Miss Girdler who had been sent out by the British Government to investigate emigration opportunities for British women. Emily informed them that "the need of domestic help is still very great" but, while she could not hold out any great hope for Calgary's understaffed homes as "nothing will be done hurriedly in regard to the immigration from the old land," the problem (as with domestic help) would "be closely supervised." Emily's report was followed closely by that of Mrs. Lewis, Convenor of Organization of Women Labour, who "touched on immigration from old country also & spoke of need of domestic help, giving reasons for the scarcity; skilled labour is short. ..." One month later, at its General Meeting of 26 September 1919, Emily informed the Calgary LCW that she had discussed "this question with Colonel Obed Smith" and had gleaned additional information on "bringing out widows with children, to help out in the smaller communities." This scheme was deemed to be a social service to the English women, by providing them with paid employment and their children with safe and healthy environments in which to grow. However much these schemes were designed to assist those in the west, the problem was that these women, "the help from Old Country [are] being snapped up down East as soon as their boats have docked." Since the fare from Montreal to Calgary was \$40.60, she urged the LCW and Calgary women to prepay the fares of these women "to secure their coming here" instead of staying in the east.¹⁸ In 1920, the prospects to solve the domestic help problem had improved when large numbers of women from the Old Country were expected. But few came. One reason for the small numbers of British women choosing to be domestic workers in the Canadian west was the competition with eastern Canadian employers. A greater detraction was the unattractiveness of domestic labour as a form of employment. Since it was expected that the restrictions on immigration in 1921 would be "more severe," Calgary women could not expect any immediate relief for the domestic help problem.¹⁹ In the early to mid-1920s the dominion government impose restraints on assisted immigration, while encouraging the immigration of independent labourers and farm workers. This Emily reported to the Annual Meeting of the Calgary LCW on 19 January 1923. The restrictions, she noted, "will be reduced likely as times improve."²⁰

For the middle-class women of the CLCW, an imperative for the encouragement of women immigrants from Britain was the need for hostels in the city in which the women were destined, as well as stopping off points along the way. Marilyn Barber has demonstrated how, in Winnipeg in this era, the Winnipeg House of Welcome was an attraction for domestic labourers, providing them with a safe, inexpensive and convenient hostel until they secured work in the homes of the middle-classes or in rural households. For the middle-class patrons of these homes, those of the LCWs and the boards of the YWCAs, such homes or hostels were much more than sources of cheap labour. These homes and hostels provided Christian supervision for immigrant women, adult education in the finer skills (e.g., needle point) that were required in their employment, and safe recreation for domestic workers in their leisure hours, as well as serving as employment bureaux for the women and their middle-class patrons. In her report as convenor of Employment of Women for the CLCW, Mrs. Glassford gave her report on the work of the Calgary Woman's Hostel and YWCA. "These places," she stated, "strive to make a home for those without a home. Evening classes have been formed in millinery and dressmaking with competent teachers." To the question of "why encourage women to come here from England?" Emily Kerby replied: "It is a free country and there is no propaganda in England to encourage them to come."

If the encouragement of domestic labourers from England for the homes of the middle-classes and rural homesteads was a high priority for LCW women, other forms of immigration did not necessarily received adequate attention nor were all immigrants considered of the same, attractive vein. One group well-received by the Calgary LCW were the New Hebridean and Dutch settlers in the Red Deer region. In a report to the Calgary LCW, Emily Kerby outlined reasons for to most Protestant middle-class persons could ascribe: These people were of "the fine type of immigrants coming to Canada."²¹ LCWs were encouraged by the National Council to "adopt' these immigrants & try to make them feel at home in a new country. The four Hollanders mentioned in Mrs Kerby's report were adopted, books, magazines etc will be sent them." As for the Hebrideans, "nicely settled near Red Deer" they were "making good citizens" and Mrs.

