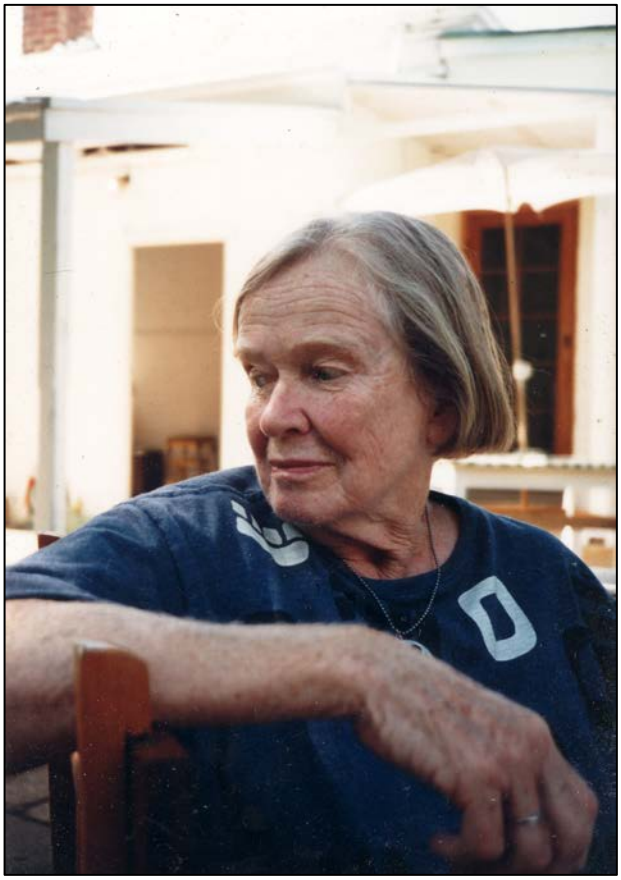
NO COWARD SOUL:
A BIOGRAPHY OF ALISON GENT
RADICAL FEMINIST AND
ACTIVIST FOR THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

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NO COWARD SOUL

ALISON GENT

RADICAL FEMINIST

ACTIVIST FOR THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

A BIOGRAPHY

DEDICATION

To my daughter Bride who has been steadfast and loyal in her support

To all women for whom being strong and wise and faithful produces both trials and joy.

To Anglican women throughout the world

To all women of faith who struggle to achieve dignity and justice

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ABSTRACT

The title of the thesis, *No Coward's Soul*, is taken from a poem by Emily Bronte and in it are encapsulated the major themes. The personal tone of the title denotes the biographical nature of the thesis. This is a biography of Alison Gent who was from childhood a devout Anglican. Theology, then, is the concern of this biography. The theological background of the church in Adelaide which nurtured Alison's faith is studied with particular reference to incarnational theology. Anglo-Catholicism, marriage and divorce are also considered.

The title indicates the prominent place literature had in Alison's life. She was an erudite woman and used her knowledge of poets and writers to inform her Christian thinking. The negation of cowardliness points to Alison's strength and courage in the face of pain and grief. I have used the term 'warrior woman' to describe Alison's persona. It cannot be limited to the difficulties she endured in her marriage, nor in participating in radical feminist practices, nor in her combat with the church protesting for the ordination of women.

Alison Gent's biography encompasses, then, a diversity of activities all of which are of concern for men and women into the twenty-first century. The historical and cultural context of the narrative is Alison's life spanning the years 1920-2009. Her life began in the relatively homogeneous and predictable interwar period in the conservative city of Adelaide, the capital of South Australia. But Adelaide was not immune to the cultural and religious crises of the 1960s; and unpredictably led the nation in reforms instituted during the time of progressive premier Don Dunstan. As the move for women's ordination gathered strength in the 1980s the church in Adelaide became a focal point in the national debate. In this context Alison stood out against the church. She was armed with a mature spirituality and theological understanding but she was a distinctive warrior – an Anglo-Catholic, the wife of an Anglican priest, a mother and a radical feminist activist.

Alison's struggle for justice for women in the church and society determined that this biography would be a feminist biography. Interviews with Alison were conducted using a feminist interviewing technique. Also considered were feminist theories, Christian feminism including feminist biblical hermeneutics, and feminist theology in relation to ecclesiology and ordination. Alison maintained what she called her 'simultaneous involvement of church and women's movement.' The account of the beginning of the women's movement in Adelaide offers a study of secular feminism and Alison's contribution to its activism for abortion reform.

The narrative of Alison's wide-ranging and 'simultaneous' activities lent itself to a narrative theology which, influenced by Wittgenstein's notion of life as a weave, McClendon's biography as theology and Lindbeck's cultural linguistic framework, is presented as a series of 'forms of life'. While an artificial construction, it nevertheless allows methodological order. The author selected four areas of Alison's life, the Anglican Church in Adelaide, marriage, the women's movement and the protest for the ordination of women in the Anglican Church, in which struggles she showed herself no coward.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university, and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature ..... Date .....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the subject of this biography, Alison Gent, who from our first meeting led me in the way of love and new life. I, like many others, was not always completely comfortable in her presence nor always in agreement with her views, but the depth of her love and faithfulness never failed to impress me. The exploration of her long life has given me many insights into, and enriched my appreciation and understanding of, the social, literary and ecclesiastical life of Adelaide. I am deeply grateful to her.

I wish to acknowledge the Reverend Dr Alan Cadwallader who encouraged me to proceed with this project. I thank him for his perceptive supervision during the first three years. Dr Muriel Porter, as second supervisor, offered encouragement and invaluable advice on oral history.

A new team of supervisors, Associate Professor Stephen Downs and Dr Josephine Laffin, took up the task shortly after Alison died in 2009. I am indebted to each for applying their several gifts and experience to bear, so that as a result of our meetings the tangled web of Alison's life story began to take form. Together we breathed life into the history and wove philosophical, theological and feminist analysis into a scholarly biography as theology. They have heroically read through many versions of the paper, always with encouraging advice. Without their faith in the potential of the subject material and in my ability to bring the project to a conclusion I would not have been able to do so.

Dr David Hilliard's invaluable knowledge of South Australian history and the Anglican Church and his willingness to read five long chapters and offer advice, corrections and suggestions of reading material has been a truly godly gift. I wish to especially thank Sue Bishop for her excitement, interest and active participation in the final eighteen months of my pilgrimage. She understood what I was saying, offered her assistance on the legal matters and gave perceptive assessment of the written word, proof reading and praise.

I have appreciated the gracious cooperation of Gent family members who answered my queries, found photographs, and generously made materials available after Alison's death. I am particularly grateful to Professor Richard Keene, Alison's nephew and godson, who enthusiastically gave his time and expertise in assembling the photographs and the items for the appendices, who was meticulous in correcting and patient to a degree when I found additional material to be inserted.

There are special friends who have shared their technical and academic gifts. Dr Carolyn Boyd ironed out many computer puzzles, revealed computer miracles and gave much advice as well as proof reading and helping to prepare the document for printing. Mrs Yvonne Paull put much effort in to photographing, formatting and classifying Alison's banners for inclusion in the appendices. Archivist, Robin Radford made the resources of the diocese of Adelaide archives available, shared her knowledge of the collection and located many items for me. My heartfelt thanks go to the staff of the Adelaide Theological Library, Adelaide College of Divinity campus. Rosemary Hocking, Wendy Davis and Hayley Eyers were everything one could hope for when you are a lost, confused and housebound research student and are fittingly included

as friends. I wish to thank Flinders research student, Rachel Milte, for her patient advice on the intricacies of EndNote, for her prompt response to my queries and for bringing the main text to its final whole form. To my dear friends Cameron and Tania Wearing who generously made their company office available for the printing, my very grateful thanks.

I wish to thank all the people who gave their time for interviews, indeed to anyone who has given me help on the way. This was no easy task for those who were close to Alison or for those who were sceptical of her merit as a worthy subject. The exercise of interviewing has informed my own perceptions of how people make and express their judgements. I am grateful that Alison, too, submitted to my request and allowed her story to be added to women's history.

Thanks go to my friends far and wide who have been excited to have the story told and who have, I hope, been understanding about my lack of communication and other activities which keep friendships alive. For those who have prayed for me, rung me, sent emails and generally kept in touch during the long, lonely years of research and writing. I thank most heartily the Parsonettes whose loving, uncritical and cheerful meetings were a well in a thirsty land. I especially thank Christina Fox for her loving direction of my spirit and Dr J Garrood and Dr Margaret Low who cared for my wellbeing.

And lastly I wish to thank my daughter, Bride. She has been the constant in my life, the person who listened without criticism, asked how I was, believed in me and loved me. I thank her husband, Chris, for his steadiness, humour and, the best thing of all in a son-in-law, his acceptance of the person I am. I am grateful for the company and love of my grandsons, Toby and Paddy. Their regular visits brighten my house, their conversation livens my life, our outings have relieved the pressures of work and their love and laughter fill me with joy.

These acknowledgements cannot end without honouring those who have performed dog-minding duties in the cause of historical research. Daisy and I salute you.

INTRODUCTION

If wisdom is kept hidden and treasure a secret, what profit is there in them?[1]

Tell me. What is it you plan to do with your one, wild, and precious life?[2]

To live from love, to live in hope, to live for justice, to live for God[3]

Introducing Alison Gent

Alison Gent was a difficult woman. She often made people feel uncomfortable. Alison angered, disturbed and shocked, enthralled, enlivened and enriched those around her. Some months after she died, at a yearly church service for religious orders and associates, the Reverend Bart O'Donovan mentioned Alison in the prayers for the departed. His words identified Alison's challenging worth: 'Alison always had the ability to discomfort one. She saw the truth in what you said, and deliberately confronted you with it. Many people reacted negatively to the discomfort.'[4] But, when I first met Alison in 1971, I was drawn to her friendliness. It was as mothers of daughters at school together that we met. Although she was old enough to be my mother, she was more than ready to converse with me about church and women's rights. We were both women committed to our Christian vocations which included motherhood and

[1] Ecclesiasticus 20:10
[2] Mary Oliver, American poet, a line from 'The Summer Day'.
[3] Bishop Garry Weatherill, sermon, Alison's funeral, 17 November 2009.
[4] Notes taken by the author and reported with the speaker's permission.

marriage, clergy wife (my husband served as a priest from 1979 to 1998) and our personal journeys towards priesthood (I was ordained deacon in 1992 and priest in 1994). Throughout the intervening years Alison and I worked for the ordination of women. We initiated the group Women in Holy Orders? (WHO?) in Adelaide, had continuous membership of the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW) in which we took on various leadership roles; we studied theology, spoke out for women and confronted church hierarchy. These impulses towards a Christian and feminist vocation (although Alison always asserted I was not a 'real' feminist) have led me to write about Alison's life. Our close association and beliefs, however, did present challenges to researching and writing. I loved and respected her. I could identify with many of her frustrations and rejections. I was an ordained woman, so each meeting between us reminded her of what I had been blessed with and what had passed her by. Her story was almost overwhelmingly sad. I faced all these circumstances consciously and carefully trod a path between compassion and impartiality.

Alison and I lived out our vocations separately and differently: she was more radical, less able to settle to one project. That was Alison; she was full of contrasts. She had a firm belief in the Christian gospel and in feminist interpretation; she led a devout life in the Anglican Church and confronted its patriarchy; she had a belief in the equality of men and women in the eyes of God and gave caring support to lesbian women who had left the church. For a woman who began her life in the years between the two World Wars she is remarkable for both her commitment to tradition and her adaptation to the modern world. Alison felt that she had been disabled all her life, living with the tragedy of losing her father before she was one.[5] Yet the house where she lived in her youth with uncles and aunts, her mother and her two older sisters, was, to her mind, a 'wonderland'. When she married the Reverend John Gent, their impoverished circumstances were juxtaposed with the affluence of her very wealthy stepfather. Love, commitment, criticism, anger, and resentment, loyalty, faith and grief tossed in the tempest of her striving.

[5] AG *Int*, 17 August 2006. 'You know, the disadvantages of my life including the death of my father before I was one, and then my godfather [having] a lot of power over me and then marrying John and his addiction to alcohol … it's taken me *all* this time to climb through *all* those hurdles.'

INTRODUCTION

The centre of Alison's life from an early age was the Anglican Church and it is the church around which her story is told. Marriage was the vital core of her endeavour and its tensions sensitised her to the marginalised position of women in the home, workplace and the church. After her entry into the Women's Liberation Movement, her tireless campaign for justice for women led on to activism for the ordination of women. This was a battleground in which Alison was 'a warrior woman'. This thesis will illustrate that 'what finally distinguishes the warrior woman from the madwoman is the way she talks, and lives, her story'.[6]

The first chapter introduces Alison with a brief overview of her life. The chapter has a chronological order. The main geographical sites are chosen as headings of the chapter sections: the house where she lived in her childhood, 'The Early Years – Home and Garden' and to which she returned later in life, 'Back to the Oaks and Elms'; the institutions which formed her: **'**The World Widens – Church and School'; 'University Life'; 'The English Department' and 'The Church and the World'. Life changing events are recorded in the sections: 'Love and Marriage'; 'Loss, Grief and Vocation'; 'My Work is Done'. The last section, 'Bon Voyage, Alison', documents the events leading to her death and after. These headings are indicative of the power of place over the imagination as it was for Alison, so the reader is transported to each site and may be absorbed into the narrative as it unfolds. While in many respects people were more important for Alison than places, the sites nevertheless have proved a useful structure. There is a pattern of separation and return that allows a chronological narrative within which her many personal relationships are woven. Thus the most significant relationships and events are introduced, while the reader is referred to later chapters where four major themes of Alison's life are explored.

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[6] Mary Zeiss Stange, "Treading the Narrative Way between Myth and Madness: Maxine Hong Kingston and Contemporary Women's Autobiography," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 3(1987). Stange used Kingston's book, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts,* in her article.

Reasons for Writing Alison's Biography

My aim in telling Alison's 'impossible' story so that it can be heard and read by others is that it will speak to the dreams and life experience of Anglican women in South Australia and to anyone concerned to learn more 'from the particular ways women tell their stories'.[7] Mary Zeiss Stange asserts that 'women have needed and continue to need the stories of others to bring their own autobiographical narratives into being'.[8]

Alison Gent is distinguishable by being a South Australian, an Anglican, and a feminist activist. She was born in Adelaide in 1920 and died there in 2009. Adelaide is the capital city of South Australia. Until the Dunstan era (1970-1979), it was perhaps the most politically and ecclesiastically conservative of the Australian states, and decidedly conscious of its British heritage.[9] As an Anglican from her childhood, Alison absorbed the church's polity, incarnational theology and piety, and as an adult an Anglo-Catholic ethos. The mature Alison challenged the church's conservative and sexist culture. Her ideology and leadership in the church's feminist movement, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, drew on her participation in the Women's Liberation Movement. I will suggest that the insights Alison gained from both the church and the women's movement informed her activism, bringing many of the church's traditions into question but reinforcing others. For this reason, feminism and theology are two main areas of focus for the biography. The third is Adelaide (and because of the limits of the thesis, less on South Australia as a whole), its culture and religious life. The three foci provide the overall rationale for the biography. They also determine the structure.

This biography is a feminist biography. The reasons for this are threefold: the author is dedicated to telling women's stories; Alison was committed to feminism; and thirdly because Alison had a significant role in Christian feminism in the Anglican Church in Australia.

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid, p. 18.
[9] For South Australia's pre- and post-World War II church and community culture see David Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order: A History of the Anglican Church in South Australia*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986). For the Dunstan Era see www.flinders.edu.au/library/info/collections/special/dunstan/biography.cfm

INTRODUCTION

This biography is a theological biography. Alison was an Anglican, devoutly loyal and yet prepared to confront what she saw as injustice. Her perspicacity developed from a knowledge of Scripture, devotion to the church's liturgical tradition and formation in incarnational theology.

This biography has a particular geographical setting - Adelaide, South Australia. The author, like Alison, was born in Adelaide and grew up in its particular culture that had distinct differences from the other states and capital cities of Australia.

Feminist Biography

Alison's story is essentially a woman's story. The last half of her long life was dedicated to the cause of women. I am telling Alison's story in order to legitimise her work for women, to acknowledge her as an important foremother and to challenge the 'public silence and private interest' that surround her. Barbara Caine suggested that 'the conflicts over the meaning and usage of the term "feminism" demonstrate the marginality of women and their inability to function as legitimating figures for each other'.[10] Although the credibility of any church person became compromised after the religious crisis of the 1960s, nevertheless the story of Alison, feminist and Christian, needs to become part of the public feminist debate.[11]

One aim in this feminist biography is to present the life of a woman who has not been successful. Biographies of women, like those of men, have typically honoured the eminent, and history has trivialised those who failed. Women and men celebrated, I believe rightly, when the injustice and inequality in respect of women's ordination in the Anglican Church were overcome. Women, previously excluded from positions of power and influence, were acclaimed. Nevertheless the honouring of women who had broken the 'glass ceiling' created an imbalance. Those women, Alison among them, who had not achieved ordination could be seen as discredited. It is in righting this imbalance and encouraging

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[10] Barbara Caine, "Women's Studies, Feminist Traditions and the Problem of History," in *Transitions: New Australian Feminisms*, ed. Barbara Caine, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p. 13. See also chapter 3.

[11] Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). See McLeod's discussion of the breaking down of religious taboos and also 'undermining of respect for national institutions', p. 67-72.

those who may not have reached positions of power and influence that I believe Alison Gent's story needs to be told.

The way forward may be measured by scripture and history. Feminist biblical scholars have explored what was hidden but not previously discerned in the gospels, that Jesus' radical ministry honoured women disciples. Hebrew women were also brought to the fore. Christian feminists worked assiduously to retrace and retell Christian women's history. Now we know much of what our foremothers achieved, how they suffered, and survived. In Australia in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Anglican churchwomen's recent past has been told mostly in reference to synod debates and media response to factional warring. Alison's is a personal history of love and constancy in discomforting and tragic circumstances.

This biography does not aim to preserve Alison's memory because she failed to achieve positions of influence and acclaim in the workplace, academia, marriage or the church. The object is rather to illustrate that, despite characteristics such as eccentricity, anger, irascibility and worldly failure, Alison, by virtue of her activities, is part of my history and the history of the women of South Australia. Alasdair MacIntyre made the point that:

> **...**what I am, therefore, is in key part what I inherit, a specific past that is present to some degree in my present. I find myself part of a history and that is generally to say, whether I like it or not, whether I recognise it or not, one of the bearers of a tradition.[12]

Continuity and tradition were as much part of Alison as were diversity and change. She lived from her sixties in the house she grew up in: little was changed and nothing thrown away. In the same way, she never gave up on friends or foes, groups or institutions. MacIntyre commented that 'when a tradition is in good order it is always partially constituted by an argument about the goods the pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose.' Alison thought the cause of women in the church was worth fighting for and fight she did. 'Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict.'[13]

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[12] Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of Tradition," in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1997), p. 106.
[13] Ibid, p. 107.

MacIntyre also claimed that 'the exercise or lack of exercise of the relevant virtues' is what sustains or weakens these traditions.[14] Alison's warrior narrative is confronting and the recording of it continued the conflict with many 'situations defined by the necessity of tragic, dilemmatic choice' such as adultery and divorce, argument and aggression.[15] The biographer has a burden of judgement as telling women's stories demands 'a kind of understanding very different from those dominant in the culture of bureaucratic individualism.'[16]

How I Approached Gathering Information About Alison's Life

In 2005-6 Alison was frail and aged, so considering this, when she finally consented to the project, the first task was to gather primary material by interviewing her. A guiding principle was that what Alison reported and believed about herself was the narrative reference point.[17] Alison was not compliant and did not share the writing she had produced over many years in her journals. I recorded interviews with her in order to compile a body of primary material. I chose a feminist interviewing methodology to allow Alison to set the agenda. This was a frustrating process; nevertheless, it respected Alison's integrity and allowed me to gather information that might have been considered ephemeral. How Alison acted in the interviews, such as her choice of topics and means of control and avoidance, proved helpful in analysing the process and content. Information that was vital to the biography was recorded so that Alison's life story began to unfold.

Chapter 2 considers the feminist interviewing methodology. The chapter is divided into six sections.

The first, 'Feminist Narrative', describes a narrative framework formed by interviewing the subject with the intention of listening to her tell her story – what Stange calls 'talking-story'.[18] 'Talking-story' refers to the way women

[14] Ibid, p. 108.
[15] Ibid, p. 109.
[16] Ibid, p. 110.
[17] Stange, "Treading the Narrative Way between Myth and Madness," p. 17. 'The dominant pattern of self-disclosure in women's autobiographies involves recounting the relationships of the autobiographical "I" … with various others.'
[18] Ibid.

traditionally have of telling their stories, of relating events in relation to others. This methodology accepts this 'essentialist' view of women.

The second section, 'The Interview Process', introduces Anderson and Jack's interviewing process which is based on feminist theory.[19] The last four sections explicate Anderson and Jack's method by applying examples of Alison's response to 'The Narrator-structured Interview', the way in which she lived out her 'Idiosyncratic Interaction Between Self-image and Cultural Norms', illustrations of her 'Two Separate, often Conflicting, Perspectives', and examples of 'Alison's Life Review.'