Kerby reported on the revised immigrant regulations that eliminated most barriers and "any person could come in if they were healthy." Yet, in sympathy with most middle-class reformers, "she was of the opinion their mentality ought to be checked" prior to their entry, to ensure that they would not become charges on the public purse. This view as supported by Mrs. Edwards who "spoke emphatically on the need of the examination being made on the other side of the water, so that the double expense be not incurred, if they are not passed."²² Thus the Calgary LCW, the women in Calgary, and Emily Kerby in particular reflected the broad opinions of most members of the NCW across Canada.

Constance Lynd

When Emily Spencer began her career as a writer we do not know. It appears that she had begun this side of her intellectual life and social criticism well before her arrival in Calgary, although there are no known examples of her fiction and social comment published prior to 1903. During the 1920s, Emily Spencer Kerby participated as a formative member of the Canadian Authors Guild (CAA),²³ in the Calgary chapter of the CAA, and in the national conference of the CAA held in Banff. While some might not expect the wife of a prominent Methodist clergyman to be an outspoken advocate of women's rights and a critic of the church, a pattern emerged during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in evangelical churches whereby the wives of ministers became outspoken critics of church policy. In her published and unpublished fiction under the pseudonym of Constance Lynd, Kerby promoted the expansion of women's sphere in society and the church and developed a penetrating critique of the church's and society's (a.k.a. men's) attitudes toward women.

Emily Spencer Kerby wrote some twenty-seven known published articles, manuscripts and letters of opinion (see Appendix I). As Constance Lynd, she criticized those conservative reformers who believed that women should not participate in public affairs. As Constance Lynd, Emily wrote extensively on the place of women in the church. In "Tired of Being a Woman,"²⁴ Constance Lynd refuted the position of the *New Outlook* and took issue with the Psalmist who said: "'Now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." In her view, women were "the *seed of the righteous*, equal with man." For many years, she contended, the church had been left women "*begging* for the *bread* of

equality and the freedom of life - or . . . self-determination." In her opinion, while the "Great One said, 'There is neither male nor female," the experience of women in the church demonstrated otherwise. "Twenty centuries have passed," she explained, "since these words were spoken; yet today we find discrimination against woman," adding with no irony, women were "the very best of Church workers." She questioned why, "in the discussion of the place of women in the church, should sex enter at all?" With tongue firmly planted in her cheek she asked poignantly, "If she is fit to give birth to men, to care for them, train them and to preach, is she not deemed fit to administer the sacrament or marry? If we are morally unfit to administer, then are we not fit to take?" She underscored the belief that not all who were ordained were "fit" to administer the sacraments, noting that "every church has had its misfits, in ministry; there is no 'corner' on such in any denomination and we women have taken the sacrament from these unknowingly." Criticising directly the policy of the United Church not to ordain women, Lynd wrote "Only three places are stilled closed to woman now, she may enter every profession - equally with her brother man. The Senate, the Ministry and the beer parlours. This should surely give the great United Church of Canada food for thought." And, with some humour, she congratulated the Rev. Samuel Rose, D.D., for seeing the light when in the New Outlook of 21 December 1928 he wrote, "I would as cheerfully take the sup from the hands of a godly woman as an Archbishop." The United Church, she warned, should take heed. The modern woman, she argued, was not the meek and submissive woman of the tenth century. The "modern twentieth century woman - an educated, reading, thinking woman - [is] a 'not-afraid-to-express-heropinion-woman,' of the year 1928."

This was not Constance Lynd's first nor last tilt at the archaic ideas of many churchmen. In the *Christian Guardian* of 14 April 1915, Lynd attacked the editorial of 17 March 1915 which did not support women's suffrage in the church. The editor had questioned the hesitancy of the Government of Ontario to support the extension of the municipal franchise to married women, a proposition, in the view of the editor, that was "so eminently reasonable, and so mildly progressive – quite lady-like, you know." The editor, failing to see faults in his argument, then informed the readers of the Guardian that "only argument against it was that it was a step in the direction of woman suffrage," and, hence, attracted the opposition of the liquor interests.²⁵

Lynd quickly took up the gauntlet and chastised the editor:

But . . . you forgot the organized Methodist Church, with its great wealth and wisdom, and its peculiar political methods, [which] last autumn . . . equally opposed to granting woman any position of advancement – viz, equality with her brother – in the Church courts. And when this "interesting debate" in the Ontario Legislature took place, and at which no doubt many of the same good brethren were present, one of the chief arguments used was the fact that the legislative assembly of the great Methodist Church considered its women *non-compasmentas*. So I don't think the Church need put it over on the liquor traffic; they are simply hand in hand – good, jolly brothers, you know. "A common cause makes brothers of us all."²⁶

The church bureaucracy soon learned that Constance Lynd quickly turned their comments about the inadequacy of movement on the suffrage question in the public sphere to one that pressured the church – Methodist and United – to understand its conservative tradition.

When the issue of ordination was first raised during the mid-1920s – church union had been promised as a means to overcome the intransigence of the older churches – Constance Lynd took issue with articles by the Rev. E. Thomas, D.D., published in *Chatelaine*. In this debate, Lynd's article, "Grist," laid the issues bare: "Why is it? and How is it? and What is the reason? That woman who has the most to do with bringing human beings into this world; man's part in it a mere incident, that when it comes to any recognition of that mother, in ceremonies where she should have the greatest recognition, her place is conspicuous by her absence?" The issue, if any could ignore it, was the incongruence between the traditionallystated influence and responsibilities of the woman, as mother, and those accorded to her in the ceremonies of the church.

[S]he is the one who first teaches the infant lips to lisp the name of Jesus; she it is who first endeavours to set the tiny feet in the right paths – yet when it comes to that day when these same children are of an age to be taken into the church – only men stand at the altar, to receive them. No kindly face of motherly woman greets with outstretched hands to welcome them into the church, and to encourage them in the way she has sought to lead them."²⁷

The message to children was clear: "Men only' is written here."²⁸ The extension of this argument, she asserted in a letter to the Christian Guardian, is that women are "Of no use to the world." In this letter, she questioned the reasons outlined in the Christian Guardian that the Methodist Church no longer met "the Needs of the Day." In the same way as the Methodist farm implements firm, Massey-Harris, would not send out a reaper and binder advertised in the local press as "not being of any use to do the work," why did the Methodist Church undermine the position of its pillars of strength, women, by arguing that they could not fulfil any real service to the Church, especially in the pulpit. "It's time," she asserted, that "we had a different viewpoint." She did not wonder that "the Church is not succeeding" among the youth, by advertising that it was not successful because of the dominant role of women in the church. "Youth loves to be identified with success," she noted. "What young man is going to join such a Church?" The Methodist Church "had better shut her doors or else change her policy." Since its ministers must

be *men of strength* – fearless; men who do turn their "barrel of sermons upside down," on arriving at a new destination, but burn them, if need be, and give the men and women (oh, but I forgot, we do not count) a message for today. Don't preach about "Sitting and singing themselves away to everlasting bliss"; preach work, action, manhood to the men, and then, by way of diversion, "femininity" to the women.²⁹

Undermining Dr. Thomas' position on the ordination of women for the ministry and his view on allowing women to administer the sacrament, she did so with characteristic humour and sharpness. The only argument that Thomas was able to muster that by admitting women to such privileges the effect on men would be unmeasurably bad. Why? Well, in Lynd's view, "Women may serve at teas and dinners, and work themselves to death, often after a hard day's work in their homes – but when it comes to welcoming into the church, perhaps the very children to whom they have given birth, and passed almost through the valley of death that they might live, she is left out." The question, according to Lynd, both in this article and elsewhere, was that women, if not to administer the sacrament, were then not fit to receive the sacrament. From her perspective, the male leaders of the church suffered from the old scriptural adage "Eyes have they, but they see not." To Lynd, who had "many a time . . . seen the admitting of members into the church, but never till this morning did . . . the question come as if a voice were speaking, and asking, 'Isn't it strange? Isn't it strange?' that women never were those administering the sacraments." The answer was obvious. Women should be provided with the same privileges as men in the church, for "There is neither male nor female' in the sight of God." And, for the fear expressed by Thomas that women in the pulpit would be disruptive to men in the congregation—"that they fear the power of an attractive woman, for the men," she countered,