While Anderson and Jack provided the feminist interviewing structure, the chapter also includes other feminist studies which aided in illustrating the process. The 'changing and unstable' meanings of the term 'woman' has implications in a woman's biography, so Denise Riley's documentation of its history was used.[20] Following this, the story is not a report of facts, nor is it a narrative of a quest or of attaining goals. I have endeavoured to establish that in relating her story Alison sustained Stange's assertion that the dominant element of women's [auto]biography is the narrative technique of revealing and understanding self in relation to others.[21] Some consideration of post-modern feminist theories is also included in exploring the appropriateness of this methodology.

Another consideration was the contribution made to the process of interviewing by the discipline of oral history.[22] Perks and Thomson's *Reader* provided further information on oral history.[23] For example, an issue for oral history is the truth of the individual's testimony; this was certainly a question that needed to be addressed in relation to Alison's memory and perception of

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[19] Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses," in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, ed. Sherna Gluck and Daphne Patai, (New York: Routledge, 1991).
[20] Denise Riley, *'Am I that Name?': Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).
[21] Stange, "Treading the Narrative Way between Myth and Madness."
[22] Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006).
[23] Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, (London: Routledge, 2006).

events.[24] The interviews which I made with Alison and others have added to a body of oral history: for women's history, for South Australia, for the Anglican Church in Australia, and also for feminist writing in this area. In addition, I used the transcript of interviews conducted with Alison in 1994 as part of an oral history project celebrating the centenary of women's suffrage in South Australia.[25] Other oral history resources used were the interviews made by Jenny Barber (especially Alison's) in her account of the women's movement in Adelaide.[26] Although Sylvia Kinder did not interview Alison, she interviewed other women involved in the start of the women's movement.[27] These interviews, particularly Barber's in 1980 and Chryssides' in 1994, were invaluable resources with which to compare Alison's 2006-2008 account.

Information gathering was not straightforward: it could not be set to a time frame nor were there any foreseeable outcomes. I give an account of Alison's resistance to the interviewing process in the section 'The Narrator-structured Interview' and offer some critique. Although I knew Alison for many years, I soon found that I only knew her in part, that there were aspects of her life and her personality of which I knew nothing. These were to be revealed over time, by hearing her story, by listening to others and then finally by having access to her papers. This primary material, a large collection of letters, poetry, placards, personal diaries and notebooks and minutes of meetings, was not available until after she had died in November 2009. Much of her devotional material and books on women's issues had glosses. There were also pamphlets, government and departmental reports, church and synod papers and works of theology. There was a large collection of newspaper clippings which included her own letters and others to which she had responded. There were also journals and newsletters from the various organisations to which she belonged. It was a vast resource as Alison never threw anything away. All these items gave

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[24] Rosanne Kennedy, "Stolen Generations Testimony: Trauma, Historiography, and the Question of 'Truth'," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, (London: Routledge, 2006).
[25] Helen Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview: South Australian Women's Suffrage Centenary Project: An Oral History of Women's Political Activity*, (Adelaide: State Library of South Australia, J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection, 1994).
[26] Jenny Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, (Adelaide: Experimental Art Foundation, 1981).
[27] Sylvia Kinder, *Herstory of Adelaide Women's Liberation 1969-1974*, (Adelaide: Salisbury Education Centre, 1980). These recordings are at the State Library of South Australia.

evidence of her thoughts on women's status in church and state. I sorted, categorised and filed these items for reference.

In order to obtain varying opinions and recollections of Alison and the events which she had related I interviewed family, friends and colleagues. I used the same interviewing methodology and so could document their reflections and information.

Theological Biography

Theologically, Alison had an Anglican understanding of the world, the natural world and Christian and non-Christian humanity, as God's creation. All creation was to be embraced rather than feared. God was present in the world and Alison was alive to the possibility that God could be calling her to explore other avenues of life. Methodologies were needed to explicate a life in which there had been no essential separation of sacred and secular and a person simultaneously sophisticated and guileless. Even late at night, if she thought there might be clouds on the hills she might suggest to a teenage son 'a quick drive to Mt Lofty to see how misty it was.'[28] Perhaps the most touching example was her late night visit to her much loved friends, Rev. Norman and Sadie Crawford. They were both in bed; Alison lay between them as they talked 'like a child with its parents … like Christ as a child resting between Mary and Joseph.' There she not only shared her sorrows but also the Crawford's sacred and loving presence which she described as being 'the closest [she] ever came to the analogy that makes God both parents.'[29] Alison's beliefs brought her into conflict with the second-wave feminism which was strongly influenced by Cartesian dualism and binary categories.[30] Post-modern deconstruction was not a suitable methodology with which to examine the life of a woman who maintained her traditional belief system despite adhering to a radical feminism.

[28] Chris Gent, eulogy, 17 November 2009.
[29] AG *PJ* 2 May 1977.
[30] Lisa Tuttle, ed. *Encyclopedia of Feminism,* (London: Arrow Books, 1987); Barbara Caine, ed. *Australian Feminism: A Companion,* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998). See especially Introduction and p. 132-141, 'A history of feminism in Australia.'

Methodologies

The methodologies used to analyse the biography are set out in Chapter 3. The chapter is divided into six sections:

In the first section, 'Introducing methodologies', various narrative theologies and theories are cited which provide insights into theological images and themes that were important for Alison. For example, MacIntyre proposed that a person becomes, through their history, a teller of stories. Narrative history is a basic genre concerned with human action and conversation. MacIntyre saw lives as enacted narratives and that the narrative concept of selfhood required that a person's history has its own peculiar meaning, and that the narrative selfhood is correlative. Alison's understanding of her self that was reflected in her 'action and conversation' is the narrative, is her biography.

Narrative theologian James McClendon offered a schema with which to tell a person's story and draw out its theological implications: 'biography as theology'.[31] McClendon's concepts for developing a biography as theology, such as hearing the person's story, constructing criteria to judge their suitability in respect of theology and what their life and theology have to offer others, have been used as a central methodology. The section sub-headings are taken from these ideas and will be used to explain the methodology.

A narrative theology used along with McClendon's is George Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic framework.[32] Alison's narrative, set within Adelaide's historical and cultural milieu required an approach which took account of context, time, place, and social mores. Contending that 'human experience is shaped, molded, and in a sense constituted by cultural and linguistic forms', this model was suited to the richly diverse environments of Alison's life.[33] The two most influential communities, the church and the secular women's movement have been selected and, within Lindbeck's framework, their specific cultural and linguistic qualities will explicate Alison's biography.

Both McClendon and Lindbeck were influenced by the philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein and 'his notion that we do not really know what language

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[31] James William McClendon, *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology*, 2nd ed, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1990).
[32] George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, (London: SPCK, 1984).
[33] Ibid, p. 34.

… means unless we can see how it is enfleshed in human life'.[34] It was, however, Wittgenstein's non-cognitive framework and his thoughts on language and human actions that provided a more precise means to analyse the complexities of Alison's life. For example, her understanding of Christian life and of the women's movement meant that both her language and actions became at times unintelligible to people in each group. Here Wittgenstein's idea of 'language games' and 'grammar' helped to unfold the layers of meaning.[35]

It was not only Alison's words and actions that were problematic. McClendon and Lindbeck's schema could not adequately put the events of Alison's history in order because of its apparently chaotic state. Any attempt to divide events into categories highlighted the complexities. Here Wittgenstein was again helpful. He described life as a weave and it is with this analogy that the complex threads of Alison's life have been unwoven. The structure of the main body of the thesis took shape from that idea. Each area of Alison's life has been nominated as a form of life: marriage, for example, and the women's movement. This is a term employed by the philosopher Wittgenstein and will be explained below. This manner of naming allows a particular area of Alison's life to be separated out and examined within the context of her actions and language in it. So the chapter on marriage is designated, 'Alison and Marriage'. It is also understood that a form of life can contain with in it another form of life, so for example 'Alison and Anglicanism' is a study of the form of Anglicanism within which Alison lived. Four major forms of life have been chosen as the central areas of Alison's life and work. They make up the chapters of the body of the thesis.

Wittgenstein and his terms are helpful in understanding and writing about Alison. As stated above, Alison's thought and practice present a degree of complexity requiring a flexible methodological approach that will apply to a life that spans the sacred and the secular and that covers a wide variety of activities. While this application will be explicated as Alison's life is unfolded, it is not my intention to be committed to using Wittgenstein's ideas as a philosophy (let

[34] S Hauerwas, N Murphy, and M Nation, eds., *Theology Without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1994), p. 17-8.
[35] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974).

alone as the only way of doing philosophy) but rather to engage in ' theology after Wittgenstein'.[36] Nor are Wittgenstein's terms always used precisely as he did. While the use of terms like 'language games', 'forms of life' and 'grammar' is grounded in his work, it is sometimes used more loosely in order to fulfil the purposes of the project. While remaining respectful of Wittgenstein's philosophy, I have made use of it in the ways theologians have used a multiplicity of philosophies over the ages.

Narrative Theology Considered as a Vehicle for Biography

The methodology applied by McClendon asserted that 'theology must hear her witnesses, discover her own truth, shape her doctrine in faithfulness to that truth'.[37] Anglicanism was the dominant cultural linguistic religious community for Alison. Within this sphere Alison did not rise to a position in the church hierarchy or achieve a fitting appointment in academia. While Alison was a prophetic leader, she did not persistently or with reliability bear office in the many women's organisations to which she belonged. I will make the point that success, position, or even quiet achievement, are not necessarily the criteria on which to judge what is worthy of biography as theology. The fruits of the Spirit may be found sporadically or in small measure in the saint or the prophet, the overworked mother or the out-of-work priest.[38] Nevertheless there may also be present the overriding ethos of the Christian gospel, a passion for justice, a disinterestedness in ambition, a love of God's little ones, a thirst for peace. The saint or the prophet may also exhibit behaviour, opinions and a life-style which makes the ordinary person uncomfortable. Alison throughout her life desired a life of prayer and learning, to work and offer loving care in the family and society. She cultivated each aspect of her Christian duty and faith with an eccentricity that also made people feel uncomfortable. While she was not alone in her idealism and ambitions, as in any individual story, the outcomes of situation, life events, personality and historical and cultural setting all contribute to that one life.

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[36] Fergus Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).
[37] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p. 84.
[38] The gifts of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. [Galatians 5:22-23 NRSV]

In the second section I examine the theological themes that recurred in Alison's life story in order to establish 'Alison as a subject for biography as theology.' There were also scriptural and ecclesiastical motifs that were influential in shaping Alison's character and decision-making. I have included significant people in scripture, church history and especially Christian women in the narrative and documented their influence on Alison's theological development. Alison's story revealed a wealth of literature (and its theology) that was formative and of which she was a master. McClendon cited the possibility of the biographical narrative breaking open accepted theological images as an important criterion for selecting a subject. All of the spoken and written evidence gathered has disclosed Alison as a woman breaking boundaries in the church and the world.

Biographical subjects also need to 'have contributed to the theology of the community of sharers of their faith especially by showing how certain great archetypical images of that faith do apply to their own lives and by extension to our own'.[39] A primary belief and image for Alison, and one that motivated much of her devotion, thought and action, was the scriptural precept that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:28). From this Alison drew the impetus for her work towards the equality of men and women in the church.

The third section sets out 'reference points for selecting a life'; criteria with which to assess the value of Alison's life and theology for future generations. McClendon cited self-scrutiny as an essential quality. In this, and McClendon's other criteria, Alison was more than a worthy candidate. He also suggested that the person be selected by their community as a model of the community's self-perception.[40] I argue that the community tends to choose the 'finest' made in their own image and likeness. I make a case for the working of God's spirit in the prophets and saints who discomfort, including people like Alison.

The fourth section considers 'whether Christian truths are validated by Alison's life.' The influence and assimilation of the Anglican Church on Alison's

[39] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p. 75.
[40] The selection of the youngest or weakest is part of the Judaic inheritance of Christianity, of which David is the foremost example.

life is of special interest. The Anglican tradition has a particular ethos: 'it exists in a mode unlike that of most Western Christian traditions. It has never been a genuinely confessional church … its primary focus is not in defining itself but on turning a community towards God in worship.'[41] To understand Alison's approach to God, to others and perhaps to understand why she made the decisions she did, it is necessary to understand religious experience in relation to the Anglican Church. Stephen Crites' narrative interpretation of religious experience that focuses on style and action, stories, time and memory, and full body reality and symbol is useful here.[42]

The fifth section describes 'the impact of Alison's life on theology and whether it can change beliefs.' Alison's lived incarnational theology ordered her life in the church and the world. This will be shown in, for example, her devotion to Holy Communion and also how she embraced the secular women's movement. Its influence, however, did not change her beliefs, rather it informed them, so that Alison's Christianity was imbued with fresh insights. While maintaining her beliefs and practices in the church, Alison embarked on reforming the church's patriarchy, arguing theologically for the equality of women and men, for women's ordination and for a less exclusive image of God.

Alison was a radical feminist. The rationale for a feminist biography has been made and the sixth section of chapter 3, 'What Alison's life offers to being religious in a post-modern world', further explicates this point. Each following chapter adds more examples and information on Alison's feminist agenda. Her feminism alone qualifies her being religious in a post-modern world; but that, together with the continuity of her devotional life, makes Alison's life worthy of contemplation in a disconnected world.

Not Just Australian But South Australian

The third object of this biography, that it is a South Australian biography, needs to be justified here in the introduction as each following chapter will

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[41] L. William Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination: An Anglican Spiritual Tradition*, (London: Darton, Longman, Todd, 1999).
[42] Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," in *Why Narrative?: Readings in Narrative Theology*, ed. S. Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1997).

present a form of Alison's life in this context. Alison epitomised the particularity of South Australia. She spoke with an English accent, absorbed the traditions of the English church and was educated in English literature. Her biography will contribute to the narrative history of South Australian women.[43] It will explore the position of women within South Australian society, civil structure and religious life, and women in the Anglican Church in this context. Many of the recent accounts of women in the Anglican Church have a bias towards the eastern states.[44] Anne O'Brien, for example, restricted her research primarily to the Anglican Church in Sydney, describing the tensions experienced by women with the institutional church 'as grounded in its peculiarly male and "godless" white origins' of the convict settlements of the eastern seaboard.[45] While acknowledging that 'most of the case studies come from New South Wales', O'Brien added: 'but many of the patterns they delineate are applicable to other parts of Australia'.[46] Conversely, accounts of women in South Australia give little credence to the role of the churchwomen in society.[47]

South Australia is unique in its formation, sacred and secular, as a colony in Australia.

> South Australia was settled in 1836 by men [sic] whose professed ideals were civil liberties, social opportunity and equality for all religions. Though each of these ideas was moulded in England, each was a protest against English practice. The emigrants had found their civil liberties unreal, because dependent on rank and property; the summit of society inaccessible except by gentle birth or exceptional wealth, of which they had neither; and the Christian religions unequal in law, custom and social status. Such obstructions bred, especially in

[43] Alison was described as a 'great South Australian matriarch, particularly to the disadvantaged' in Elizabeth Mary Fisher, ed. *Women's Roll of Honour for the 20th Century in South Australia*, vol. 1 (Adelaide: International Women's Day Committee (SA), 2001), p. 47.
[44] Muriel Porter, *Women in the Church: The Great Ordination Debate in Australia*, (Melbourne: Penguin, 1989); Janet West, *Daughters of Freedom: A History of Women in the Australian Church*, (Sydney: Albatross, 1997); Anne O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers: Women and Religion in Australia*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005); Elaine Lindsay and Janet Scarfe, eds, *Preachers, Prophets and Heretics: Anglican Women's Ministry* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2012).
[45] O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers*.
[46] Ibid, p. 13.
[47] Adelheid Taylor and Valda Mignon Stobie, eds., *Greater Than Their Knowing ... A Glimpse of South Australian Women 1836-1986* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986); Helen Jones, *In Her Own Name: A History of Women in South Australia from 1836*, Revised ed, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1994); Kinder, *Herstory*; Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*.

> Dissenters of the middling class, particular ideals of liberty, which emigrants determined to put into practice in their new land.[48]

Alison was born into a Baptist family and she, with her mother and two sisters, was nurtured by an extended family after the death of her father before her first birthday. Alison describes this generosity as prompted by their Christian values. It was a family that had 'come out in that rush and desire to fill South Australia with good honest [folk and make it] a paradise of dissent.'[49] Alison was quoting Douglas Pike's *Paradise of Dissent*: Pike identified South Australians' sense of otherness: 'her people refused to admit South Australia was ever a *colony*; it was an outlying English *province* with its own peculiar foundations, its own national song, its own commemoration.'[50]

My object is to document what the church and society in Adelaide was like for women in the period of Alison's formation in the church in her childhood and her activism from the 1970s. I also am a member of the cultural-linguistic community of Adelaide and the broader cultural-linguistic community, the Anglican Church and its the smaller sub-groups, such as clergy wives and the protest movement for the ordination of women. I will give an account of the broader communities – and the relationships within the smaller groups – from this viewpoint. Although I am a feminist and have adopted much of that cultural-linguistic framework, I was not a member of the Women's Liberation Movement.

The structure of the thesis depends on progression from the broad cultural-linguistic community, the Anglican Church in Adelaide (chapter 4) to a sub-group, marriage in the Anglican Church (chapter 5). Alison's involvement in another cultural-linguistic community, the Women's Liberation Movement, is also part of the progression (chapter 6). The ordained ministry is yet another sub-group of the Anglican Church. This is explained in chapter 7 as an introduction to the move of women into that form of life. The protest movement for the ordination of women, a form of life within that sub-group, is examined in

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[48] Douglas Pike, *Paradise of Dissent: South Australia 1829-1857*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1957), p. 3.
[49] AG *Int*, 20 March 2007, p. 2.
[50] Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*, p. 495-6.

particular relation to Alison's participation, in chapters, 7 and 8. In each chapter the methodologies are applied.

Anglicanism

The opening section, 'Theological Foundations', looks specifically at incarnational theology, the most significant influence on Alison's growth in the Anglican faith. A description of 'Alison's Formative Years: the 1920s to the 1940s' includes a study of the churches she attended and in what ways they were representative of the Anglican cultural-linguistic community. Those clergymen who most exerted their 'Priestly Influences' are examined, taking particular note of their incarnational theology. The section, 'Confirmation and Commitment', explains the turning points in Alison's life at which she consciously devoted her life to the church.

In the section 'University and Anglo-Catholicism' the beginning of Alison's relationship with John Gent is described. Under his sway Alison moved into another Anglican sub-group, Anglo-Catholicism. The place of 'Imagination and the Caroline Divines' in Anglicanism is noted. In the university at that time the study of these theologian poets coalesced Alison's learning and the love of God. 'The Poets' most significant to Alison and about whom she wrote lectures, 'John Donne' and 'George Herbert', are expounded.

The chapter concludes with a section on 'Alison's Devotional Life'. Excerpts from her personal journals give an insight into her spiritual journey.

Marriage

This topic is central to the thesis. The impact of her marriage reverberated on every aspect of Alison's life: it was the source of her deepest distress and greatest love. The insights she gained from its joys and sorrows informed her feminism. Her theology of the equality of men and women, of the role of husbands and fathers pervaded her belief in the validity of Christian marriage and her feminism.

The chapter begins by setting marriage in its wider cultural-linguistic communities, and describing 'What Marriage Entailed in the Anglican Church in Adelaide in the Middle of the Twentieth Century'. Within the Anglican Church,

'the Aims and Objects of the Mothers' Union', a sub-group, played an important role in consolidating the 'language games' of the broader community. The section, 'What was the Form of Life of an Anglican Priest in Adelaide in 1947?', describes another sub-group which Alison entered when she married a clergyman. There was yet another sub-group, 'The Culture of Anglo-Catholic Clergymen and their Wives', pertaining to Alison and John's marriage. The 'Role of the Clergyman's wife' is one which has been ridiculed and rarely studied: it is interpreted in a cultural-linguistic context. The church's attitude to 'Divorce' was something that identified it as a form of life. It is discussed in relation to the impact of the Gents' marital and relationship problems and their divorce after thirty-six years of marriage.

The narrative of 'Alison's Marriage' begins the second half of the chapter. The courtship and engagement years and the wedding are covered in Chapter 1. This part of the chapter is divided according to significant changes; beginning as the Gents start their married life together in the section, 'The Years from 1947 to 1970'. From that time Alison became wholly committed to the women's movement, although she worked during 'The Years from 1971 to 1980' to bring about some change in John's regard for her. This was not to be and the section, 'Belovedness and Blight', recounts the decision to divorce recorded in Alison's writings. The section '1981-1998 Divorce' describes how Alison and John each reacted to the altered culture and language games of the Anglican Church. When John died Alison determined that her cultural state was one of a widow. The years '1998-2009 Widowhood', it seemed, were empty of John as Alison waited until, she said, 'We Wake Eternally'.