If so, then get the homeliest ones you can find, for the job – but get them, and do justice to our women \ldots I beg of the Great church of Canada, the United Church of Canada, to do justice to its womanhood, and so shall cease the ringing question of Sunday:

Isn't it strange? Isn't it strange? That men will not see Our women have rights as well as he? Do they know that The God who made man Is the same father of womankind? Why heed they not the words of Christ There neither is male or female here But all are equal in His dear sight.

Is it through jealousy, dear, or thoughtlessness, that shuts these doors in our women's face? Men of our church awake, to the opportunities, of leadership in this matter & Let Justice prevail.³⁰

For Emily Spencer Kerby, the "New Day for Woman" would not arrive until men cast off their old ideas about what was the place of women in society and in the church. To Emily, the proper sphere of women was everywhere and not just in the home. When she had as much a right as men to be in the sportsfield and she ridiculed the idea that woman "should be satisfied with the sport of the dishpan, and the corn broom. Chasing dirt was more religious for her than chasing a ball over the field in God's great open air. 'Men only' was written here." Moreover she mocked those in the churches who, when rooms were set aside and furnished for sports and recreation allowed girls "one night a week to play in the recreation rooms, under the instruction of a man mark you, a man to teach them to play. All the pious male saints of the same church went off their bases because of the atrocity of a 'man' seeing girls in gymnasium bloomers ... "31 And she decried the attitude of the many men within the church who argued that a "Read Revival Needed," citing one man who wrote that "He has no use for liquor, women or tobacco, of any of the things that demoralize society." Emily Kerby "utterly refuse[d] to have womanhood put on the same basis as liquor and tobacco. Women are not 'things' that demoralize society, they are not 'things' at all, but beings who do more for the uplift or the race than all manhood." From her perspective it was not women, tobacco and liquor that were inextricably intertwined but "men and liquor and tobacco are so inextricably bound together, it is almost impossible to detach the man." And, if such a statement were made in a public forum, she argued, "men would think we were crazy, and yet it is far more appropriate than what was said by a man. Yes, we need a revival, a revival that will not make the name of womankind a byword or a jest." She emphasized further that

Woman is a human being, endowed with capabilities as great as man, but she has never had a chance. Men have told women for centuries just what they are, what they must be and do. They must be ignorant to please the men. But God came to our rescue in the way of education, and the revival is upon us. Educated womanhood is asserting her right to a place in the sun. Can someone tell me WHY men think God made the world for the male half (or less than half) of his creation? It is the most utter case of egotism imaginable.³²

Fiction and op-ed as a means for moral education

In Canadian literature, fiction has often served as a medium for moral education. The novels of Janey Canuck, Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung and Ralph Connor are examples of social gospel/social reform literature that carried explicit moral as well as social reform messages. Emily Spencer Kerby used not the novel but the short story and op-ed as media for moral education. While her letters to the editor and her op-ed articles were fashioned as responses to outrageous positions of prominent men within the Methodist/United Church and the public, they also portrayed in a favourable light women's roles in society. Her short stories complemented her public arguments on women's roles in society but they remained within the mould of early twentieth-century moral literature for youth and young adults. A brief analysis of some of her published and manuscript articles demonstrates clearly that, in the fashion of the period, she employed the short story and op-ed as a media to educate young women and young men on the pitfalls of straying from the strait and narrow path of virtue while, at the same time and within the context of maternal feminism, promoting the equality of women.

In "Grandmother's Bonnet" (ca. 1922), Constance Lynd castigated the ways in which the church undervalued women by placing on them conditions of behaviour that were clearly discriminatory and would not be applicable to men. This "fictional" account focused on "a little oldfashioned bonnet, with a bit of ribbon on it, and a tiny rose-bud peeping from under folds." The story, with many biblical references and permeated with contempt for the practices of the "old" church and the Methodist Church in the 1920s, related how a young woman, newly married, in a Methodist congregation, one day on the way to the quarterly service with her husband, had been denied entrance to the church because of the rosebud in her bonnet. Such action turned the husband completely against the church, although for the sake of the children the wife and mother had "set good example to her children. Mothers are usually so much more careful of this than fathers." One moral question for the readers was, while the "rose-bud" had kept the father, who was a loving husband and father and a religious man, out of the "church Militant, did it keep him out of the church Triumphant?" Within the manuscript of this story, at times a confusingly organised manuscript, Lynd complained of the church's concern for outward rather than inward "dress," the church's concern for the dress of women, and the tradition, before the individual communion cups, of "old men, with long mustache and whiskers . . . (often coloured with tobacco)" being served communion before the women. She questioned directly "why all things men wanted to do were never taboo religiously, but all sorts of restrictions were placed upon the things that girls and women wanted to do."

Lynd's critique of the church's contradictory approach to women's morals (women as paragons of virtue and as the source of moral evil – as harlots) by focusing on the negative view of the morals of women as reflected in their dress was reiterated in other fiction, articles and manuscripts: "A Man's World and A Man's Heaven or Do Women Really

Count?"; "Ladies - The Bachelors and Birth Control"; "Men-Women-Dress-Morals"; and "Man, Woman and Freedom." In "Man, Woman and Freedom" Lynd chastised men who endeavoured to shove "women gently but firmly back into the home." Men had exploited women and women's labour constantly and, as a result of the Great War and the Depression, by 1935 had made a "pretty mess" of the world. Since women had gained greater access to education in the previous fifty years and had secured "her rightful place in the world as a person, as a citizen and received the franchise," women's place was in the world and in the home. Men, too, had equal responsibilities in the home and for the education of children. Women's achievements in the world of business, that is obtaining a small foothold after demonstrating her capacity to do all mens work in the period of the Great War, in Lynd's view, had contributed "good [for] the human race in America and for the child from babyhood to maturity than ever since the man's regime began." As with other feminists of the period, Lynd's view, reiterated in "Shall Married Women Work?" rejected men's opinion that women were "quite inferior to men: a woman had no brains, no ability as to judgment; her one and only safety was in her instinct, so the men said, and woman was thankful for that. She had no soul . . . "Lynd and her feminist colleagues rejected the position of many men in the 1930s, many of whom were out-of-work or who were businessmen and politicians, and some women who demanded that "if one of these emancipated women should inadvertently marry, she must be compelled by act of law to throw all her achievements aside, and undertake the eternal round of bake, wash, iron, scrub and meals three times a day, whether she is fitted for it or not. [But] men do not demand this of men, if they marry a wealthy woman . . ." She advocated and dreamed for the day when employers, and society more specifically, "will choose the woman who best can do the work assigned . . . whether she is married of not."

It was the "double standard" that men imposed on women that truly irked Constance Lynd in her fiction and in her op-ed pieces. In "Men-Women-Dress-Morals," Lynd attacked vigorously men's "scathing indictment of woman, her dress, etc., as a temptation to men." Contemptuously she opined, if man "is the stronger sex, then it is time he got out of his swaddling clothes and become what he professes to be – the protector of womanhood, not its destroyer." She attacked the double standard arguing that "until fathers are as insistent as mothers regarding the cleanmindedness of their boys, as the mothers are of their girls, we shall utterly fail in producing a clean race." As for dress, "let men clean up their minds." Women, she stated, never complain of their "temptation" because men wore "tight suits and exposed the masculine form." Women's morals, evidently, were much higher than those of men. Women were in "the forefront of battle for a 'white life for two."" Men, therefore, should "let us alone and [turn] their attention to cleaning up their own backyards."