The Women's Movement

An 'Introduction' explains the birth of the WLM in Adelaide, the cultural-linguistic community of the University of Adelaide and the contemporary upheavals of the 1960s. 'Alison's Simultaneous Membership' was a singular phenomenon that Wittgenstein's notion of life as a weave helps to describe. In the section, 'the Women's Liberation Movement in Adelaide', its rationale and actions in the first years are related. From the newsletters and other publications 'Factors Identifying the Women's Movement as a Form of Life' were

devised by the author. These factors are chosen and presented in a non-hierarchical manner. They are 'Feminism'; 'Non-hierarchical organisation'; 'The support and acceptance of all women'; 'Telling women's stories'; 'Political activism'; 'Inclusive language'; and 'Women as people in charge of their own bodies'. Alison's activism is noted and her language and actions recorded, such as, for example, her letters to the local daily newspapers about abortion, and her placards on the place of men in family life.

The Protest for Women's Ordination Part 1

The 'Introduction' explains the structure of this chapter and points out that the subject is continued in the following chapter. The division was decided on the basis of a change in the form of life; that when the movement became part of a national movement it took on that grammar and action and effectively became a new form of life.

The first section establishes 'the patriarchal church and the absence of women' as identifying the church in Adelaide. This situation is further expanded by describing 'Women in Ministry in the Mid-twentieth Century' and the different language games that applied to them. Against this 'The Discernment Process for Ordination and Theological Education' that applied men at the same time highlights the exclusiveness of the cultural-linguistic community.

The section, 'The Protest Movement for Ordination of Women as a Form of Life within the Anglican Church', gives a general overview of the issues around the subject, such as gender exclusive language and what needed to be done to change the culture. This is further described in the section, 'The 1970s', when Alison began to agitate for change and asked, 'Can a Woman Test her Calling to Ordination?' The sub-section, 'How the Ordination of Women was Debated', puts the debate into its historical context overseas, nationally and in Adelaide.

During the years '1980 to 1984' Alison had a very public face in the debate. She began a group, 'Women and Holy Orders?' to discuss the matter and to be a reference point, demonstrating that a different culture and new language could still represent the church. The last section explains 'The Protest in Transition' to a new culture.

The Protest for Women's Ordination Part 2

The 'Introduction' forms the seam between this and the previous chapter and prefigures 'Monica Furlong's visit, May 26-28 1984 and the end of WHO?' As women around Australia began to see the advantage of a national movement, the Moderator of the English group introduced the model to Australia. The section on 'the Movement for the Ordination of Women' describes the 'Planning' by the WHO? group and its 'Inauguration' in Adelaide. The establishment of a national organisation in '1985' led to the use of 'A Different Grammar' and the generation of a different form of protest life. The protest was subsequently to influence and change the church itself. The section, '1986-1989 The Beginning of the Church as a New Form of Life', records the change in relation to the ordination of women to the diaconate. 'Alison and the Selection Process' is decribed and the chapter concludes with 'The 1990s The Priesting of Women'. The year before Alison died she witnessed the consecration of the first woman bishop in Perth. Applying her grammar and actions, she proclaimed this event as signifying the completion of her work.

Conclusion

The thesis concludes with a reflection on the future of ordained women in the Anglican Church in the light of Alison Gent's prophetic contribution to the reshaping of the church for the twenty-first century.

Material in Addition to the Main Text

Photographs

The photographs are divided into sections which are to be found at the end of the relevant chapters. Each photograph is numbered for chapter and sequence. These photographs are intended to enhance the text. They have been selected from photographs supplied by Alison's family and friends. Their selection was limited by availability so they are not a complete record. The specific sources of the photographs are not noted.

Explaining Primary Material

After Alison died her family carefully sorted through her possessions. A vast, diverse and disorganised collection of documents, correspondence, personal writing and memorabilia which included an extensive collection of newspaper clippings, articles, posters and banners came into the author's possession. Alison was in the practice of dating, signing and giving a title and place to most items – from a scrap of paper to an extensive collection of books – which assisted identification and research. It was also possible to place events into chronological context and link Alison's life story within the culture of society, church and family. It has enabled the assembly of appendices, sections of photographs, and a long list of secondary source material. The collection has proved to be a noteworthy historical and cultural source. Alison's personal items that have been of particular consequence for the purposes of the thesis are itemised.

Bibliographies

The main bibliography, which was generated with EndNote, concludes this thesis.

Primary source material consists of notebooks and journals, Alison's writing, audio-visual items, education items from school to continuing adult education in old age and memorabilia.

Secondary source material is a list, arranged by subject, of periodicals and journals, newspapers, newsletters and minutes. Those items which belonged to Alison are marked with an asterisk. Most are not cited in the text but have been used for research.

Interviews

Interviews record the interviewees' names and the place and date of the interview. Audiotapes and transcriptions of all the interviews are in the author's possession.

Appendices

The appendices are a representative selection of Alison's correspondence and poetry, transcripts of interviews, and other documents of interest.

1 ALISON GENT: AN OVERVIEW OF HER LIFE

> Life is indeed dangerous, but not in the way mortality would have us believe. It is indeed unmanageable, but the essence of it is not a battle. It is unmanageable because it is a romance, and its essence is romantic beauty.[1]

> Out of the fragments of our defeats,
> God makes a vessel of beauty and usefulness.[2]

The Early Years – Home and Garden

Alexandra Avenue, Rose Park, two kilometres from Adelaide's Post Office and Central Business District, is one of the city's most beautiful streets, with four lines of trees, oaks along the footpaths and elms either side of the wide, grassed plantation which divides the street. It was here, at Number 66 on 20 September 1920, that Alison Grace Hogben was born, a sister for Elizabeth Cole and Janice Maude, the three daughters of Lavinia Constance [nee Jones] and Alfred Richard Hogben.

Alison was born into the comfort and stability that a father who was a successful accountant could provide, assisted by the large and caring families of both parents.[3] However, Alison said in her last year that she toiled all her life

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[1] E. M. Forster, *Howard's End,* p. 144.
[2] AG *PJ* 3, p. 215. As Alison 'received it during [her] meditation with the Bridgidine Sisters.'
[3] AG, *Int,* 14 June 2006-2, p. 8. No 66 was named 'Longfield' from the Victorian novel, *John Halifax, Gentleman*, about the struggle to be a gentleman. 'My father was doing very well along that line [of being an accountant].'

living with the loss of her father. Alfred Hogben died on 25 May 1921, thirteen days before his fortieth birthday, when Alison was just eight months old.[4]

Alison's birthplace was a freestone-fronted brick home, one of three built by Alison's mother's family, the Joneses, in Alexandra Avenue. All still stand, little altered, as a testimony to their quality and the appreciation of their successive owners of the quiet beauty and elegance of the street. Numbers 49 and 51 sit side by side on the opposite side of the street across the plantation from Alison's birthplace. In No 49 Lavinia Hogben's two unmarried brothers and four unmarried sisters shared their lives; 'a loving if snug and thrifty household.'[5] The men, Reg and Stanley, went out to work, kept the garden (fruit trees, vegetables) and maintained the fabric of the building. Stanley pedalled to work at a hardware store in Adelaide's main business street, Rundle Street. From his shed the quiet Western Front veteran created the kitchen cupboards in the 1930s, omitting drawers, as Alison never failed to point out, so the cutlery lived on the table in trays for eighty years. Her daughter-in-law, Penny, cleared the table on 25 February 2010. The women, Alice, Annie, Ida and Grace, kept house, sewing, cooking the fruits reaped from the garden, and cleaning. Grace supplemented the family income when, in 1927, tragedy and loss again fell on the household with Reg's suicide. Alison's son Christopher was to observe that 'essentially it was a matriarchal commune.'[6]

Reg bought the land from their brother, Herbert, who lived next door in No 51, and built the house at No 49. Herbert and his wife Emma had no children and when she died, he sold the house and moved in with his brothers and sisters. Alison talked a little about Herb and his house (her children loved him) but she was reluctant to talk about Reg's death.[7] Alison's reflections on the loss of significant men in her early years are inconsistent. She selectively protected the family history. This could be attributed to the reserve with which an older generation coped with loss and grief and the ignominy of suicide.

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[4] Christopher Gent, conversation, October 2012. Alfred died of bowel cancer.
[5] Christopher Gent, eulogy, 17 November 2009. Appendix G:2.
[6] Ibid.
[7] AG *Int*, 14 June 2006-2, p. 8. Alison related Reg's death to her age at the time; she was six years old. Pleading ignorance as to the cause, she referred me to her son Chris who confirmed that Reg had committed suicide.

The Jones family, like the Hogbens, were Baptists. Their home church was the Norwood Baptist Church where Rev. Charles Bright was the minister.[8] Members from both families had served overseas as missionaries.[9] There was a family culture of adventurous Christian women who gave their lives for the gospel and the improvement of those less fortunate. Lavinia (Win) Hogben's young daughters met cousins back in Adelaide on furlough from the mission field, so the notion of Christian service had names and faces.[10] The dreams of Christian ministry, which were engendered in many young evangelical Christians of their time, were part of their family tradition and so moved into the realms of possibility for the Hogben girls.

At some time during Alison's childhood there was a falling out of the Jones family with the Norwood church, because they did not like the way the minister was treated.[11] The family practised their piety at home, as witnessed by their generosity in taking in their widowed sister and her three daughters.[12] At one time there were ten people living in No 49, a situation Alison experienced as wonderful.[13] The generous encompassing of family extended through the years. Alison's children spent much time there: the older boys remember it as Uncle Stan and Aunt Grace's home. Alison's eldest son, Timothy and his bride, Elizabeth, lived there after their marriage in December 1971. They put up new curtains in the front bedroom, perhaps the only decorative evidence of the late twentieth century. A refrigerator, a portable handset telephone and in the twenty-first century an automatic washing machine (from sister Betty's home and not twenty-first century; it found its place in the laundry beside the mangle over the concrete troughs and the Pope washing machine with a wringer) remained the only concessions Alison made to modernity in the way of material possessions. Alison was as firmly planted in this place as the elms and oaks which lined the street. Place was an important paradigm in this life.

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[8] AG *Int*, 29 November 2005-2, p. 5.
[9] Janet Hogben was a missionary in East Bengal and Bangladesh. Elizabeth May Gooden nee Jones [cousin to Alison] studied at Parkin College (the theological school of the Congregational Union in Adelaide) in 1920s and 1930s. She died in October 1972.
[10] Lavinia Hogben was called Win by the family.
[11] AG *Int*, 13 February 2006, p. 3.
[12] AG *Int*, 29 November 2005-2, p. 5.
[13] The house had four bedrooms and a sleepout.

1 ALISON GENT: AN OVERVIEW OF HER LIFE

When Alison's mother moved over the road to live with her unmarried brothers and sisters she occupied the front bedroom with her young girls. Alison remembered lying in her cot in that room looking through the window at the house where she was born. It was in this room that I began interviewing her, as she lay in bed amid the mail – letters, newspaper clippings from local papers, interstate and overseas clippings sent from friends, journals of countless interest groups and organizations, newsletters of countless charities – and the local and church newspapers, books, some mending and the remains of lunch.

Alison experienced in that house a 'loving, sharing, Christian community.'[14] These early years made a deep impression on her. The gospel of devotion to the welfare of others, Christ's imperative of bearing one another's burden, the Christian life, was connected to everyday action, of sharing and working that was not for gain or self. Her frugality, which could be put down to growing up during the Depression, she ascribed as 'a virtue learned from a family which lived as people ought to live.'[15]

It was a cultivated household with books and music covering a wide range of tastes and interests. The infant Alison did not want for attention with three maiden aunts at home. There was always someone to read to her; bible stories were essential. Her sister Betty taught her to read, and by the age of four she knew Lewis Carroll well and thought the book was named for her - 'Alison Wonderland.'[16] The older aunts, born in Victorian times, reigned over a household of genteel manners and refined conversation delivered with polished English accents.

Alison's early school years were spent at Miss Dunn's School around the corner in Prescott Avenue next to Gartrell Memorial Church. Alison liked to mention that the international star of ballet, stage and film, Robert Helpmann, and his sister had also attended that school. The local Anglican church, St Theodore's, was also within walking distance in Prescott Avenue. Proximity to

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[14] AG *Int,* 14 June 2006-2, p. 6. 'They were extremely noble, those unmarried men and women … just taking in mother and three little girls when my father died. It changed their lives very considerably.'
[15] AG *Int*, 28 November 2005-1, p. 7.
[16] AG *Int*, 13 February 2006, p. 6-7. 'I've known Alice in Wonderland all my life; so much so that I think I must have had it read to me before I ever could read, because I thought I was Alison Wonderland.'

school and churches gave the young girls and the rest of the family freedom of choice and decision. Alison remembers walking across the parklands 'on very short legs' to Evensong at St John's Halifax Street with Aunt Alice.[17] Aunt Alice was confirmed into the Anglican Church at home aged ninety.[18] Alison suggested that her father was already leaning towards the Anglican Church before he died but it was Grace, the youngest Jones sister, who enthusiastically took on Anglicanism and became committed to parish life, with St Theodore's the family church. The acceptance of cremation and the establishment of memorial gardens in the last half of the twentieth century created a 'church graveyard' for the parish's faithful departed. At St Theodore's there are family plaques and now for Alison herself.

The World Widens – Church and School

Alison's mother Lavinia (Win) Hogben had trained as a teacher, but she chose less exacting employment to take her out of the house and supplement the household income.[19] Win first worked as a typist for the Electricity Supply Company. Alison was aware of her widowed mother's continuing distress at her situation.[20] Then she was employed by wool merchants, Koonoona Proprietors, with which the Makin family had pastoralist connections. Architect Guy Makin had his office in the same building.[21] While at her mother's office three-year-old Alison caught Makin's attention, as they both had red hair. This regard she

[17] The city of Adelaide is a mile square, bordered by terraces, and open space, known as parklands. Alexandra Avenue runs into the road adjacent to the East Parklands. Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 3.
[18] Her confirmation certificate was unearthed in what Charles Gent, Alison's fourth son, called 'The Great Extraction', the ten months the family spent clearing the house after Alison's death. Aunt Alice died at home aged ninety-two. Charles Gent, email, 8 September 2009.
[19] AG *Int*, 6 November 2006, p 6. 'I think Australian children were too Australian for her; she was very English in her predilections.' Alison gave this as the reason her mother preferred to work in an office typing rather than go back to school teaching.
[20] AG *Int*, 26 July 2006, p. 1. Alison thought her mother found going to work stressful and she was sure 'she used to go into the toilet to weep.'
[21] Makin's father, Frank, was a wealthy pastoralist and sharebroker, 'well known through his connection with Koonoona Station' in South Australia's mid-north. Obituaries Australia. Makin Snr had married Louisa Duffield, daughter of Koonoona's owner, Walter Duffield, MLC. By Guy Makin's time Koonoona was administered by proprietors. 'From 1909-1927 Guy Makin's architectural office was in the same building, Cowra Chambers, Grenfell Street, as were his father's business concerns.' www.architectsdatabase.unisa.edu.au

relished, her mother's friend businessman John Dring was also attracted to Alison's red hair.[22] Guy Makin later became Win's employer and family friend.

Alison spent her early school years at Rose Park Primary School, then in 1930 she followed her sisters to Walford House School. The year before Alison, aged eight, Jan fourteen and Betty sixteen were baptised together on 1 August 1929 at St Augustine's Unley, the school's parish church. Makin was Alison's godfather; in her mind she was his favourite. The move to Walford was another clear statement that the family was Anglican, and no longer Baptist. Alison's love of the Anglican Church and her devotional life is the subject of Chapter 4.

School life proved difficult for Alison as her exceptional abilities, her personality (perhaps), and spoiling by indulgent aunts and uncles, created a divide between her and her peers.[23] She complained that it was ever so: 'no-one ever wanted to talk about what I wanted to, or understood what I meant.'[24] Her experience of rejection and jealousy had long-standing effects. Alison rarely acknowledged her connection with the school: Old Scholars' functions were not in the orbit of this most gregarious of women. However, in her last two years, and consistent with her attempts at reconciling herself to past hurts and difficult relationships, Alison did attend an Old Scholars' Dinner. Miss Helen Reid, a former headmistress, remarked to the elderly Alison that she was 'the cleverest girl who had ever been at Walford.'[25] Alison was dux of the school in 1937 and her list of prizes and other achievements are a testimony to her abilities and breadth of interest and knowledge, as are her poetry and essays from the school magazines.[26]

Alison was a school prefect (as were Betty and Jan) but chose to leave school rather than be head prefect, citing that she did not feel at home at

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[22] AG *Int*, 26 July 2006, p. 1. 'Dring, from a firm of carriers, was an old friend of my father's. Whenever he came to visit Mother and I was there, he used to put his hand in his pocket and pull out an Australian gold sovereign and say it was exactly the colour of my hair.'
[23] AG *Int*, 13 September 2006-3, p. 4. 'I mean I was detested for being too damn clever. I was excluded from too many cliques…I used to get the rough end of it.'
[24] AG, conversation, MOWatch Conference, August 2006. Alison identified herself with Leunig's 'silent burrower.' 'No-one understands what I am getting at, saying. I'm always on a different level.'
[25] AG *TC*, 1 January 2007. Alison claimed that she has the most entries on the Walford Honour Boards. See Appendix A:3 for photographs of honour boards.
[26] School Prefects, Photograph 1:11; hockey team, Photograph 1:10. See Appendix A for Alison's literary contributions to the school magazine and a list of prizes and awards.

school.[27] The choice appears to have been a missed opportunity to mature in responsibility and leadership. When Alison reflected on this and other decisions which seem consistent with a pattern of withdrawing or retreating from success, she defended them as right for her, voicing no regrets.[28]

Makin was a very considerable Anglican influence in Alison's life. The wealthy architect and warden at St Peter's Cathedral, as employer, godfather and family friend, treated the young family to picnics, concerts and excursions in the country. Alison explained that 'he and his wife didn't seem to go in the same groove socially all the time' and his own child, a son, was at Geelong Grammar School.[29] Makin introduced the family to worship at the cathedral and its choir. As a young child and into her teen and university years, Alison enjoyed a privileged social life as Makin's favourite. She experienced high Victorian living when Makin took her to lunch at his mother's home in North Adelaide, where 'three maids dressed in black with white aprons [were] standing against the sideboard' waiting to serve them.[30] Alison was among Adelaide's elite, as the Makins were regarded as 'Old Gentry.'[31]

Friendship and socialisation was found in the company of her many cousins, some of whom lived in the country, and with other families on holidays. Alison also could share her life-long passion for nature with family friends with whom she rambled at the seaside suburb of Marino and in the Adelaide Hills collecting and drawing native orchids.

University Life

Alison began studies at the University of Adelaide in 1938 in French, English and Latin and by 1940 she was already working towards honours

[27] AG *PRH*, p. 12. 'Leadership (Head Prefect) uncomfortable. I was unpopular, seen as a "swot". [I was] a person who felt bad about living up to the school's expectations and not at home there: not free.' See Photograph 1:11.
[28] AG *PRH*, p. 11-15.
[29] AG *Int,* 6 November 2006, p. 6.
[30] AG *Int*, 14 June 2006–2, p. 6. 'When I was young I had to cope with two completely different ways of living with nine or ten of us crowded into a not very huge house and over there with the butler and parlour maid.'
[31] Dirk van Dissel, "The Adelaide Gentry 1850-1920," in *The Flinders History of South Australia: Social History*, ed. Eric Richards, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986). 'Mrs Frank Makin's bridge evening at Keynedon, Palmer Place [was among those events] attended almost exclusively by the gentry', p. 359. For more details see chapter 4.

degrees in French and English. She was admitted to both French and English Honours degrees.[32] From 1942 Alison tutored and lectured in English, French and Latin.[33] She was awarded a Masters degree on 12 March 1948 for her lectures, particularly those on the seventeenth-century English metaphysical poets.[34]

Alison's brilliant double first and her ongoing connection with, and attachment to, the university are evidence that these were good years. The margins of one notebook from 1940 contain 'girlie' exchanges with a fellow student: at twenty Alison was beginning to put aside the 'swot' image which had dogged her school life. She was involved with other activities including Christian groups such as the Student Christian Movement [SCM]. She initiated saying the Daily Office with other student Anglicans, but was disgruntled and disappointed that this devotional time was later superseded by the Anglican Society where debating was more popular.[35]

Some of Adelaide's notable sons and daughters were Alison's fellow students and remained friends: Max Harris of the Angry Penguins and Ern Malley literary hoax fame and John Bray, who became Chief Justice of South Australia. Lionel Renfrey and Tom Reed, who became Anglican bishops in Adelaide, were both friends and sources of conflict. The University of Adelaide was truly Alison's *alma mater*. She continued to receive newsletters from the English Department and to attend functions into her old age.[36] She belonged to the University Club and once took the author to lunch there although she did not invite her into the company of her academic friends. Alison viewed her scholarly life with mixed feelings: with pride in her early achievements but with frustration and some resentment at her later employment as a part-time tutor.

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[32] University of Adelaide, sixtieth anniversary of graduation commemoration booklet 2002. Alison received her degree for English in 1941 and for French at the ceremony on 16 December 1942. See Appendix A for the range of topics studied.
[33] AG *NB* 1.
[34] University of Adelaide, sixtieth anniversary of graduation, commemoration booklet 2008. See Appendix A.
[35] Daily Office was the name given to the saying of Morning and Evening Prayer according to the *Book of Common Prayer*. These were adapted from the medieval monastic offices. Alison wanted an Anglican and more particularly a prayerful focus.
[36] Later incorporated into the Friends of the Barr Smith Library.