The "double standard" always had ill-effects for the woman and rarely for the man. In "Margaret Halstead," Lynd related the age-old story of a Christian girl who fell in love with a handsome cad who, after a promise of marriage and some drinks of champagne, seduced and left her. The child, of course, died. Margaret Halstead struggled to regain her respect by earning a living as a nurse but was recognised and unceremoniously dismissed from her employment. While Margaret suffered, young Dickie Thorton, the cad, carried on and prospered. "How could men make and sell poison so destructive? Why," Lynd pondered, "did not Christian men remove the temptation from the young?" Men instead seemed to encourage such behaviour among young men.

Occasionally Christian men did respond and cads did suffer. Women always suffered more greatly than did men – the moral, societal and health impact of transgressions, even those forced on women, was usually more severe on women than on men. In "The Boomerang," Lynd tells the story of a confident young man who, using the exciting new automobile technology, would often entice young women to go on a tour of the city lights and country sites, ending at a secluded spot some distance from the city. At the threat of leaving them if they had not yielded and letting them walk to the city, he would have his way. One young, Christian woman did not yield and walked throughout the night to her home and work. The employer, learning of the incident, fired the young man! One must wonder about the many other women who had not the moral stamina to refuse the threat of this young man.

These fictional accounts do, as expected, conform to some typical patterns. In the literature of the period, "sin" was usually accompanied, for women, by dire consequences – social outcast, disease, poverty and death. The men in these stories often did not suffer the same consequences as did the women. Moreover, the fiction also rewarded the virtuous.

In all of her writings, whether letters to the editor, opinion pieces and fiction published on the women's pages of the *Calgary Herald*, *The Albertan*, *Chatelaine* or *Maple Leaf*, the official organ of the Women's

Canadian Clubs, Emily Spencer Kerby or Constance Lynd, strongly promoted the expansion of women's proper sphere – that is, in all professions and positions in the Church and in Canadian society. She chided those in the Methodist and United Church and Canadian society who refused to extend to women rights and privileges equivalent to those held by men. For Emily Spencer Kerby, the question the Methodist and United Church and Canadian society had to answer was, "Do women really count?" She knew the correct answer. She was less certain that the Methodist and United Church's male hierarchy and Canadian men could bring themselves to embracing women as equal partners in the governance of the church, its mission and in Canadian society.

Endnotes

- Valerie J. Korinek, "'No Women Need Apply': The Ordination of Women in the United Church, 1918-1965," *Canadian Historical Review* LXXIV, No. 4 (December 1993): 473-510; and Carol L. Hancock, "Nellie L. McClung: A part of a pattern," in *Prairie Spirit: Perspectives on the Heritage of the United Church of Canada in the West*, eds. D.L. Butcher, et al (Winnipeg: Univ. of Manitoba Press, 1985), 212-215.
- 2. Korinek identified "Constance Lynd of Calgary" as a "woman outraged by the sexist articles before council" and by the misogynist arguments of the Rev. Ernst Thomas in *Chatelaine* in the late 1920s. As the other women identified by Korinek were either prominent women in the church and/or the Canadian feminist movement, it is curious that more was mentioned of Constance Lynd ("The ordination of women in the United Church").
- For detailed information on G.W. Kerby see Michael Owen, "Rev. Dr. George W. Kerby: Evangelist for the Home and School," *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* XXXIX, No. 4 (December 1993): 477-493; and Michael Owen, "By contact and by contagion': George W. Kerby, 1860-1944," *Vitae Scholasticae* 10, No. 1 & 2 (Spring/Fall 1991): 131-157.
- 4. Catherine Lyle Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1950), 46-66.
- See Nanci Langford, "All That Glitters': The political apprenticeship of Alberta women, 1916-1930," in *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, eds. C.A. Cavanaugh and Randi R. Warne (Edmonton: Univ. of Alberta Press, 1993), 71-85.