She did not publish or gain a lectureship or tenure, the signs of a successful career in academia.[37]

Alison believed her singing and speaking voice was her greatest asset.[38] As with most of her gifts it brought her joy and satisfaction, opportunity and repudiation. Her godfather paid for singing lessons. With young men away in the forces during World War II Alison was asked to sing in the cathedral choir. She was the first woman to do so, but she was not paid, nor permitted to robe or process with the rest of the choir, rather she 'nipped into the choir stalls from the back.'[39] Alison was to claim her time in the cathedral choir as her first and only official ministry in the Anglican Church.[40]

These years were a foretaste of Alison's future throughout which rejection and ridicule continued to blunt the flowering of talents and cast shadows on the highlights. Circumstances of time and culture worked against her skills, devotional aspirations and calling. When she took her English honours degree in 1941 'lack of money made it impossible for [her] to go as [she] might have liked to do to an English University for further academic training.'[41] In 1942, Alison's honours French degree earned her a scholarship to study in Paris, but 'the fall of France made scholarships for studies in French disappear.'[42] She reflected that she 'was not ambitious' when she first graduated, and did not pursue lecturing and tutoring when she could not go to Oxford. Her 'second honours subject did not launch [her] away from home, either.'[43]

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[37] Charles Gent, interview, 28 October 2008. He remembered his mother expressing regret that she did not persist with her academic studies.
[38] These gifts were cultivated at Walford House School. Alison presented two items at the musical club concert each year, usually one in French. In 1937 she sang Aminte from 'Bergerettes' and Purcell's 'There's not a swain.' *Walford House Magazine*, December 1937.
[39] Chris Gent, eulogy, 17 November 2009.
[40] Alison's anger at rejection festered over time. In August 2004 the tenth anniversary of girls being admitted to the cathedral choir was marked during the Sunday morning service. Alison's two granddaughters, Imogen and Grace, were in the first intake. Each girl went on to be Head Chorister as did another granddaughter, Alice. St Peter's was the first metropolitan cathedral in Australia to admit girls. That Alison herself was not noted as being the first woman to sing in the cathedral choir at this event she saw as rejection. Her resentment sadly was not alleviated by her granddaughters' opportunities.
[41] AG, 'The Nature of a Woman's Position at a University.' Talk prepared for a meeting of the Adelaide University Women's Liberation Group to discuss 'Women in the University Community', 29 September 1970.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

These major circumstances impeded Alison's progress in the academic world and were further complicated when her mother married Guy Makin at St Theodore's on 24 December 1941.[44] Makin, a highly cultured man and a *bon vivant,* was president of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. He was also a man of very decided and forceful opinions who revelled in arguments. 'He was clearly proud of his accomplished and spirited god-daughter.'[45] While No 49 remained her principal residence, Alison enjoyed stays at 'Mount House', Makin's twenty-five-roomed mansion at 114 Strangways Terrace, North Adelaide, where she had her own bedroom, 'fashionable clothes, trips to the theatre, days at the races, singing lessons, horse-riding, golf, dinner with professional and business figures, discussion of art and literature and politics.'[46] Alison was diverted by these excitements and, without the necessity of earning her living, from any opportunity to further her career that tutoring and lecturing full-time might have offered her. She was again the centre of attention. Her sisters were no longer at home: Jan was happily married and Betty, having trained as a nurse, was overseas on war service in Papua New Guinea.

However, her mother's marriage caused turmoil for the young Alison. She cited Makin as one of her three loves in a poem written in 1974.[47] A close friend believed Alison was in love with him. Alison's childish belief that she was his favourite was broken by the realisation that she had been a 'chief link', used as an excuse for meetings between her mother and Makin.[48] Her position was now usurped and her identity compromised.[49] Alison suggested there was tension between her and her mother and she blamed her mother for what had happened with her godfather.[50] Alison was to reflect on how she resolved these emotional dilemmas:

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[44] *Advertiser,* 30 December 1941. Makin's first wife had died in 1938. Their son, Paul, having been educated interstate at Geelong Grammar School, lived in Queensland and died in 2008. Chris Gent, email, 27 November 2012.
[45] Chris Gent, eulogy, 17 November 2009.
[46] Ibid.
[47] See *Revenants*, Appendix C
[48] AG *Int*, 6 November 2006, p. 6. 'I spent a lot of time with him all my life really, ever since he took a fancy to me when I was about three. So you see I was the chief link between mother and him, I was the chief sort of occasion for their seeing each other… And then when I got married that was the end of that, I was poor and they were rich.'
[49] AG *PRH*, p. 18-19.
[50] AG *TC*, 11 April 2008. 'I had been cool to her and didn't visit her much. When I was about seventy years old I realised she had done the best she could.'

> I had to make an effort to be clear that I was swimming in a summer sea, not diving underwater in a dangerous, shark-infested, deep sea place with overwhelmingly strong currents – a sea from which I had emerged before I reached my pleasant summer garden. Mother/Godfather – I set aside at last the hurt I have felt for being involved against my will in the strain and difficulty of their emotional relationship.
>
> New understanding: that I am loved and safe, that my sense of that is not dependent on a relationship with a particular person – God, who is She no less than He, holds me.[51]

The new understanding came late in Alison's life, but it is evident that Win and Guy's marriage had a stultifying effect on Alison's academic career and unbalanced her emotional intelligence. In his eulogy, Chris Gent ended his account of Alison as a brilliant student at school and university with – 'BUT' and a long pause worthy of the enormity of the consequences. The photograph of Alison chosen for the order of service for her funeral, reproduced in the frontispiece, shows 'a young woman of glamour and intellectual brilliance poised on the brink of …'[52]

Love and Marriage

John Gent, dashing, witty, clever, a strong Anglo-Catholic churchman, and captain of the University of Adelaide Debating Society was a fellow student. His interest in the Anglican priesthood and personal charms, together with his academic prowess, proved irresistible.[53] Alison fell 'hopelessly and irretrievably in love.'[54] This happened, she said, 'at a SCM conference at Corio'; it was in 1941, the year of her mother's marriage.[55] When she announced that she had finally recovered from what her sister Betty had called her madness, Alison was eighty-

[51] An un-dated document, probably from a retreat or quiet day, with a large drawing on one side and this explanation on the back.
[52] Chris Gent, eulogy, 17 November 2009.
[53] John George Moyns Gent, 27 February 1919 – 31 July 1998. He had a Bachelor of Arts (Hons), University of Adelaide, a Licentiate in Theology (Hons) and a Scholar in Theology (Th Schol), Australian College of Theology. He trained for Holy Orders at St Barnabas' Theological College, Adelaide. At university together Alison 'found him impressive. [He] was president of the Student Christian Movement and president of the Arts Association.' AG *Int*, 13 February 2006, p. 7.
[54] Chris Gent, eulogy, 17 November 2009.
[55] AG *Int*, 29 November 2006-2, p. 9. 'Yes, I fell in love with John at a SCM conference at Corio.'

six years old, John had been dead for eight years and Betty was in a nursing home.[56]

Alison enthusiastically adopted a new (to her) expression of Anglicanism.[57] Anglo-Catholicism combined a liturgy that was glorious to the senses with a strong missionary drive and a down-to-earth care for the poor. To a young woman, whose senses were enlivened by John Donne's love poetry and the other Anglican divines, John Gent and this church tradition were a heady mix. Chapter 4 on Alison and the Anglican Church will include a brief study of the Anglo-Catholic church in Adelaide.

In the late 1940s exceptional students would go overseas to complete their education, preferably to Oxford, the seat of English learning and Anglo-Catholicism. Both Alison and John, at university on scholarships, needed a champion. Makin disapproved of John's character; this together with Alison's headstrong attachment to John and her wholesale adoption of what Makin saw as an excessive form of Anglicanism, could have influenced the obvious withdrawal of his favours.[58] John Gent's family did not have the means, neither did he have a patron, to provide further education.[59] Alison believed this was a turning point for John. If he had been able to complete his education and fulfil

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[56] AG *Int*, 14 June 2006-2, p. 16. 'I've had a strange sensation only in the last few weeks that I've got over whatever it was that was a form of madness that assailed me when I fell in love with John.' It is unclear whether Alison shared her retraction with anyone other than the author.
[57] AG to her mother and sister Betty, reported to the author by Chris Gent.
[58] AG *Int*, 28 November 2005-2, p. 2. 'He [Makin] loved calling me his daughter but he didn't always treat me like one. [Not going to Oxford] would be the most obvious manifestation. Guy would say, "Well, it was all your own fault, because you [tape indistinct here]".' Chris Gent believed there was some dissension around the engagement and marriage. Chris Gent, interview, 6 August 20011.
[59] John's father, Vere Gent, was a self-employed accountant, ruined in the Great Depression. He married Eva Meller at St Mary Magdalene's. They, like the Joneses and Hogbens, had a 'certain facility for genteel poverty.' Chris Gent, email, 27 November 2012. The Gents, like other devout church people of their time, gave priority to Christian education. Although they could not support their children independently they assisted both John and his sister, Maida, to attend church schools. John received education at St Peter's College through the beneficence of a parishioner at St Mary Magdalene's. St Peter's College boys had their own postulant guild under the headmaster, Rev. Bickersteth. It was the custom to assist promising youth into a career in the church. Pam Lindsay, telephone conversation, August 2012.
John Gent also attended St Mark's University College. 'In 1931, The Reverend Julian Faithfull Bickersteth gave 500 books together with two thousand pounds for establishing a scholarship. The recipient of this scholarship must be an Old Boy of the Collegiate School of St Peter who intends to take Holy Orders. However in the event of there being no applicant for the scholarship who is able to satisfy the requirements of the intention to take Holy Orders, it is open to the discretion of the Master to any Old Boy of St Peter's who does not intend on taking Holy Orders.' Julian Bickersteth Scholarships. www.stmarkscollege.com.au

his potential in comfortable and satisfying circumstances, life would have been better for him. Yet, in the face of what to them was abandonment, they were stoic and resolved to remain in and work for Australia, to *be* Australians.[60]

During their long courtship Alison and John mixed with many of the leading church people of the time. When they visited the rector of St Paul's Pulteney Street, Alison resented being relegated to the kitchen with the rector's wife while John enjoyed theological discussion in the rector's study.[61] A close friend who knew them before they married reported that they were both leading and dazzling figures in Anglican circles. With her relationship to Makin, John may well have seen in Alison a well-connected and prosperous partner. Their intellectual vivacity provided a sparkling meeting of minds. Alison reflected after thirty-three years of marriage:

> Perhaps what is wrong with John and me is that we were in the first place a 'marriage of true *minds*', and much enforced domesticity, the enforcement dictated by John's fear of my eclipsing him, has been the cause of driving out of sight the original cause of his love for me.[62]

In 1945 John wrote lovingly to Alison from Yorketown where he was serving as priest-in-charge, bemoaning their long separations and the delay of their marriage.

> Your portrait is looking out past me. It is worth studying. I can see first, a lot of beautiful fair hair, which waves out over each ear. And the face underneath is the real truth. It's a strong face, a good firm jaw and a mouth which is tender and strong, able to laugh a lot and kiss a lot. Eyes which are fixed so easily on great distances, and a head which is high and wise. You dear darling, there's nothing I can say too much about you. I love your [unreadable] utter distraction. And shall never be content apart from you. Cos I shall never be complete without you.
>
> John is coming to see you and hold you and kiss you and tell you with all his heart that he loves you and is going to marry you.[63]

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[60] AG *Int*, 28 November 2005-2, p. 2. Also 28-29 November 2005, p. 1. 'We were both keen Australians. We realised we could do as Christians in Australia as anywhere else. [John] would have been better protected if he had had money and status.'
[61] Sue Henry-Edwards, interview, Sydney, May 2008.
[62] AG *PJ* 3, 27 May 1980, p. 123-4. The phrase 'marriage of two minds' alludes to Shakespeare's Sonnet 116. During the months of divorce proceedings, Alison contemplated writing on the philosophy of literature, which led her to remember her and John's attraction to each other. Their sons made the same point. Chris Gent, interview, 6 August 2011; Charles Gent, interview, 28 October 2008.
[63] John Gent, letter to Alison, 1945.

This time was remembered as the period of their youthful romance, and it was at Yorketown that their children decided to place the last of Alison's ashes.[64]

Alison and John were engaged (unofficially at first and then officially) for nearly four years: there were diocesan rules prohibiting marriage until three years after priesting. Their long courtship put a strain on their relationship.[65] In the years between graduation and marriage Alison tutored and gave lectures at the university and spent her time between 'Mount House' and Alexandra Avenue. When I asked why she did not actively pursue her academic career, she replied lamely, 'Because Mother wanted me at home.' Alison wrote:

> I'd never seen my marriage to John, - though Mother and Bet and my friends were so unwilling that I should embark on it - as my great adventure, the only one open to me (because of my lack of professional drive when my student training ended and the lack of money to go to Oxford). I knew I took risks, for I had already encountered very convincingly John's cold and ruthless – in parts at least – nature. But I embarked on the marriage trusting in God's mercy: and by grace the adventure was enabled to last for thirty-three years.[66]

Alison claimed that she was not interested in pursuing an academic career, and just wanted to devote her life to the church.[67] However a letter written the night before her wedding reveals that she did desire to remain active in academic life.[68] The letter and the accompanying lectures were never sent.[69] Alison prefaced her married life as she was to live it, unable to produce the intellectual work her abilities had promised.

Alison Grace Hogben and John George Moyns Gent were married on 1 February 1947 at St Mary Magdalene's Church, Moore Street, Adelaide. It was a very hot day, 109 degrees Fahrenheit: in the days before air-conditioning, an early morning 9.30am service was held to avoid the heat of the day. St Mary Magdalene's was John's family church where his mother played the organ. The

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[64] Alison wanted to be 'with John' so her ashes were sprinkled in the garden of the rectory at Yorketown on their wedding anniversary 1 February 2013 because 'it was here that they were in love.' See photograph 5: 28

[65] AG *Int*, 28-29 November 2005, p. 6. Alison admitted that it was she who proposed to him.

[66] AG *PJ* 3, p. 165.

[67] Ibid, 27 May 1980, p. 123-4.

[68] AG to Professor Cornell, 31 January 1947. 'I am leaving these six [French] lectures with Mr Edgeloe for you to collect when you return… If you consider them unfit in their present state for the purpose we intended them for, I shall work on them later.' Appendix A:4.

[69] The letter, folder and contents of undisturbed, yellowed lecture notes are poignant symbols of Alison's abandoned ambition.

custom of the wedding taking place in the bride's home church seems to have been foregone, although St Theodore's and St Peter's Cathedral were both much larger churches. Alison noted that four bishops attended.[70] The reception was held at 'Mount House.' Alison had pursued the marriage despite her own apprehension about her future career and doubts about John's suitability, the disapproval of her mother and stepfather and her sister's reservations.[71] Alison reflected that she 'had a slap-up wedding, and that was the beginning of my life in poverty.'[72]

Alison's marriage, family life and the Gent's subsequent divorce in 1981 are explored in detail in Chapter 5.

The English Department

After fifteen years as a housewife, raising four boys and having occasional work in schools or as a tutor, a chance encounter with a university friend led to Alison's appointment as part-time tutor in the English Department of the University of Adelaide in 1962, a position she held for twelve years.[73] Alison's friend had noticed her distressed state but also recognised her need for stimulation and intellectual pursuit outside the home.[74] Alison's return to academic life heralded a period of heightened ambition and energy, activity, creativity and output. She tutored English 2 and supervised post-graduate students. She received research scholarships in 1965, 1966 and 1967.[75] Kevin Magarey, a fellow student, now lecturer and mentor, suggested areas of research.[76] Alison's article on Milton was declined for publication.[77] There is no

[70] AG *Int*, 1 February 2006; Author's notes, February 2006. Bishop Robin presided, Canon Finniss, Alison's priest from the cathedral, solemnised the marriage. Brigadier Blackburn VC commented that 'all weddings should be like this.' His daughter, Rosemary Blackburn [Wighton] was Alison's bridesmaid. Photograph 1:20. Alison's children noted the number of bishops at her funeral. It is seen as a sign of one's status or importance or respect in the church.
[71] AG *PRH*, p. 4. 'Mother thought I had "thrown myself away" when I married.'
[72] AG *Int*, 6 November 2006, p. 6.
[73] AG *TC*, 26 April 2008. Alison responded to her friend's brief enquiry about her wellbeing that she was 'terrible.'
[74] Peggy Mares, interview, 11 May 2011, p. 1.
[75] Registrar to AG, 12 January 1966. AG to Registrar, 9 November 1973. See Appendix A:7:1, A:7:2.
[76] List of possible literary projects - an article on Milton's 'A Mask' (abortive 1966), a learned note on Mercury and the nymphs (posted Nov. 1967), and an article on Hamlet.
[77] Editor, *Studies in Philology*, University of Carolina to AG, 19 November 1967, re Alison's submitted article, 'Milton, Mercury, and the Dryads.'

evidence that she offered any other work for publication; this first rejection was enough to destroy her confidence. Her reaction seems to have been to divert her energy to the extraordinary; for example, in 1967-8 she took a Sanskrit Course with the Linguistics Society. Both John and Alison appear to have lost the commitment and focus needed to pursue further academic study. In 1968 John's attempt to gain a higher degree was half-hearted.[78]

Alison and John's fifth child, Lavinia, was born in 1965. All their five children were blessed with their parents' intellectual gifts, so they did well at school and university. They were also nurtured in the arts and in the church. They sang in church choirs, Alison read *The Lord of the Rings* three times to Charles, and Lavinia knew the Nicene Creed by heart when she was three. All this time the household at 49 Alexandra Avenue provided a home away from home and loving respite for the older children, visits to 'Mount House' kept the family in touch with other families in Adelaide society, and the university gave Alison intellectual stimulation and some professional credibility.

The couple continued their serious involvement in church activities. They read widely on the issues of the day, sacred and secular; their library was testament to this. John was a presenter on the ABC Radio Sunday night religion programme. Alison joined the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament and the Society of Mary, two Anglo-Catholic societies, in order to align herself more with John's world.[79]

Alison continued to love John, to cherish and protect him as she had vowed on their wedding day, but in the face of his rejection, the devastation of unrequited love, she was driven, she claimed, to take up the cause of women in the church and the wider world.[80]

The Church and the World

Alison's interests were wide ranging, so that, even while tutoring, she was involved in the caretaker committee of a new group, *Church and Society*,

[78] AG *Int,* undated. John's 60% for a History 3 essay could not confirm his former reputation as a brilliant history scholar.
[79] Alison was made a life member of the Society of Mary in 1960. The South Australian chapter of the Society of Mary closed when the first Australian woman priest was consecrated a bishop in Perth in May 2008.
[80] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*. Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*.

which began with a conference in February 1969.[81] Its fundamental rationale was the proper understanding of the Incarnation, and its concerns were social issues, such as poverty and loneliness, racism, under-developed countries, and Aboriginal issues.[82] In 1970, as concern over Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War grew, one of the topics under discussion was the theology of war and peace. Other topics were industrial relations, aboriginal rights, and the underprivileged.[83] This group was a precursor to Alison's more radical activism.[84] An indication of the climate against activism in conservative Adelaide is reflected in an article on religious affairs in *The Australian*, in which the author warns church people to scrutinize their pastor for radical activism.[85]

Alison's life at this time was marked by significant change when Guy Makin died on 26 July 1970. Noted in the architectural world for his adherence to traditional forms of architecture, Makin was an archconservative. Alison, conversely, took yet another step away from the high society of her roots and Makin's influence and began her association with the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) which was inaugurated at the University of Adelaide in late 1969. Chapter 6 will serve as a discursive discussion on women's liberation in Adelaide and Alison's activities in the movement. Her assimilation of secular feminism informed her knowledge and understanding of Christianity and its developing modern feminism. The major focus in the second half of her life was in protesting for the ordination of women in the Anglican Church. Chapters 7 and 8 will analyse this narrative.