- 6. Newspaper clipping, ca. 9 April 1936, in Provincial Archives of Alberta (hereafter PAA), 75.387.
- 7. "Twenty years ago Sunday Assent was given Woman Suffrage bill in Alberta," *The Calgary Albertan*, 19 April 1936.
- Clipping from PAA, 75.387, United Church of Canada, Box 18-, George W. Kerby Papers. See "The Seven Prominent Alberta Women Who Have Worked Hard for the Bestowal of the Franchise on Members of Their Sex," *The Calgary Albertan*, n.d.

The "Seven Prominent Alberta Women" and their affiliations were Mrs. G.W. (E.S.) Kerby (Calgary pioneer advocate of equal franchise), Mrs. Arthur (Emily) Murphy (Janey Canuck (devoted much of her time to the suffrage cause), Mrs. E.P. Newhall (Honourary president of the Consumers' League), Mrs R.R. Jamieson (President of the Local Council of Women, Calgary), Mrs. P.S. Woodhall (First provincial president of the Franchise Union of the WCTU), Mrs. W.M. Davidson (played a prominent part in the suffrage campaign in Calgary), and Mrs. Nellie L. McClung (author).

- 9. "For 20 years Mrs. Kerby has been working in the west for the betterment of conditions as they affect women. The legal inequalities first aroused her interest and support for the pioneer women. She was a member of the board which built the first YWCA in Alberta, at Calgary, and is still actively engaged in the work in connection with the YWCA institutions at Banff and Lake Louise, where girls may be accommodated at reasonable cost while enjoying the beauties of the Rocky Mountains. For many years she has been an officer of the Local Council of Women at Calgary, and finally president, working all the time for the enfranchisement of women. Mrs Kerby is now third vice-president of the National council, and also a member of the Canadian Authors' association, having been the author of several works of fiction as well as articles of a serious nature. Her home is in Calgary" (PAA, 75.387, UCC Box 8-, G.W. Kerby Papers, Scrapbook Newspaper clipping).
- 10. See Korinek, "The ordination of women in the United Church," 489-450.
- 11. A search of quarterly board reports and reports of the annual conference did not reveal the identity of the summer placements of George W. Kerby in this period.
- 12. "Twenty Years Ago Sunday Assent was given Woman Suffrage Bill in Alberta," *The Calgary Albertan*, 18 April 1936.
- 13. See N.S. Griffiths, *The Splendid Vision: Centennial History of the National Council of Women*, 1893-1993 (Ottawa: Carleton Univ. Press, 1993), 131.

- 14. See, for example, Marilyn Barber, "The servant problem in Manitoba, 1896-1930," in *First Days, Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History*, ed. Mary Kinnear (Regina: Canadian Plains research Center, 1987), 100-119.
- 15. See Michael Owen, "Lighting the pathways for New Canadians': Methodist and United Church WMS missions in Eastern Alberta, 1904-1940," in *Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta*, 1-18.
- 16. Glenbow-Alberta Institute (GAI), Calgary Local Council of Women Papers (CLCW), Minutes 1919-1924, M5841, Box 4, File 24.
- 17. GAI, M1703, Box 3, File 24(i), [Minute Book 1922-1924], 20 January 1922.

GAI, M1703, Box 3, File 24(i), CLCW, Executive Meeting, 21 May 1920.