Alison wanted to embrace as many women's groups as possible. She believed her attendance at organizations would somehow be an overarching influence between opposing factions and varied interest groups. She used Austin Farrer's expression, 'walking sacrament', to describe how she

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[81] Conference Papers, Retreats and Conference Committee, Retreat House Board.
[82] Ibid.
[83] *Church and Society News*, February 1970 – June 1971. Occasional Newsletters.
[84] AG and Robin Millhouse, State Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, December 1968- March 1969, correspondence in reference to the Carrington Hotel and welfare of local aboriginal people.
[85] 'Take a long hard look at your pastor next Sunday. Get behind his bland benevolence, his deceptive smile. Watch for any hint that he could be a dangerous communist dupe, dedicated to the overthrow of free enterprise society. Does he pray for peace in Vietnam, attack the failures of capitalism or continually urge a ban on nuclear weapons? Has he ever let slip, "Our Father, who art in Peking"? Find out if he mixes with "progressives" in the church: a black mark for this. Better still, has he ever carried a placard on conscription, peace or pensions – or anything?' Graham Williams. *Australian,* 10 March 1969.

understood herself as a sacramental presence.[86] She was also committed to expressing in her person what she understood as the internal ecumenism of the Anglican Church.[87] Tolerance and acceptance were not limited, for Alison, to religious expression. She did not deny her Christian being when representing a secular organization and vice versa. She was who she was, to the annoyance of both believers and non-believers. Her exposure to many forms of Christian expression, as well as to the various aspects of feminism, helped to hone her broad perspective on issues of justice and morals. Alison was able to apply theological reflection to her secular experience and, with energy and conviction, present her views on opposing positions in order to promote understanding. Alison spoke to church groups about the aims of the WLM concerning women's need to work outside the home.[88] She gave a Christian interpretation on marriage at a WLM forum.[89] She belonged to conservative Anglican women's groups, such as the Mothers' Union [MU], and an umbrella group, Anglican Women of Australia.[90] Alison participated in experimental feminist liturgy and used inclusive language, particularly the use of 'Mother' in addressing the first person of the Trinity.

Alison was already acquainted with ecumenism when the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women was declared in 1975. She had joined the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius in the 1960s. This was an Anglican-Orthodox conversation which published worship material, papers and a journal through which Alison became familiar with the Orthodox tradition, its liturgical

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[86] English priest, Austin Farrer (1904-1968) preached a sermon on the priesthood with that title. Leslie Houlden, ed. *Austin Farrer: The Essential Sermons* (London: SPCK, 1991). The sermon is on p. 101-104; the phrase is first mentioned on p. 102. The author is grateful to Father Scott Moncrieff for this reference.

[87] The acceptance of internal pluralism has been a characteristic of Anglicanism since the Reformation. While seventeenth-century apologists sought distinction from both Roman Catholic and non-conformist churches, influences of both continue, as high and low Anglicanism, within the one institution.

[88] Anglican Society Conference, Longwood, 26-28 May 1972. 'The Role of Women in Society.' Students at Flinders and Adelaide Universities and tertiary colleges formed the Anglican Society.

[89] Three-minute talk on the women in the church at the International Women's Day March, c. 1977. Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 16. 'I included in my little speech the fact that women who wanted to be ordained were apt to be told … to be careful not to be after privilege and power by people who had a good deal of both.'

[90] Anglican Women of Australia re-formed in 1982 and held triennial conferences at which Alison was a regular participant. In 2006 the conservative ethos was very obvious: at the conference dinner the male clergy were welcomed by name, but the presence of a woman priest (the author) was not acknowledged.

calendar and praxis.[91] She brought her broad knowledge and acceptance of different traditions to ecumenical women's organizations, such as Australian Church Women where, in 1976, she 'sought prayer support as the matter of ordination of women to the ministry of the Anglican Church was being debated.'[92] From August 1978 Alison was a member of the South Australian Committee of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women [UNCSW]. She variously represented Australian Church Women and the Australian Federation of University Women on the committee, the scope of which was wide-ranging - political, educational, economic, legal and social.[93] It shared its concerns and interests with other women's groups but its business was overtly official. When the Australian federal and state governments set up offices for the Status of Women, the changing role of women was legitimised thus adding to the momentum for a similar change in the churches.

Alison was not only reactionary; her concern for justice for the poor and oppressed saw her being co-opted onto the social responsibility committees of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the MU, and the Anglican diocesan synod.[94] Alison's concern was for all women everywhere. This conviction was also behind organisations such as the Women's Services Working Party that espoused a 'main point – to be as available to as many women as possible!'[95] But for one woman it was too far-reaching an ideal.

The proliferation of women's organizations, the wealth of information from official documents and books written by and for women, and changes in the churches resulted in Alison being overstretched and unable to focus on

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[91] The Fellowship was founded in 1928. *Sobornost*: *the Journal of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius*. Alison's holdings: 5: 1977- 6: 1978; [incorporating Eastern Churches Review] 1:1 1979–7:2 1985.

[92] Noreen Schahinger, *A History of Australian Church Women (South Australian Unit): Formerly Women's United Church Association, Women's Interchurch Council: Commemorating the Diamond Jubilee 1936-1996*, (Adelaide: Australian Church Women. History Committee, 1996), p. 32.

[93] UN Commission on the Status of Women (SA) Committee. minutes, notes.

[94] Alison was a member of Adelaide diocesan synod 1978-1983; 2000- 2005. *Year Book of the Province of South Australia: including the Dioceses of Adelaide, Willochra, The Murray*; YWCA Purpose and Concern committee, minutes, December 1978 – 1985; YWCA Board to AG, 14 November 1985, re Alison's request to rename committee. Alison was on the Working Group. International Year of the Child, minutes, November 1978. Anglican representative, South Australian Council of Churches, Faith and Order Commission, minutes, 1983–1999. Alison was not renominated in 1999. David Hall, Anglican representative on SACC nominations committee to AG, 27 April 1999. She continued to attend SACC General Council meetings as a visitor to 2006. Geraldine Hawkes to AG, 13 November 2006.

[95] Women's Services Working Party Project Advisory Meeting, minutes, 30 January 1986.

fulfilment in any specific area. Her frustrations in regard to her marriage and family life, her academic career and life in the church were also awakened. Like a disturbed dragon, Alison raged in the face of new possibilities and past obstacles.

Back to the Oaks and Elms

The challenges associated with being in contact with women in the liberation movement were personal as well as intellectual. Women's self esteem was now to be considered and the right to remove oneself from situations in which one's self esteem was damaged and brutalised was advocated. Alison's awareness of her own plight was heightened. In 1976 she and the two younger children, Charles and Lavinia, moved from Clearview to Alexandra Avenue, Rose Park. Although Alison moved away physically from John, she did not separate emotionally or psychologically from the partnership. The events around this move are more fully explained in Chapter 5.

Alison returned to the place where she had experienced uncritical caring and support in her youth. She brought her wounds but continued her involvement in women's issues and her life in the church. A burst of energy in the late 1970s began twenty years of vain struggle to gain the theological qualifications required for ordination. A study programme at Masters level may have been more appropriate.[96] Alison was then fifty-seven years old, not too late in years to fulfil the demands of home and study. However the cycle of failure continued, exacerbated by her natural disorganisation and an inability to focus on achievable goals. Influenced by friends in the women's movement, Alison attended a personal growth course conducted by the Department of Further Education in December 1979.[97] She saw what she learned from the secular course as 'the action of God in [her] life', gaining faith and strength to receive insight into her belovedness in the sight of God and to face the real possibility of divorce.

[96] A Masters studies prospectus for the Australian College of Theology was among Alison's papers. Her original university work included much of the philosophical disciplines in which she was now engaging at undergraduate level. Her early life had been filled with theological discussion at the highest level.
[97] AG *Int*, 14 June 2006-2, p. 5. Poster collage, Department of Further Education, course, December 1979.

Loss, Grief and Vocation

1980 was a momentous year. Despite the impossible dreams of love requited and the practical reality of love unrequited, Alison acquiesced to the divorce John wanted [Chapter 5]. The protest for the ordination of women was made public with the group, Women and Holy Orders? [Chapter7]. Both situations coincided with the death of Alison's long-lived mother.[98] In 1984 the protest movement in Adelaide joined with the newly emerging national movement modelled on the English Movement for the Ordination of Women. The transition to being part of this body, the development of the South Australia branch and the eventual ordination of women to the diaconate and priesthood in Adelaide is described with particular reference to Alison's involvement, in Chapter 8.

The 1980s was a time when Alison exercised significant pastoral ministries. With her understanding and experience of the role of priest's wife. She offered support to the wives of men at St Barnabas' Theological College training for ministry. 'She invited us to Parsonettes. About half a dozen or more of us would go.'[99] Parsonettes, initiated to provide support for wives of country clergy coming to the city for synod in 1915, became one of Alison's most loved causes.[100] It survives today as a support group for those who treasure the vocation of clergy wife, those who have been brought up in rectories and those dismissed from them by divorce. The group's spirit generously enfolds those outside church and society's norms.[101]

As the mores of society and church changed, Alison was committed to those experiencing misunderstanding or rejection by the church. She began a group, 'Separated and Divorced Anglicans'.[102] She was a loyal member of

[98] 12 June 1980, just after her ninety-sixth birthday.
[99] Jeannie Minnis, interview, May 2008.
[100] Alison liked to connect the name to the Suffragettes; for her, as for some Suffragettes, the cause of women applied equally in politics and the church. This point is discussed in Peter Street, "Death on the path to suffrage," *Church Times*, 31 May 2013.
[101] Parsonettes will celebrate its centenary in 2015 and has a regular attendance of fifteen. For more details see Chapter 5. See also Appendix B: 9,10,11.
[102] See Chapter 5.

'Integrity', a support group for gay and lesbian Christians.[103] Alison attended 'very early on: her rationale was that she was there on behalf of her lesbian sisters from the women's movement who were alienated by the church's attitude to homosexuality.'[104] She remained with the group for all of its existence.

Alison took a keen interest in the ordination groups of other Christian denominations. She attended seminars, conferences and meetings for Lutheran and Greek Orthodox lobby groups. She assisted in the formation of both Roman Catholic groups, Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) and Ordination of Catholic Women (OCW) and followed their progress by attending conferences.[105] This attentiveness was not just political but personal. Friendship and pastoral care regualrly accompanied Alison's concern, even if her views and her criticism were not always welcome.

Alison's orthodox theology did not exclude her from participating in Womanspirit camps for women disheartened by formal religion and wanting 'to have a cosmic perspective that is affirming to women, … to open the door … to personal power.'[106] The camps provided another platform for her own radical ideas and a sense of belonging to compensate for her felt rejection by the church. Alison's experience in the women's movement gave her the language to mix in this company and the nerve to not be shocked by its ethos. Her poem, 'Womanspace', written in 1981, was published as 'Albatross Flight' in the first issue of *Rippling Web* in 1983.

> I am soaring
> in womanspace …
>
> See my straight glide,
> my veering curves
> till I plummet …

[103] Two members of the Diocesan Social Questions Committee formed the group in 1985. Father Donald Grey-Smith, interview, 26 February 2010.
[104] Ibid.
[105] WATAC commenced in 1984 as a national project of the Roman Catholic Religious women and men of Australia. It is ecumenical by membership. OCW was founded in Canberra in 1993 by MarieLouise Uhr and Zoe Hancock. AG *Int*, 6 November 2006. Alison claimed a special connection with OCW. 'I was next to Marie Louise Uhr on the day that she decided to start OCW.' Elisabeth Dunnicliffe and AG, conversation, 3 October 2010, p. 2.
[106] Thea Rainbow (formerly the Reverend Dorothy Wacker). *Rippling Web: a Womanspirit Link-up.* December 1983 No 1, p.6. These camps 'bounced off from the Christian Feminists.' AG *TC*, 28 July 2006.

but do not forget
I have flown,
been beautiful, free,
and will again
for longer.[107]

Few causes were closer to Alison's heart than the mother and child in need. Pastoral care and activism combined when she became involved with a secular organization, the Southern Areas Mothering Unit, which provided accommodation and other daily living care and education for young single mothers and their children.[108] Always keen to improve her self-understanding, Alison attended another personal development course in 1986.[109] However, the interpretations she drew from her decisions, relationships and actions at that time varied considerably from those she offered during interviews and even in her journal writings.[110] Alison's feelings were like wild animals that the warrior woman found impossible to tame. They, and her peripatetic lifestyle of church services, visiting and meetings, hampered any real progress towards gaining theological qualifications or stability of purpose. Meanwhile the church, by the last half of the 1980s, accepted women to be ordained as deacons, and on 5 December 1987 the first women was made deacon in Adelaide. The account of the church's move towards ordination is found in Chapters 7 and 8.

Alison exerted herself to live with justice and equality which she so strongly espoused. She could write, with prophetic wisdom and loving care, to Caroline Pearce congratulating her on being priested in the United States and offering loving advice for Caroline's planned return to South Australia.[111] It is unclear whether Caroline appreciated Alison's guidance, but Alison displayed a capacity to be concerned for someone who had achieved what she could not. Such effort took its toll as she struggled with her own failure.

The 1980s was the most frenetic decade of Alison's life. With John remarried and living in New Zealand, and her heart set of changing the church, she crammed her days with courses, projects, study, conferences and groups.

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[107] *Rippling Web: a Womanspirit Link-up,* December 1983 Number 1. p. 10. See Appendix C for the full text.
[108] See Chapter 6.
[109] AG, *PRH*.
[110] The disjunction will be examined in chapter 2.
[111] AG to Rev. Caroline Pearce, 18 October 1988.

Alison marched with women's liberation, initiated silent vigils held outside the cathedral after ordinations and wrote and spoke for women with vigour. In her sixties, Alison still had the energy and intellectual capacity to accomplish what she most desired, to be ordained. It was, however, that energy and intellectual capacity which worked to her disadvantage, allowing her to take on too many committees, be too vigilant at prayer and give attention to too many causes. The decade closed with the death of John's second wife, Barbara, in 1989, which revived Alison's hope that John might return to Adelaide. In 1989 Alison attended a selection conference at which people aspiring to be ordained were examined for their suitability. Alison was not recommended as an ordinand.

My Work is Done

Into the 1990s Alison was still hopeful of testing her vocation. She had learnt how to conduct an adversarial argument as the young protégée of Guy Makin and claimed she was never overawed by powerful men.[112] It was her *modus operandi*, but argument did not assist her when she went to another selection conference in 1992, and she was not accepted.[113]

In December 1992, eighty women were admitted to the priesthood in Australian dioceses, including five women in Adelaide on 5 December. In the aftermath of the struggle for priesting for women, MOW moved to become a single national body.[114] With many of the former leaders of MOW ordained and in active ministry, the way was open for Alison to be the South Australian contact for, and then vice-president of, the national executive.[115] She persisted in positing her opinions, which, after her failure to be ordained, now focussed on the role of the laity.

In 1993-4 Alison participated in an elective 'Death, Dying, Loss and Grief' for second- and third-year medical students at Flinders University Medical School.[116] She presented a segment on divorce.[117] If divorce was the loss which

[112] AG *TC*, 14 January 2007. 'I am not too scared to say what I think to powerful men. This comes from being taken as a spare daughter by my mother's boss.'
[113] Diocese of Adelaide, Selection Conference papers, 1992.
[114] MOW (National) Inc, newsletter, July 1998.
[115] MOW (National) Inc, newsletter, January 1999. Alison remained vice-president until her death, travelling to national network meetings, and to Sydney MOW AGM.
[116] Flinders University Department of Primary Health Care, School of Medicine to AG, 1994.

was then foremost for her, loss became more immediate in the sudden, unexpected and tragic death of a son. On 27 August 1994, at the MOW conference in Ballarat, Alison was notified of the death of her and John's eldest son, Timothy, who had suffered a heart attack aged forty-six.[118] The shock of this death seemed to have been held over: she talked little of it until her last years.[119]

The inevitable cost of a long life is the death of friends. Alison attended her friends' funerals as she had attended to them by letter, telephone or personal visits. Some funerals offered a chance for Alison to participate, as at the public commemoration held in memory of the Hon Dr John Bray in Bonython Hall at the University of Adelaide on 25 July 1995. Dame Roma Mitchell, the Governor of South Australia, delivered the eulogy, and the third speaker was Professor Brian Medlin, who had been Alison's referee at the 1992 selection conference. Alison, a member with John Bray of the Charles Jury Poetry Group, read two of Bray's poems. She was in the company of her (now illustrious) university friends and fittingly enjoyed the private reception afterwards in the University of Adelaide Club.

John Gent died in New Zealand on 31 July 1998. Alison had made a concerted effort to show love and care for John and Barbara Gent and entertained them at family gatherings when they visited Adelaide. Lavinia praised her mother for keeping the family together. Although Lavinia had lived at home into her thirties, Alison reacted angrily to her leaving. She unreasonably expected the pattern of family sacrifice that had sustained those living in Alexandra Avenue for nearly a century to continue. The anger, born of

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[117] Professor Anthony Radford, email, 5 October 2010. Radford initiated the course and invited Alison to contribute. He wrote: 'The Electives concerning "Death, Dying, Loss and Bereavement", were I believe the first of their kind in undergraduate medical students. They were optional but so popular a third of the class took them over their 2nd or 3rd year. We covered loss of work, a limb and divorce as examples. Alison's contribution was in connection with loss sustained in divorce. All appreciated her courage in sharing what her divorce had meant to her. The nature of changing relationships, the loss of identity which in her case included that by what she believed had been formed in a life long bond - in marriage - indeed she never regarded herself as divorced!'

[118] Heart Foundation to AG, 5 October 1994: 'conveying deepest sympathy and advising donations were being received as in memoriam gifts.' Tim's eulogy was delivered by his brother, Chris.

[119] AG *TC*, 4 August 2007. 'I have begun listening to music again, today to Schubert's 'Earl King' [a Leid 'Erikonig', a setting of Goethe's poem]. The Earl King was riding with his child and when he arrived the child was dead. It made me weep like mad for Tim.'

unrealistic expectations and unresolved grief, exhibited itself more often and more ferociously as she aged. In 1999 when I approached Alison suggesting that I write her biography, rather than being flattered, she saw my offer as an affront to her own capabilities. Her response, 'I will do my own', was neither gracious nor feasible, considering her inability, over the past thirty years, to produce any substantial written work.

What Alison did in her last decade was what had been primary in her life and that was to belong - to church communities, the women's movement and many other groups dedicated to women's causes. She attended church services and meetings, her habitual lateness aggravated by failing health, so that she often arrived after the event. Alison's commitment to continuity meant that she loved things to the end, however impractical. She tottered into the cathedral on Sunday evenings to attend alone the prayer vigil which had been set up in the early days of women's ordination activism. Such widely disparate groups as Christian Feminists, the women's movement's Tuesday Afternoon Group, and the Society of Mary, even if unviable because of low numbers, earned her support and attendance.[120] Alison did not give up her activism when she no longer had the facility to move and shake in the church; she merely diverted it to another cause. She revived her interest in peace activism by joining the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom [WILPF], and international activism by subscribing to *New Internationalist*.[121] Alison found an admiring audience in the younger women in WILPF. They were tolerant of her eccentricities and admired her refreshing awareness of world issues. Admirers and detractors have expressed their gratitude for her continued interest in their welfare.[122]

I approached Alison again in 2003 about writing her biography and again she refused. Her fierce independence also stood in the way of any gracious

[120] Christian Feminists was a radical ecumenical group begun in about 1985. It was the forum of heated discussion, particularly between Alison and her friend, Roberta Hakendorf, a Loreto nun who championed the cause of women in the Roman Catholic Church. The Tuesday Afternoon Group was an offshoot of older women in WLM. Both groups will be further explained in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

[121] *New Internationalist* is an 'award-winning global justice, human rights and sustainability magazine', www.newint.com.au. In 1984, while staying in Oxford with 'Goldy' Stafford, Alison shared her friend's peace activism by going with her to deliver firewood and sandwiches to the anti-nuclear protest at the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp.

[122] Irene Harris, interview, 9 September 2010. Heather Crosby, interview, 16 October 2011.

withdrawal from her interests and activities. She found it almost impossible to let go and deeply resented being 'kicked out of the choir' and 'tipped off the readers' roster' at her parish church. She responded angrily when informed that she was no longer an Anglican representative on the Faith and Order Commission of the South Australian Council of Churches.[123]

At home Alison made every effort to identify with the dispossessed by living frugally and in discomfort. As she felt her powers lessen, Alison took her reputation for shock tactics to new heights by 'living as those on the rubbish heaps of South America' and consuming out-of-date foodstuffs, including sour milk.[124] This outrageous behaviour had its roots in her attitude to suffering. Some of her health issues were resolved when she was diagnosed with coeliac disease, but her physical wellbeing was not a priority for her time or money. She lived with pain as she lived with rejection – they were to be endured, prayed through, carried as a cross. Her acceptance of suffering is a thread woven through her childhood, marriage and vocational struggles.

In late 2005 Alison finally agreed to the biographical project and I began to formulate my proposal and initiated some preliminary interviews. Alison was debilitated and had lost her appetite but guarded her independence by refusing to talk frankly to family or medical people about her symptoms. The research process was brought to halt when, *in extremis*, Alison underwent critical surgery for necrosis of the ileum on 9 December 2005.

Alison greeted her survival as a gift of new life. She changed her hairstyle for the first time in adulthood and bought two new brightly coloured skirts from the Adelaide Market encouraged by friends who met there for coffee. The day she returned home after rehabilitation Alison entertained the Christian Feminists in her drawing room.[125] For her new life Alison had plans - personal, such as a regime of better housekeeping, and public - such as instituting a holy day to honour the men she regarded as martyrs to the cause of women's ordination. She announced that she had a strange sensation that she had 'got over whatever it was that was a form of madness that assailed [her] when [she]

[123] SACC nominations committee to AG, 27April 1999; Archbishop George to AG, 26 May 2000.
[124] Author's experience, 2009.
[125] See Chapter 7.

fell in love with John.'[126] Alison spoke of her painful journey since 1938 in relation to her vocation and marriage.[127] In contemplating her new life she had also taken off her wedding ring.[128] A significant spiritual resolution was also announced, that she would try to reconcile with as many people as possible before she died.

After her near-death experience, Alison showed more enthusiasm for our biographical project and began reading biographies and responding to some of my questions. As part of the project I also accompanied her to as many events as I was able or she would allow. I accompanied her to Albury to the Anglican Women of Australia Conference in May 2006, and to her last MOWatch conference, 'Women in Purple', in Melbourne in August 2006. The theme and focus were how to move women to the episcopate. Several women priests, who held significant positions in the Australia-wide church, joined the discussion. The keynote speaker was an English woman priest and academic and a former theological adviser to the English bishops. Jane Shaw was everything that Alison would have aspired to be as a young woman. She resembled the young Alison in looks and equalled her in intellect, but two generations and a church and society changed beyond imagining separated them. The Reverend Canon Dr Jane Shaw, Dean of New College Oxford, had been able to fulfil her academic ambitions and answer her vocation. Alison was gracious to Jane, but as was often the case when successful women demonstrated their acumen, Alison's residual anger, born of frustration and unmet needs, burst its banks and swamped her companions.

At this time Alison diverted to something new and joined Business and Professional Women (BPW). She claimed that she had never thought she was a professional woman.[129] Her venture into the secular professional sphere involved a monthly dinner. It was, however, an illusion of professional life abetted by the adulation and awe she received in respect of her old age and

[126] AG *Int*, 21 July 2006, p. 16.
[127] AG *Int*, 4 July 2006, p. 1. 'I remember thinking you could be a nun but I decided that was not what I wanted.'
[128] Ibid, p. 2. 'To show I really believe Christ when he says that in heaven there is no marriage or giving in marriage and if John isn't bothered about it why should I be.'
[129] AG *Int*, 13 September 2006, p. 5.

provocative comments. Alison appreciated the meal and the stimulating company in a venue very near her home.

In Perth, in May 2008, the Reverend Kay Goldsworthy was consecrated bishop in the presence of supporters from all over Australia.[130] Alison was there, having conceded to a wheelchair, and accompanied by a MOWatch friend. Out of respect of her role in the struggle, her frailty and her friendship with Kay, she was afforded a seat with the family. At the reception, and never one to miss a dramatic moment, Alison left her wheelchair and hobbled onto the stage to talk to Bishop Victoria Matthews, from Canada, who was to be installed as Auckland's diocesan bishop in August that year. Alison ensured that her presence as the grand old lady of the cause was noticed, and that she featured in the photographs.[131] And never one to miss the opportunity to make a pronouncement, on the matter of the consecration of Australia's first woman bishop, she declared, 'My work is done.'[132]

Bon Voyage, Alison

The demise of her car and extreme physical frailty kept Alison from any of the dozen meetings, church services, coffee gatherings, and family and friend's occasions that had filled her normal week into her ninth decade. Continuity in 2008 became almost solely dependent on the telephone or another's visit, as Alison led a more restricted life, and relied on friends, especially Roberta Hackendorf, for transport. She spent more time in bed, surrounded by books, letters and the daily paper as always, and now with medication and food. Her last retreat at Melrose in the Southern Flinders Ranges was with the Community of Saint Barnabas and Saint Cecilia.[133] Alison needed a carer to assist her and she delighted in the irony of being tended by

[130] See Chapter 8.
[131] See Photograph 8:14.
[132] AG *TC*, 10 September 2008.
[133] The Community of Saint Barnabas and Saint Cecilia was established in the diocese of Willochra in 1997. See a detailed history in T. W. Campbell, *Religious Communities of the Anglican Communion: Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific*, (Braddon, ACT: The Author, 2007), p. 34-36.

her long-time friend and no-longer-Christian, Barbara Willow, a former member of the Tuesday Afternoon Group and Womanspirit Camps.[134]

Alison's sister, Betty, died 1 October 2008 after ten years in a nursing home where Alison had visited her weekly. The loss of her sister precipitated a time of deep and painful remembrance of other losses and pain. Schubert's 'Gretchen at the spinning wheel', a deep lament over lost love, prompted floods of tears for John. Similarly Alison wept for women and their children listening to Schubert's 'Hagar's lament.'[135] She became intensely aware of her own mortality, and with that came the shedding of some of the burdens of the past.

Her last year was a time of letting go but then hastily grasping at something new. She would ring me almost weekly with a new idea or to see if I was coming to visit: by this time I realised there were no new ideas and that Alison was fading and failing. Alison suffered a stroke in August 2009. When I visited her in late September in a residential facility she looked tired but was cheerful and delighted to eat her favourite treat that I had brought. With a stern 'I hope you will record this' look, Alison announced, 'I regret nothing.'[136] Two weeks later she made another pronouncement, 'I don't know whether to go home or to die.'[137] To visitors on 27 October Alison quoted a hymn that had been on her mind, evidence of the Christian hope in which she lived.[138]

> Lord it belongs not to my care
> Whether I die or live;
> To love and serve thee is my share,
> And this thy grace must give.[139]

When the ever-faithful Parsonettes arrived to have their 5 November meeting at the nursing home, they found Alison had been taken to the Royal Adelaide Hospital. Her last words as her family talked around her and she slipped into unconsciousness, were, 'Whatever you're saying, I'm opposed to it!'

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[134] Barbara Willow, interview, 20 September 2011. See Chapter 6.
[135] AG *TC*, 4 August 2007. Alison said she was familiar with music because she went to a lot of concerts with her godfather when she was young.
[136] Shades of Edith Piaf. These were her last words to the author.
[137] Pam Lindsay, interview, 21 October 2008.
[138] Heather Robson and Beth Potter, interview, 13 September 2010. Beth Potter reported, 'I wrote it down as she quoted it to me. I wrote it down because she said I've been thinking about this thing a lot and so she went write it and I said can you say it again and I'll write it down so that's what I did. They were her very words.'
[139] Richard Baxter, English Hymnal No 433.

She died in the Royal Adelaide Hospital on 13 November 2009. Her wish always was to be at home so to honour that wish, Alison's body spent the night before the funeral at No 49 Alexandra Avenue, Rose Park. She lay in state in the drawing room as family and friends toasted her with whisky and shortbread. Her son, Chris, stayed with her that night and accompanied the coffin to the cathedral the next morning.

Alison's funeral took place in St Peter's Cathedral, Adelaide, on 17 November 2009. The order of service was the Burial of the Dead and Holy Communion from the Book of Common Prayer [BCP]. The Bishop of Willochra, Garry Weatherill presided, preached and celebrated. Bishop Garry was a long-time family friend and had taken the funerals of her son, Timothy and her sister, Betty. The cathedral choir was in attendance. Alison's eldest living son, Christopher, delivered the eulogy. The large congregation which filled the pews was testimony to Alison's wide range of friends and her influence in the church. Members of the Movement for the Ordination of Women, who had shared administrative roles with Alison in the past, came from interstate and messages were received from past presidents of MOW. One of the pallbearers was Hamish, a young man Alison had cared for through drug addiction and numerous court appearances.

A service was held on Easter Monday 2010 to inter some of Alison's ashes at St Theodore's, Toorak Gardens, the family church just around the corner from Alexandra Avenue. Alison joined her mother, sisters, son and niece there.[140] The plaque has a line from a poem by Emily Bronte, 'No coward soul is mine.' The poem's significance was revealed to Lavinia in 'a note Alison had written on the inside cover of a wee book called *Great Prayers Of Famous Women*':

> This book was Mother's: it came to me when Betty gave me Mother's dark blue overcoat after she died (it was in the pocket). Most wonderfully, my fingers found it, in the pocket of the green raincoat I

[140] Family members whose ashes are interred at the Memorial Garden at St Theodore's are: Lavinia Constance Makin (née Jones, Hogben); her three daughters: Elizabeth Cole Hogben; Janice Maude Keene (née Hogben) as well as her husband Frank Edward Keene; Alison Grace Gent (née Hogben). In the next generation: John Timothy Moyns Gent, Alison's eldest child; Cheryl Jennifer Keene (née Jones), married to Frank Richard Keene, Janice's second child; Elizabeth Gent (née Cook), widow of Timothy. Documentation supplied by Richard Keene, Alison's nephew, 2 October 2013.

> bought in London, on 2.ix.80 just as I was bracing myself to watch John leaving Adelaide for Christchurch NZ. It opened at p. 10 (I had no memory of putting it there).[141]

Page 10 has an extract from Bronte's poem:

> No coward soul is mine,
> No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
> I see Heaven's glories shine,
> And Faith shines equal, arming me from Fear.
>
> O God within my breast,
> Almighty ever-present Deity!
> Life, that in me hast rest
> As I, undying Life, have power in thee!
>
> There is no room for Death,
> Nor atom that his might could render void
> Since thou art Being and Breath,
> And what thou art may never be destroyed.[142]

Lavinia read the poem at the interment.

On 9 October 2010, the Gent family gathered for a farewell dinner at No. 49. The house was empty of everything except the dining table and chairs left for the next owners and their memories. The family closed their chapter by toasting each room in the empty house; to the people who had died there, and those who had lived and loved and been nurtured in that 'mad house', so called

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[141] Documentation supplied by Lavinia Gent, 20 December 2012.
[142] The extract omitted these four verses after verse two:

Vain are the thousand creeds,
That move men's hearts, unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth, amid the boundless main

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by thy infinity,
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears.

Though earth and moon were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And thou were left alone,
Every Existence would exist in thee.

by Charles with affection and gratitude for the benefits of the learning, the generosity, and the manners he had inherited from its occupants and for the gift of his extraordinary mother.





1:1 Alfred Richard Hogben 1881-1921



1: 2 Alison's parents, Lavinia and Alfred



1:3 No 49 Alexandra Avenue. Alison's sister, Betty, replaced the front fence with this one in 1990



1:4 Alison welcomed by her sisters, Betty (seated) and Jan. This and the following two photographs were taken by their father



1:5 Alison's steady gaze



1:6 At her first painting lesson, under her father's watchful eye





1:7 The three sisters

1: 8 . . . with their mother





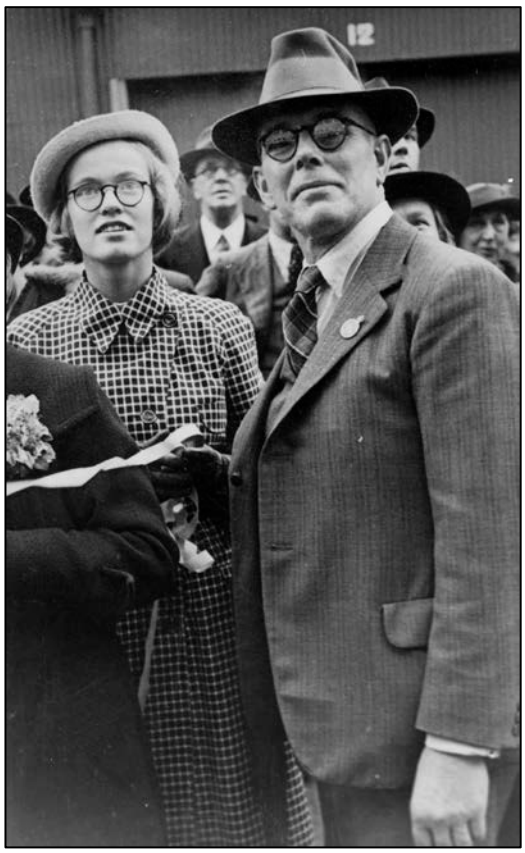
1:9 Nine year old Alison starting at Walford House School



1:10 Centre stage, captain of the B Hockey team 1937



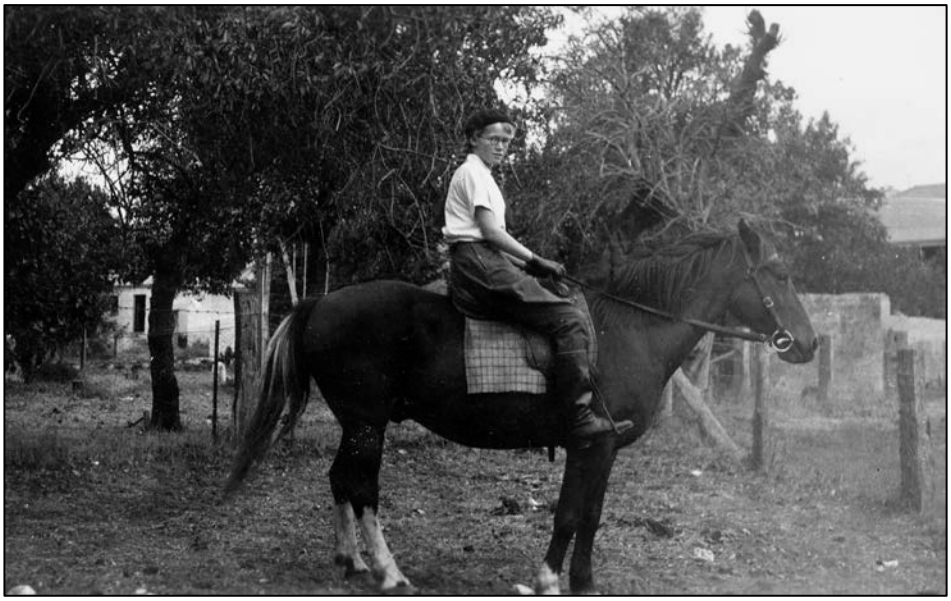
1: 11 Prefects, Walford House School, 1937.
Alison is standing 4th L



1:11 With Uncle Stanley at Outer Harbour seeing her mother and Guy off on an overseas trip



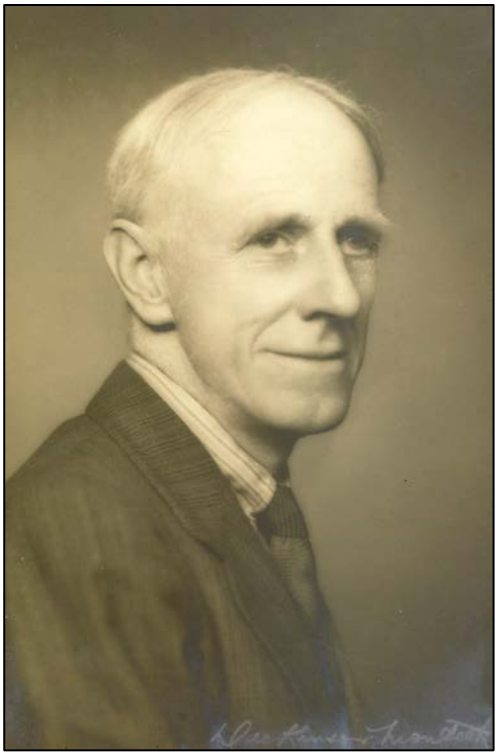
1:13 The height of fashion in Rundle Street



1:14 Enjoying the countryside and acquiring another accomplishment



1: 15 Lavinia Constance Jones Hogben Makin, 1884-1980



1:16 Guy St John Makin, 1879 – 1970



1:17 Alison – a studio portrait



1:18 Alison, bridesmaid to her sister Jan. On the staircase landing in Mount House. 23 December, 1939.



1:19 Alison on her wedding day
1 February 1947



1:20 With her bridesmaid,
Rosemary Blackburn



1: 21 With her first born, Timothy,
in front of St Barnabas'
College, King William Street



1: 22 Young Timothy with Aunt
Grace at Alexandra Avenue



1:23 Alison breastfeeding Christopher in the drawing room of No 49. The chair, upholstery and bookcase were unchanged in 2009



1: 24 At Mount House with three boys; from L. Peter, Timothy and Chris



1: 25 Playing with Timothy in the front garden of 7 Moorang Street, Kilburn



1: 26 Alison with baby Charles



1: 27 Alison and toddler Charles at the front gate of Mount House



1: 28 Alison with Baby Lavinia in the backyard of Mount House



1: 29 Alison, baby Lavinia and Lavinia (Win) Makin



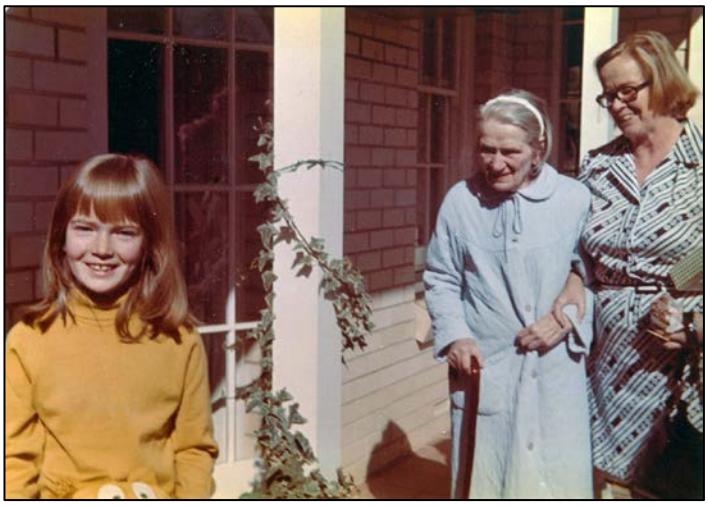
1: 30 Timothy off to high school: at the bus stop near 428 Grand Junction Road, Clearview, 1965



1: 31 Alison with ironing and pearls



1: 32 Lavinia aged 4, with her mother and grandmother



1: 33 Alison with her aged mother and young Lavinia



The Boys' Choir of St. Peter's Cathedral

1: 34 Charles is the choirboy 3rd from the right in the front row



1: 35 Alison showing the strain of her difficult marital situation



1: 36 In Jakarta for her son Peter's wedding to Sally



1: 37 With granddaughter, Grace,
Timothy and Elizabeth's elder daughter
December 1986



1: 38 Alison and Lavinia, with day old Harry and his mother Sue Gent
(wife of Charles Gent) in the background. 31 May 1998



1: 39 Alison, centre, and her sisters, Jan, left, and Betty, right, met for morning tea every fortnight for years. This is the only photograph taken of their meetings



1: 40 Alison blows out candles. Father Grant Bullen, rector at St Mary Magdalene's, helps celebrate her 80th birthday



1: 41 With son Chris at the 80th birthday



1: 42 Lavinia and Alison. Alison kept this photograph on her refrigerator



1: 43 Alison and Lavinia at an
Alice in Wonderland party



1: 44 Alison with her much loved Japanese maple in the front garden of No 49. c. 1995



1: 45 . . . again in 2006



1: 46 And again in 2007. The house where she was born was across the plantation



1: 47 Seated in comfort at a Christmas celebration at her daughter-in-law, Elizabeth's house with her basket, walking stick and a glass of wine



1: 48 Alison did not give up her habit of shocking behaviour



1: 49 Lavinia at the interment of ashes in the garden at St Theodore's, Toorak Gardens



2 INTERVIEWING METHODOLOGY[1]

'The trouble with you, Mrs Gent, is that you don't know your place.'

'The trouble with *you* is that you don't know *my* place.'[2]

We forgive their imperfections and inherit their glory.[3]

Introduction

Alison Gent twice rejected my suggestion that I write her biography. In late 2005, when eighty-five years old, she finally agreed. This reluctant acceptance and my knowledge of her resistant and contradictory behaviour led me to expect her to subvert the interview process. My agenda for this process was, in the first instance, to win her cooperation in sharing her history. Once this was achieved I then planned to address the practicalities of interviewing by introducing a tape recorder and gaining permission to accompany her to functions and meetings. It was only after a near death experience in the first two months of our conversations that Alison reluctantly accepted the use of the tape

[1] The chapter is a version of a paper 'Alison Wonderland' presented at the 'Art of the Real': Creative Non-fiction conference, University of Newcastle, May 2008.
[2] AG, telephone conversation, 21 November 2007. Alison reported this conversation between herself and a male priest.
[3] Lavinia Gent, 1998.

recorder. The requirements of the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee were then addressed and Alison read the proposal and signed the consent form. The outcome of Alison's period of post-operative recovery, as she believed that her survival was an opportunity for new life, was a burst of ideas and plans for the future. Her reflections on her marriage contradicted those offered in the first two months. This would be the pattern for the next four years of our time together.

When I began to formulate my proposal for a feminist and theological biography I expected the process of interviewing to reveal the real Alison Gent. Other subjects I had interviewed for other projects had been eager to share their story, and presented evidence of their family history and life achievements. It was possible in two or three interviews to gain a clear picture (albeit complex) on which to construct a biography. I knew from our acquaintance of many years that Alison had experienced the harsh and happy realities of human existence. I knew some facts: she had been married, divorced and widowed, and had borne five children. What I knew of her social and historical context was that she was an Adelaidian, a devout Anglican, and a committed feminist. I knew that she was a contentious figure, ready to state her opinion and to shock. Alison's stature as churchwoman and a feminist, which merit her a subject of biography, warranted an interviewing methodology which respected those factors. The complexities of her character, which had as their foundation suffering and humiliation, required an interviewing methodology as unthreatening as possible; and her age and proclivity to obstructive and controlling behaviour a methodology as coercive as possible. The situation seemed to prescribe a feminist interviewing technique that allowed the subject freedom to express herself, to set the agenda and determine the focus of the research.