- "Out of 10,000 expected, 2,274 arrived. Of this number 465 came with the intention of doing house work, 4 came to Alberta, they were 'spoken for or snatched up' as soon as they disembarked" (GAI, M1703, Box 3, File 24(i), CLCW, 9th Annual Meeting, 20 January 1921).
- 20. "Mrs. Kerby... in her report stated that there was a decrease in Immigrants this year. The cause of this is chiefly due to greater restrictions put upon the land. The door is absolutely closed to those who have no money to tide them over when out of work" (GAI, M1703, Box 3, File 24(i), CLCW, Annual Meeting, 19 January 1923).
- GAI, M1703, Box 3, File 24(i), 18 May 1923, General Meeting of the Calgary LCW.
- 22. GAI, M1703, Box 3, File 24(i), Executive Committee, 16 November 1923.
- With other prominent western Canadian writers including Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung and husband George.
- 24. New Outlook, 29 December 1928.
- 25. The Christian Guardian, 17 March 1915.
- 26. "No Votes for Married Women," Christian Guardian, 14 April 1915.
- 27. "Grist," PAA 75.387/6028, UCC Box 181.
- 28. "Grist," PAA 75.387/6028, UCC Box 181; and Elizabeth Jones (ES Kerby), "New Day for Woman," clipping.
- 29. Letter to editor, "Of no use to the world," Christian Guardian, n.d.
- 30. "Grist."

- 31. Elizabeth Jones (E.S. Kerby), "New Day for Woman."
- 32. "A Defence of the Capability and Dignity of Women by A Human Being and A Woman," *Calgary Herald*, Woman's Page, n.d., 6.

Appendix 1: Publications and Manuscripts of Emily Spencer Kerby (a.k.a. Constance Lynd)

"Grist" "What Women have done, Women can do" "Pluck" "Men, Women and Freedom" "Tired of Being a Woman" (published 29 December 1928) "Grandmother's Bonnet," Calgary Daily Herald, 3 June 1922 "How the First Bank Came" "Hurrah for the Sugar Bush" "Telling Cinderella's Fortune" "The United Empire Loyalists - Who are they?" "The Sterilization Act of Alberta" (rejected by The Times London) "The Passing of the Servant in the Home," The Westminster, n.d. "The New Day for Woman" "A Triumph for Womanhood" "Margaret Halstead" "Ladies - The Bachelors and Birth Control" "Man, Woman and Freedom," The Arrow, December 1935, 3, 17 "Knew the Old Time West in the Rough and Ready Days When Pollinger and His Coach Provided the Transportation, Calgary Daily Herald, 10 May 1924 "Of no use to the world," Letter to editor of Christian Guardian, n.d. "Men Women Dress and Morals," Woman's Century, n.d. "Calgary Women's Practical Work, The Maple Leaf, February 1925, 28-9 "Women and the Club Idea: Woman's Canadian Club extends Welcome to Foreign Born Citizens," Morning Albertan, Calgary, 27 June 1913; see also Calgary News-Telegram, 27 June 1913 "Women and Our Church Courts," Christian Guardian, 28 October 1914 "New Day for Woman" E.S. Kerby to Editor, Calgary Herald, Woman's Page "A Defence of the Capability and Dignity of Women by A Human Being and A Woman," Calgary Herald, Woman's Page, n.d., 6 "No Votes for Married Women," Christian Guardian, 14 April 1915 "Attacks Sermon of the Rev. A.J. Clark" "Women's Dress" "First Bank Came to Yukon," Calgary Daily Herald, 23 December 1922, 7. "A Woman Objects," The Calgary Albertan, n.d. "The Unwritten Law," The Calgary Albertan, n.d. "Women and the Ministry, Constance Lynd Replies to Dr. Ernest Thomas," The Outlook, 7 November 1928 "The Way of Income Tax: A Story for Married People," The Expositor, 11 March 1922 "Shall Married Women Work?" "Emil's First Christmas in Canada," Onward, 21 December 1929 "Calgary's Churches have Developed with Inspiring Rapidity"

126