These questions stayed with me for the duration of the interviews – Would the subject keep changing her views and opinions in reaction to what I wrote about her? Would she ever be open and straightforward, not cagey and withholding? Yes, she did keep changing her views, and no, she was never straightforward. The question – had the interviews given a complete picture of a life? – was answered in part when I gained access to most of her papers and

writings, personal journals and diaries, minutes and newsletters after her death in 2009. Documentary evidence of meetings attended, correspondence with friends and family and contemporary reflections on life events disclosed many aspects of Alison's life which she had not discussed in interviews. The interviews therefore did not give a complete picture of a life. What they did give can be termed a feminist narrative of which there are numerous models.

Mary Zeiss Stange's 'talk-story', for example, referred to women traditionally telling their stories in relation to others.[4] This is a model of the essentialist view of women, 'in a uniquely feminine essence, existing above and beyond cultural conditioning.'[5] Post-modern theorists challenged this notion: some noted the 'changing and unstable' meanings of the term 'woman', or argued that freedom from essentials was an advantage to women.[6] Others saw the need for non-universalising narratives, citing the specificity of Western, European feminism over against Third World feminism.[7] Conversely a feminist methodology asserts that what Alison said was real to her. The feminist interviewing methodology will examine whether a narrative biography can be constructed out of a series of oral interviews conducted with a feminist sensibility.

Feminist Narrative

At the first national conference of the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW) held in Sydney in August 1985, women were urged, in song, 'to tell their truth and bring their brothers home.'[8] That women in telling their stories were telling the truth was a dominant feminist discourse at the time.

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[4] Stange, "Treading the Narrative Way between Myth and Madness."
[5] Tuttle, ed. *Encyclopedia of Feminism*, p. 99.
[6] Riley, *'Am I that Name?'*.
[7] Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall, eds., *Women, Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, 2 ed, (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 3.
[8] The last lines of the refrain of the conference song, *Moments*, written by Helen Kearins RSM 1985.

> Remember who you are
> And sing your song.
> Let your 'No' re-echo
> Making every woman strong.
> Speak your truth
> And bring your brothers home.

> Women were the experts, the authorities, the sources of knowledge about themselves. This expertise stemmed … from 'the authority of experience.' A woman knew something to be true because she lived through it, and had her own feelings and reactions, rather than the feeling she was supposed to have, or that she herself expected to have.[9]

Within the oral history discipline this notion of the authenticity of women's (and working class people's or blacks') narrative of lived experience underwent positivist criticism expressed by 'grave concerns about the accuracy of the evidence' in some accounts.[10] Portelli argued against this:

> 'what makes oral history different' – orality, narrative form, subjectivity, the 'different credibility' of memory, and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee – should be considered as strengths rather than weaknesses, a resource rather than a problem.[11]

In contemporary Australia, Rosanne Kennedy explored the contested memory of Australian aborigines and suggested that:

> personal testimonies should be regarded as sophisticated interpretative narratives that incorporate sharp social and historical insights and not simply as evidence for interpretation (or rejection) by historical 'experts.'[12]

The application of oral history methods and feminist theories disclosed elusive and complex aspects of Alison's narrative. Would another method adequately explore and explain the Alison who was both revealed and hidden in the interviewing process?

Contemporary feminist theory can be informed by post-modernism. Post-modern reaction to 'the universalising tendencies of modernist theories of truth and human nature' leads in part to the rejection of the notion of an integrated self.[13] In this context there should be no expectation that Alison would present as whole person through the interviewing process and the researcher should anticipate complexity and diversity from the subject.

The song is mentioned as 'Too Many Years in Silence' (the first line) in Lindsay and Scarfe, eds, *Preachers, Prophets and Heretics*, p. 123.

[9] Hester Eisenstein, *Contemporary Feminist Thought*, (London: Unwin, 1984). p. 37. Note 8: see Diamond, Arlyn and Lee Edwards (eds.), *The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism* (Amherst: University of Mass Press, 1977).

[10] Perks and Thomson, eds, *The Oral History Reader*, p. 2.

[11] Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different."

[12] Kennedy, "Stolen Generations Testimony," p. 506.

[13] Caine, ed. *Australian Feminism*, p. 475.

Feminist philosopher, Sally Haslanger cited the claims of Chris Weedon, bell hooks, Judith Butler and Naomi Scheman, among others, that the 'subject', 'identity', 'knowledge', 'truth', 'nature' and 'reality' are each socially constructed.[14] Haslanger examined the distinctions between what is objectively real and what is socially constructed:

> We must distance ourselves from the objectivist tendencies to limit our vision of what's real, but we must be careful at the same time not to simply accept perspectivist limitations in their place. I would propose that the task before us is to construct alternative, modestly realist ontologies that enable us to come to more adequate and just visions of what is, what might be and what should be.[15]

These distinctions offer another language with which to describe the events and relationships in Alison's narrative, such as the objective reality of her divorce and the socially constructed narration of her marriage.

In the search for reality and truth in the interview process, the presentation of the subject's self may be the ultimate source. The objective reality is that the audiotapes of the interview are the documentary evidence of my subject's reflections and the accounts of events. According to some feminist theory, Alison could be said to be speaking her truth. However, as will be discussed later, the contradictions in Alison's narration and the ambivalence with which she responded to topics such as class and money justify questioning the reality of the narrative and the narrator's perception of self. The ontological reality, therefore, is that the real Alison had not been, and may never be, defined by the self she presented.

The Interview Process

The feminist interviewing process required the researcher to observe and listen; it was a creative act rather than a clinical procedure. The resulting story was not a report of facts, nor a narrative of a quest about attaining goals; it was to be a feminist narrative. Alison's contrary character required me to anticipate her indignant temper and to be careful not to antagonise her. As she

[14] Sally Haslanger, "Objective Reality, Male Reality, and Social Construction," in *Women, Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall, (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 84. Also note 1, p. 103.
[15] Ibid, p. 103.

increasingly lost her independence, Alison became more defensive so that my request to read her diaries was met with affront. Throughout the four years of interviews, and my loving attention, she was obstructive but demanding. The project was often in danger of descending into an artful battle between her contrariness and my seduction.

In the first months of 2006, I visited Alison two or three times a week with some sense of urgency as her health and capabilities were deteriorating. Alison was in command in her own home and interviews were conducted at her bedside after critical surgery and recovery, at the kitchen table in the intervening years, and then at the bedside (in another room, nearer the kitchen and bathroom) in her last year. I also noted our telephone conversations. Interviews happened: Alison would often take my visit as an opportunity for me to drive her to the supermarket, to a coffee shop or for lunch at a local eating-place. It was in the car or over lunch, when I was unable to take notes or record, that she would let me into her most private world with controversial opinions or talk about her marriage. She refused to reiterate. When I arrived at an appointed time for an interview Alison might be cooking her meal, in bed asleep, gardening, or not there at all.

I will describe one typical day. I ring and ask Alison if I could see her, thinking, hopefully, that we would both be prepared. In her kitchen I sit opposite her at the table which bristles with letters and newsletters from every imaginable women's organisation. I notice a receipt from the RSPCA with a note in Alison's handwriting, '20 years of subscriptions' (she is documenting her actions). I scan the newsletters looking for events to which I might accompany her but Alison obviously does not want me to enter her academic world as she makes it clear the events are for members only. I am, however, welcome to Women's Liberation events. I have been recently to a monthly 'Women in Black' demonstration. Alison and I stood on the steps of Parliament House with Alison's friend, Ruth Russell, one of the human shields of Baghdad.[16] I have

[16] 'The five Australian human shields still in Baghdad may be forced to remain in the city until the end of the war. Speaking from neighbouring Jordan, former human shield Donna Mulhearn says she received word two days ago that all of the Australians are alive and well. But she says they may have missed their chance to leave Baghdad. "The Iraqi officials had put a curfew on from 6:00pm to 6:00am but now of course the invaders are in control of the outside areas of Baghdad and the roads", she said. "So they're saying that no foreigners are able to leave, so I

accompanied Alison to her parish dinner and to her beloved Parsonettes. But today Alison is stewing quinces. She offers me a cup of tea. I place my battery-operated tape recorder on the table. I ask a question, but Alison replies in monosyllables, without interest and then launches energetically into *her* latest thought on – marriage, single women, the church. Alison then decides she is going to blanket-stitch a piece of material for a mat for my dog. The needle needs sharpening. The kettle boils, the dog barks, the needle rasps back and forth on the whet stone as Alison talks on – patches of profound analysis of Christian life, quotations from seventeenth century metaphysical poets, then about John and the divorce, his neglect of her and the children, all delivered almost indecipherably because Alison has a dental plate. This plate needed to be attached to her front upper jaw but it is not secure and it moves, audibly, as she talks. She hates the plate but will not have the surgery required for it to be permanently fixed. Much later that day, in the relative peace of my own home, I struggle to transcribe the tape. Along with rasp of needle on whetstone, the dog barking, the kettle whistling and the clatter of dentures there is a persistent, droning, all-pervading whirring sound that adds to the cacophony. That is caused by my own shortcomings, the battery in the tape recorder had been running down. My research is thinly disguised graffiti etched with exhaustion and frustration. Oh, to conduct an interview in a sound proof room with a set of questions, a compliant subject and thoroughly tested appliances.

As a feminist interviewing a feminist, I decided a framework within which a narrative biography might be constructed. Anderson and Jack suggest a technique with which to gain new insights about women's experience.[17] Three points of this process usefully describe the interviews I conducted with Alison. The first proposed that 'an oral interview, when structured by the narrator instead of the researcher, allows each woman to express her uniqueness in its

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think if there were any foreigners who wanted to leave, they would find it extremely difficult at this time." The five remaining Australian human shields are Adelaide woman Ruth Russell, Queenslander Osama Al Shaban, Patricia Moynihan from Melbourne, Rosemarie Gillespie from New South Wales and Western Australian Michelle Poule. A sixth Australian peace activist, 73-year-old Perth Reverend Neville Watson, also remains in Baghdad but is not part of the human shield group.' ABC news item, 9 April 2003; www.abc.net.net.au

[17] Anderson and Jack, "Learning to Listen.

full class, racial, and ethnic richness.'[18] Such interviews are 'particularly valuable for uncovering women's perspectives.'[19] Secondly, attention is drawn to the value of the oral interview in which 'each person is free to describe her idiosyncratic interaction between self-image and cultural norm.'[20] Thirdly:

> A woman's discussion of her life may combine two separate, often conflicting, perspectives: one framed in concepts and values that reflect men's dominant position in the culture, and one informed by the more immediate realities of a woman's personal experience.[21]

The Narrator-Structured Interview

In considering the first proposition, that the narrator rather than the researcher structure an oral interview, examples of interviews with Alison show what the structure might look like. When I brought my 'Letter of Introduction', which had been required and subsequently approved by the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee, to Alison, she did not receive it with enthusiasm but criticised the wording of the proposed title of the thesis. I was grateful that she conceded to sign it. When I introduced a very small tape recorder to our meetings, Alison objected strongly to its use. I explained that I had a bad memory and needed an aid, adding that what she was saying was important and should be kept for future feminists. She reluctantly agreed but made no concessions to its use such as stopping and waiting when I needed to change tapes. At her home we met most often in the kitchen where she offered me tea and biscuits, or cooked her meal. As I have related, there was much extraneous noise over which I, as the researcher, had no control. In respect to the content, Alison structured the interview by talking at random about people from the past and present, events past and present, and her opinions, which I eventually discovered were reworked and regurgitated. She rarely tolerated interruption when I tried to ascertain the spelling of names or places. Her response to most of my questions was disinterest. She would have thought of something else to talk about in the meantime.

[18] Ibid, p. 10.
[19] Ibid, p. 11.
[20] Ibid, p. 20.
[21] Ibid, p. 11.

The results of the interviews, when listened to or read in transcription form do, nevertheless, demonstrate the richness that can be consequent on a narrator-structured interview. When Alison, recovering from surgery in 2006, lay in bed, she talked, not about herself, but about her divorced and deceased husband, John. The narration flowed effortlessly: how much she loved him, his impressive family tree, his great mind, his academic prowess, his priesthood, his understanding of what true Christianity was. She was resting in the bedroom where she had slept as a small child, and from where she could look over the road to the house in which she was born. She talked about her childhood in the house she now occupied, where she had lived with her unmarried aunts and uncles, her widowed mother and her two older sisters. This, she said, was a 'wonderful' life. Alison at three thought the book's title and her name were the same, 'Alison Wonderland.' She talked about her godfather and how he doted on her. Her narration allowed no chance to determine details of the family or even family names and dates, but it enabled Alison 'to express her uniqueness in its full class, racial, and ethnic richness.'[22]

Mary Zeiss Stange examined Maxine Hong Kingston's account of her mother talking about her childhood, a narrative process Kingston called 'talking story.'[23] Stange concluded that when women 'talk story', they tell their story in relation to others. In the preliminary interviews and many of the subsequent ones Alison 'talked story' in relation to others; to her husband, her godfather, and significant others from her childhood, and her many friends, colleagues and acquaintances. The interviews structured by the narrator also revealed Alison's 'full racial and ethnic uniqueness.' Her racial uniqueness was exhibited in her Australianness, in contrast, for example, to the Englishness of her family. She spoke of John's and her acceptance of not going overseas for further education as a positive decision to stay to *be* Australian.[24] Alison viewed Adelaide and the Anglican Church as her ethnic origins. Her commitment to Adelaide, and indeed Australia, was an important part of her struggle for justice for women.

[22] Ibid, p. 10.
[23] Stange, "Treading the Narrative Way between Myth and Madness."
[24] AG *Int*, 28 November 2005-2. p. 2; 28-29 November 2005, p. 1.

Anderson and Jack suggest that the interview structured by the narrator is 'particularly valuable for uncovering women's perspective.'[25] I found that over the course of our interviews Alison's perspective on a number of issues changed. This change was not linear or progressive but random and reactionary. The following example illustrates Alison's change of view.

I had been asked to write an article for the final edition of the religious, feminist journal, *Women-Church*.[26] It was suggested that I write about WHO?, a group which Alison had formed. It was the first forum for discussion about the ordination of women in the Anglican Church in South Australia. I broached the topic with Alison over her kitchen table, conscious that my being asked to write it might provoke her resentment and jealousy. With the increasing infirmity of age she was no longer able to write eloquently, provocatively and persistently as she had done in the past. I knew this was a grief, albeit unspoken, for her. I asked her questions that might have initiated her reflections on 'the web of feelings, attitudes and values' that had given meaning to this event.[27] My questions, however, received a disinterested, monosyllabic response: Alison closed that conversation and opened another that she directed.

I wrote the article relying on my own memories, and those of another foundation member of WHO? Alison read a draft, I added her comments and the submitted article was published. Alison and I attended the Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) Conference in Sydney in August 2007 where *WomenChurch* was distributed. I had expected that Alison would be thrilled to see herself acknowledged in print, but she did not receive the article with any grace. She thought I had not represented the group or her well. She resolved that she would write it as it really was. Alison was mollified later when she learned that her daughter had loved the article, and had wept when she read her mother described 'a warrior woman.' But in the months afterward Alison constantly greeted me with, 'You got it all wrong, Lez. I am going to write to the national Anglican paper and explain what really happened. It is very important that I was inspired NOT by the American experience but by the inspiration I

[25] Anderson and Jack, "Learning to Listen," p. 11.
[26] Yvonne Lesley McLean, "WHO?," *WomenChurch: An Australian Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 40(2007).
[27] Anderson and Jack, "Learning to Listen," p. 11.

received when I visited the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock.'[28] Alison did not entertain any responsibility for her refusal to cooperate while I was preparing and writing the article. In this context, the narrator-structured interview does not necessarily produce satisfactory results in terms of historical fact nor even opinion on motivations in the subject's life. Alison's motivation for starting the group may indeed have been her visit to Knock. In the context of a feminist methodology, what Alison reported in reaction to the article is what she believed in 2007; whether it was the case in 1979 is more difficult to ascertain.

I continued to use Anderson and Jack's methodology, although as a research method it was time consuming and frustrating. My patience with Alison's domination of the agenda was sorely tested. The rewards have been insights into the richness of Alison's life events and the uniqueness of her character.

Idiosyncratic Interaction Between Self-image and Cultural Norms

Anderson and Jack 's second proposition points to the value of the oral interview in which 'each person is free to describe her idiosyncratic interaction between self-image and cultural norm.'[29] Alison was well known for her strong, and often controversial, opinions, which she offered at meetings and lectures, in casual conversations and group discussions with all manner of people. During the interview process, Alison was unrestrained in voicing her accounts of interactions with others. She was aware that she was different to the cultural norm, but interpreted that variously as the fault or inadequacy of the other person or group. As I learnt more about her everyday life and observed her in a variety of cultural settings, I noted that Alison worked out of differing and contradictory cultural norms. I noted also that her self-image in relation to these cultural norms likewise was differing and contradictory. It is not clear whether Alison understood that her interactions were differing and contradictory: she certainly did not admit to it in the interviewing situation. The complexities were multiplied by the increasing disabilities of old age and then impending death. Alison's conversations grew more self-reflective in her last

[28] AG, unrecorded conversations, 2007-9. For Alison's visit to Knock see Chapter 7.
[29] Anderson and Jack, "Learning to Listen," p. 20.

two years when she began to review her life. An example was her intention to reconcile with as many people as she could before she died.

There were dominant characteristics of Alison's life in which self-image and cultural norms were embedded; two inter-related examples were class and money. They formed a complex web of relationships with other cultural norms such as marriage, the church, and the women's movement. In observing and analysing Alison's idiosyncratic interaction between self-image and cultural norm, it is with class and money that she showed herself most ambivalent and contradictory.

Class and money was a platform on which Alison stood but it was an old-fashioned swinging platform, moving to and fro. The picture she drew of her childhood in our first conversations was one of frugality and careful living. Her widowed mother was 'taken in' by her brothers and sisters who generously opened their house to accommodate the family of mother and three girls. The tone of Alison's account, with phrases such as, 'taken in', gave the impression of financial destitution. Alison attributed her mother's family, the Jones's, generosity to their Baptist heritage and Christian charity. She stated with pride that at one stage there were ten in the house. As she described the domestic activities, cooking and sewing, growing fruit and vegetables, she did not mention that a housekeeper was part of the household.[30] Housekeepers (some working on a daily basis and at times living-in) were a constant in Alison's life, from her childhood, during her marriage and again on her return to Alexandra Avenue. Alison returned there later in life and looked after Aunt Grace and Uncle Stan, but with the assistance of a live-in person whose name I heard only from Alison's son, Chris. It seems that in older age it was Alison's desire to promote herself as poor and working class. These women, who were part of the household, became anonymous, rendered nameless and faceless as in an Edwardian home.

Alison displayed an idiosyncratic reaction when she objected to the well-to-do implications of her home being in a 'leafy suburb', a description I had used

[30] Chris Gent, interview, 6 August 2011; Peter Gent, interview, 19 November 2009; Lavinia Gent, interview, 17 December 2012. The Gent and Rose Park families always had daily household help.

in the *WomenChurch* article.[31] Alexandra Avenue is one of Adelaide's loveliest streets. Unlike the industrial northern and western suburbs, which in the late twentieth century became more fashionable because of their proximity to the city, Rose Park and neighbouring Dulwich and Toorak Gardens have always been suburbs of choice for professional people. When a particular street chanced to be mentioned in conversation, Alison noted that one of the judges of the Supreme Court lived there.[32] Here her reaction was in keeping with the cultural norm, as she identified him with his legal office rather than by his other worthwhile activities. Wide tree-lined streets, large gardens and rear-access lanes complemented the substantial villas, of which Alison's home was one. These were the circumstances in which Alison went against the cultural norm of either accepting or promoting status by rebuffing any suggestion that her origins were middle-class.

The Jones's household was cultivated; the books, music, artworks and furniture in the house signified their family's interests and thought. Alison and her sisters were educated at an Anglican private girls' school. She gained her undergraduate and post-graduate degrees at the University of Adelaide. This was not the normal educational path for a lower income family. Alison put much emphasis on the fact that both she and John had scholarships which enabled them to attend university. Undoubtedly scholarships allowed the less privileged opportunities for tertiary education. However the fees were only part of the expense involved in attending university and Alisonrequired the ongoing assistance and support of her family during this time. Few poorer families were able to provide the necessary support at a time when children left school early and worked to supplement the family income.[33]

The Makin home, albeit more lavish, had at its heart the same sorts of values of culture and style that Alison enjoyed at the home of her mother's family. Alison rarely acknowledged the richness the Jones and Hogben families' gifts of cultivation and prosperity which were her heritage. She did concede that

[31] McLean, "WHO?," p. 42. AG, unrecorded conversation, 2007.
[32] AG *Int*, 26 July 2006, p. 1.
[33] John had been sponsored through private school, for example. It is unclear what aid John Gent had through university, but it can be assumed his candidature for ordination attracted generous assistance.

her father had been 'an up-and-coming accountant' but excused his private school education by explaining he was supported by a benefactor.[34] She fondly described the 'lovely Liberty lawn frocks' which her mother, 'a very good dressmaker', made for her little girls but that 'living here [Alexandra Ave] when [she] was little was reasonably poverty stricken.' To my protest at the contradiction, Alison herself protested, 'Oh well, it wasn't so awfully expensive, just nice fine cotton.'[35] A telltale manifestation of Alison's cultivated upbringing that she could not, or did not want to, hide was her English accent, a legacy from aunts born in Victorian times. Later she adopted some of the phraseology of her women's liberation sisters to prove her modernity and association with women from other backgrounds.

Alison was especially reticent about the wealth and influence of her godfather, who became her stepfather. Her conversation about his North Adelaide mansion was prompted by my questions, but given the opportunity to 'talk story' she gave minimal details, and coyly admitted shopping with her mother for glorious new season hats at Miller Anderson's, an emporium which catered for Adelaide's best dressers. Her life with Adelaide's social elite, described by her son Chris in his eulogy, was only hinted at by Alison. Conversely, Alison kept newspaper clippings of the ancestral home of John's family, the Moyns, which she showed enthusiastically to demonstrate his highly connected background. She was eager to tell me that a John Gent was a priest in Elizabethan times. These disclosures illustrate Alison's idiosyncratic reaction to cultural norms.

Alison's position in cultivated society was signified by her academic life at the University of Adelaide both in the 1940s and as a tutor in 1960s and 1970s. She did not, however, identify herself to me as a scholar until I saw a letter addressed to her as MA. I did not know she was a Master of Arts and I had

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[34] AG *Int*, 13 February 2006, p. 7. Arthur Hogben attended Prince Alfred College, an exclusive Methodist private school for boys. A book prize, embossed with the school building and motto, has a book plate, 'AR Hogben, Fourth Form, first prize. Christmas 1895.'

[35] AG *Int,* 6 November 2006, p. 6-7. Most families developed a frugality during the Great Depression and WW11 that involved growing their own fruit and vegetables, raising poultry and making their own clothes. In this there were grades that denoted the measure of affluence, for example clothes made of fine Liberty cotton or from cut-down adult clothing, woollens knitted with purchased wool or with wool unpicked from worn-out garments. Alison has here tried to picture her childhood as similar to the more disadvantaged people who lived around her in Kilburn, folk who would never have heard of Liberty fabric.

known her for thirty-five years. When I commented she muttered that she had read for her MA when her second child was a baby and closed the subject. In her 'talk story' she often referred to friends and acquaintances in relation to their educational status; at other times she reacted to this same proclivity in others with contempt. Nevertheless, Alison readily praised John's academic achievements and his status as a teacher in the church. On the sixtieth anniversary of their wedding, Alison and I visited St Mary Magdalene's where she had married John Gent on 1 February 1947. An account of her dress and attendants, the number of bishops and the music, and the very lovely reception, was only offered in response to my promptings. These wedding trappings were, however, the cultural norms that befitted Makin's stepdaughter. Her interaction with the opulence of the past was to focus on the consequences of her marriage, saying that they left the reception to live in poverty; and that, she said, 'was the end of that.' Alison expressed earnest self-revealing about some circumstances and reluctance and secrecy about others. It seemed that Alison wanted to highlight the latter part of her life marked by poverty, disgrace and exclusion, rather than her origins of comparative affluence and privilege, acceptance and opportunity.

Alison was very proud of her participation in the Women's Liberation Movement [WLM] which began in 1970. She admitted to being filled with trepidation when she first joined women marching in the streets. She was aware of breaking the cultural taboos of her class by exhibiting herself and setting herself at odds with people critical of the feminist agenda. Middle- and upper-class women in Adelaide did not parade themselves in public. Once accustomed to the exposure, Alison defiantly 'protested', adding to her noticeable presence by carrying banners. Her alliance with radical feminism brought her into conflict with the cultural norms of the Anglican Church in Adelaide. Many were offended by her behaviour, for example, churchwomen accustomed to the dominant patriarchy perceived her attitudes as anti-male. Alison's protest on behalf of gay and lesbian people was seen as undermining the moral order.

Conversely, women's movement members were suspicious of Alison's bearing, speaking voice and education, and her religious fervour. Alison spent much effort trying to assure people in the women's movement that she was

from the working-class stock and was poor. She said that she 'couldn't bear to tell the women's movement that [she] had a wealthy middle-class godfather.'[36] She did describe her godfather to me, albeit reluctantly, in these terms. At the time she began her association with the movement, Alison was struggling to maintain her marriage and her poverty, in terms of money, self-esteem and credibility. When she aligned herself with people who rejected her social status and her religion but offered her much-needed support, Alison adopted their rhetoric which proclaimed the worth of all women. She had bought herself a new home at the cost of denying, or at least, transmuting her origins. Her efforts were rewarded when she was an honoured guest at a thirty-fifth birthday party for the WLM's Adelaide newsletter, *Liberation* on 8 July 2006.

Alison was not ambivalent in her desire to support and stand beside all women but this resolve was idiosyncratic. To achieve this interaction with different cultural norms, her self-image was in danger of being compromised. As a result of employing Anderson and Jack's feminist interviewing technique many contradictions were brought to light, some even occurring in the same conversation as Alison defended her pro-women philosophy.

Two Separate, Often Conflicting, Perspectives

The third of Anderson and Jack's propositions, that women present two separate, often conflicting, perspectives, was evidenced in the interviews. Alison, in an uncharacteristically careful explanation, made it clear that she and other women who married clergyman in the 1940s and 1950s identified with their husband's calling and their vocations were manifested in their husbands' priesthood. Alison and her peers were working out of 'concepts and values that reflected men's dominant position in the culture.'[37] Her discourse on marriage was invariably framed within this perspective. Marriage effected an ontological change for both parties, where 'the two shall become one', and was therefore indissoluble. This was the view of the church of Alison's youth. It was articulated most strongly in rules against divorce and remarriage and was the most dominant in all Alison's discussions and can be said to have been the most

[36] AG *TC*, 2007, p. 5.
[37] Anderson and Jack, "Learning to Listen," p. 11.

anti-feminist of her convictions. Yet despite this stance, and from her personal experience of rejection and marriage difficulties, she spoke out against aspects of human relationships that were unjust. She cited abortion as an example of what happens when the child is rejected and abandoned by the male. Similarly the injustice of the church not ordaining women was informed by her experience of rejection by John of what she perceived as her equal vocation.

Alison's attitude to membership of, and attendance at, the Charles Jury Poetry Group was in direct conflict to her views on inclusiveness. The terms under which the group had been set up by her English professor exhibited an academic exclusiveness, born of male domination of the academic world, which Alison would not have tolerated in another circle. Alison flatly refused my request to sit in on a meeting. As Charles Jury had decreed, membership was by invitation only. Alison had inherited the leadership of the group and saw it as her duty to preserve it as Jury had ordained. Only those of the highest calibre were to be admitted. Alison cited those who had not been invited and were known to be 'put out' by their exclusion. Anyone newly enlisted was very important academically. These explanations, haughtily delivered, concluded with a concession that I could wait until 10pm when the meeting ended and come in for drinks. I declined. I did tender the university's 'Letter of Introduction' for the group's consideration. The group proved to be less exclusive than Alison and I was welcomed as Alison's biographer to observe the next meeting.

Alison's Life Review

The period of interviewing took place in the last four years of Alison's life, during which she had a near-death illness. Her recovery was marked with announcements that showed she was reviewing her life. That they were startling was consistent with Alison's proclivity to shock; however the sentiments appeared genuine. The most symbolic of a life review was her announcement that she had 'finally got over John: what [her] sister Betty said was [her] madness.' Alison also took off her wedding ring as a sign of her new state of life. 'Getting over' John was much more than an acceptance of her sister's disapproval of her infatuation; she surely must have come to that in her

youth. Alison got over her total obsession without denying it was madness but with a sense of freedom. A new haircut symbolically freed her from her youthful image. So strong was this sense of freeing herself from the bonds of youth and middle-age that Alison announced she was beginning a new life. Some marks of this new life were the relinquishing of her car, and the acceptance of help with transport. Her avowal to clear up the house was perennial; she did give away a few personal items, but separation for her was not easy. Alison's commitment to love even those she found difficult brought her to resolve to reconcile with as many people as she could before she died. She was active in this, inviting people for lunch and making phone calls. Her family bore the brunt of the strain this resolve took on her, as she argued unreasonably with them.

These life review statements and subsequent action could be viewed with scepticism. It is possible that in announcing a resolve to reconcile Alison wanted to confirm her image as a worthy Christian to her biographer. Haslanger can be helpful here. She warns against scepticism and idealism, and advises that for a feminist reality the researcher needs to distance herself from objectivist tendencies. An objectivist interpretation could regard Alison's being 'over John' as unlikely in view of her attitudes and behaviour over sixty years. Alison did, however, work hard to establish and maintain a good and loving relationship with both John and his second wife. Her prayer life was always her reference point by which she sought to resolve life issues. Did this sense of freedom come through prayer? Haslanger urges the researcher to be careful of perspectivist limitations. Alison's assertion that she was beginning a new life appeared foolish from the perspective of her age and chronic health problems. Nevertheless, transformation and resurrection are the Christian beliefs from which Alison reviewed her life. She also believed that the new life begun in old age was not limited to an earthly life but continued after the grave.

Alison's assertions demonstrated Haslanger's idea of an independent reality of the world. This independent reality 'emphasises that there is no necessary connection between what's real and what human beings know or can (in practice) know.'[38] When I asked what had prompted her to reflect in such a way, Alison claimed, in the first instance, it was because so many people had

[38] Haslanger, "Objective Reality, Male Reality, and Social Construction," p. 101.

sent her cards when she was ill. As she came to terms with the serious nature of her hospitalisation, she revised her reason stating it was because she had come so close to death. Still later, after reflecting further on her near-death experience, she was persuaded that her own conversation about her life (with me?) had prompted her life review. Alison rarely acknowledged the interviewing process as having some influence on her present life. Haslanger seemed to suggest, by an independent reality of the world, an independence from the unreality of imposed structures. Was Alison implying she was not only free from John but also from Betty's condemnation? Was Alison presenting an alternative ontology that gives new life to the aged and infirm? Is a just vision of human relationships implicit in the notion that reconciliation with those with whom our relationships are damaged? If this is the case then Alison's reconstruction, in Haslanger's terms, created an adequate reality.

An adequate reality is framed by Haslanger in terms of what is, what might be and what should be. Alison's narration had presented her 'self.' She had been evasive and contradictory – that is what she was. The content of her story had conflicting themes – that is 'what is'. Alison contemplated her life and offered some review – that is 'what might be.' 'What should be' is a matter for further reflection.

Conclusion

A feminist interviewing technique which set no agenda, and had no formulaic pattern of questioning, allowed the peculiarities of Alison's character to manifest themselves as freely as they did in her everyday life. Alison displayed the inconsistencies and conflicting views and attitudes which Anderson and Jack indicate are possible with a feminist methodology. My biographical task might have simpler if I had limited my enquiries to dates and places and/or if Alison had been more consistent in her views and opinions rather than changing them according to her mood, or if she had been open and straightforward instead of cagey and withholding. The researcher's expectations and interpretations can affect the integrity of the subject's story. One researcher recounted her grandmother's story giving it a feminist interpretation. The grandmother felt her story had been misappropriated and

that she had lost her power over her story.[39] Alison reacted to my writing about WHO? in a similar manner.

How different was the Alison represented in her reminiscences from the person who began a discussion group on the ordination of women twenty-five years before? While listening to her 'talkstory', I was dealing with a woman who was aging and exhibiting its cognitive and organisational consequences. I have since been able to verify the names, dates and times of events and people Alison had mentioned in her narrative. I have interviewed members of her family and some friends and acquaintances. Some of the interviewees have contradicted Alison's version of particular events or people. The facts of her story may be disputed by others, strengthening, perhaps, the case that a different Alison existed previously to the one presenting her narrative. A feminist methodology argues that we do not tell our story for facts but for meaning. The meaning comes through in the way the narrator structures the story. The interviews have determined the structures and outcomes of this thesis. Some of her interests, such as the Mothering Unit, were only revealed to the author after her death. This period of success was hidden and overshadowed by the predominant topics of her conversation, her marriage, her life in the women's movement and the protest for the ordination of women.

After Alison's death, when I read her journals and minutes of meetings, and was able to note the books she read and the annotations she made in them, the meaning she had conveyed in the interviews was reinforced rather than contradicted. If there were any changes, exaggerations, or fabrications they can be thought of as a restructuring of what really happened to fit with the other elements of the story, her sense of identity and purpose for example. The real Alison is the Alison whose identity and past are encapsulated in her story; other people's accounts do not always concur.

In the following chapter I set out the rationale for analysing the material collected by the interviewing process and from Alison's personal writing, correspondence and papers. I have taken Ludwig Wittgenstein as the principal philosophical approach because his ideas on forms of life can be employed to

[39] Katherine Borland, "'That's Not What I Said': Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research," in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, ed. Sherna Gluck and Daphne Patai, (New York: Routledge, 1991).

unravel the complex threads of Alison's life and thought, so that certain areas of Alison's life, isolated as warp and weft, may be named as forms of life and their distinctive language-games and grammar noted. It is in Wittgenstein's general understanding of language that we come to know what something means by looking at how it is used. This understanding comes through linguistic content, not by how language measures up to some external criterion, such as a dictionary.

Narrative theologians, George Lindbeck and James McClendon, have provided helpful applications to Wittgenstein's ideas. Lindbeck applied his view of language to religions which can be seen as 'comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualised, which structure human experiences and understanding of self and the world.'[40] It is the liturgy and not doctrine or even foundational texts by which a devotee experiences the impact of the meaning, the message. Liturgy is essentially a communal activity and is usually further accompanied by a communal life outside the ritual. It is in these communal activities that the religion conveys its meaning. I have illustrated this point by describing Alison's formation in the Anglican Church in Chapter 4, giving particular emphasis on the effect of the language and actions of its liturgy. Wittgenstein contended that we come to know what someone means by looking at how their utterances are used, in the 'language games' and 'forms of life' of their lives. In separate chapters in this thesis we shall see how Alison, within her various cultural communities, was shaped by her participation and in turn conveyed her meaning to others.[41]

McClendon applied Wittgentein's notions by suggesting that biographical subjects who 'have contributed to the theology of the community of sharers of their faith' are legitimate vehicles for theology because others may be informed and enriched by their story.[42] This thesis will demonstrate that Alison did indeed 'enflesh' her beliefs and is a justifiably suitable subject on which to construct a biography as theology. Chapter 6 describes Alison's feminist activism which involved her public activities in a secular movement. Alison enfleshed her radical feminism while remaining a devout and practising

[40] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 32-3.
[41] Ibid. It is the 'communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of the individuals', p. 33.
[42] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p. 75.

Anglican. She was motivated by theological beliefs as well as feminist ideology. I have used Lindbeck's definition of ecumenism, as a 'strange combination of constancy and change, unity and diversity' to help explain Alison's inhabiting of two worlds, the church and the women's movement.[43]

Alison, as a subject for biography, presented a complex life with apparent inconsistencies. Complexities and inconsistencies are the stuff of ordinary life, they are the empirical, the experiential (broadly understood) to which Wittgenstein, with Lindbeck and McClendon, and feminists, give great value. It has been important to be both believing and sceptical of Alison's assertions and interpretations of events. In commenting on telling the truth, Wittgenstein's is not a traditional notion of truth. He does hold that truth can and does exist independently, but in the experience and life forms of people's lives as he explains:

> The criteria for the truth of the confession that I thought such-and-such are not the criteria for a true description of a process. And the importance of the true confession does not reside in its being a correct and certain report of a process. It resides rather in the special consequences which can be drawn from a confession whose truth is guaranteed by the special criteria of truthfulness.[44]

I would suggest that whatever the process, the special criterion for truthfulness for a feminist interview is that a woman tells her own truth. The process, however, has been shown to be flawed; Alison contradicted her own statements and wrote contradictory viewpoints at different times in her life. We could say, nevertheless, that the notion that women as experts of their own experience does qualify as a special criterion of truthfulness and in this respect Wittgenstein's ideas do resonate with a feminist interviewing methodology. It is important to note that he did not accept or promote individualism of any sort. Language, meaning, truth - all exist within linguistic communities, not within the subjective reality of an individual. As I will show, despite her individuality, Alison's life was very much one of relationships.

Alison knew herself always in relation to another, a particular attribute Carol Gilligan argued marked women's moral position: Alison, for example,

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[43] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 15.
[44] Wittgenstein, *PI*, p. 222.

sought only to test her vocation within the church's normal process.[45] Hers was a prophetic voice; she often spoke with strange, unintelligible feminist language in a patriarchal church. In so many instances in her life, her vision of community, and the language with which she conveyed this vision, was incomprehensible to others. Wittgenstein did consider this problem, commenting that 'we also say some people are transparent to us. Also … one human being can be a complete enigma to another.'[46] Although Alison suffered the prophet's conceptual isolation, she persisted in trying to build up community rather than de-construct it. The selection of the communities which are the subject of the chapters of this thesis was dependent on Alison's activities within each of those groups. Using Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach, I have demonstrated how Alison's spoken and written word impacted each community. I have also shown that while Alison's prophetic role proved very difficult and painful for her, she did not, for example, adopt the solitary life of a writer from where to criticise the church. Instead, she remained within the community and so demonstrated 'the relations between professions of belief and their lived context', a criterion for McClendon's biography as theology.[47]

[45] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). The point is developed in Chapter 7.
[46] Wittgenstein, *PI*, p. 223.
[47] Hauerwas, Murphy, and Nation, eds., *Theology Without Foundations*, p. 17.

3 METHODOLOGIES

> Judge not the preacher; for he is thy Judge:
> If thou mislike him, thou conceiv'st him not.
> God calleth preaching folly. Do not grudge
> To pick out treasures from an earthen pot.[1]

Introducing Methodologies

The basic premise of this biographical study is that the story Alison related in interviews and through her writings was her reality. The narrative has been assembled using oral history with a feminist interviewing technique as discussed in Chapter 2. Similarly, Alison's thoughts, feelings and accounts of incidents revealed in notebooks, diaries, scraps of paper, letters, glosses on books, journals and meeting minutes, and banners are her reality. These are the components of a narrative which recounts her ideas, passions and beliefs which she gave flesh to, which she embodied. In this sense, not only will a biography document the influences and activities which gave rise to these beliefs, thoughts and feelings but will consider Alison as narrative enfleshed. Other sources and opinions will be referred to if relevant or for clarification, but for the purpose of this study, it is Alison herself as narrative who is pivotal.

The biographical study will need to consider several factors: Alison's intellectual capacity, her wide fields of interests, the dominance of thoughts and feelings in her actions and reactions, her intense spiritual experiences, her

[1] George Herbert, *The Church Porch,* stanza 72. 'Love the people you don't naturally feel inclined to. That's what George Herbert teaches.' AG *Int,* 6 May 2007, p. 4. Alison then quoted the poem above.

Christian beliefs and her feminism. Analysis of the narrative will address both the cognitive and the non-cognitive. The cultural and societal influences described and implied in Alison's narrative were diverse and extreme, changing and continuing. This life was lived with such intensity and commitment that particularity of place, continuity, diversity and change had meaning beyond the contextual. Alison was totally enmeshed in both the sacred and secular.

Narrative Theology Considered as a Vehicle for Biography

The narrative theology movement began in the first half of the twentieth century with what Stanley Hauerwaus and Gregory Jones in *Why narrative? Readings in narrative theology* termed the 'rediscovery of narrative.'[2]

> The category of narrative has been used, among other purposes, to explain human action, to articulate the structures of human consciousness, to depict the identity of agents (whether human or divine), to explain strategies of reading (whether specifically for biblical texts or as a more general hermeneutic), to justify a view of the importance of 'story-telling' (often in religious studies through the language of 'fables' and 'myths'), to account for the historical development of traditions, to provide an alternative to foundationalist and/or other epistemologies, and to develop a means for imposing order on what is otherwise chaos.[3]

The documents they cited for the genesis of narrative theology included the communal narrative, such as H. Richard Niebuhr's focus on the telling of 'the story of our life', in which he argued for communities of faith looking for the narrative value of the Scriptures.[4] The personal view, according to Stephen Crites, in 'The narrative quality of experience', which he contended from the phenomenological tradition, is that human existence and human experience are fundamentally narrative.[5] In Alasdair MacIntyre's discussion, the narrative view of self is contrasted with Sartre's position: 'The story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity.'[6]

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[2] Stanley Hauerwas and L Gregory Jones, eds., *Why Narrative?: Readings in Narrative Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1997).
[3] Ibid, p. 2.
[4] Richard H. Niebuhr, "The Story of Our Life," in *Why narrative?: Readings in Narrative Theology*, ed. S. Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1941).
[5] Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience."
[6] MacIntyre, "The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of Tradition," p. 106.

MacIntyre comment on the need for conflict in tradition is pertinent to the present project. He claimed that 'when a tradition is in good order it is always partially constituted by an argument about the goods the pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose'.[7] His assertion that 'traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict' will be demonstrated.[8]

Narrative theologian James McClendon further developed the idea that personal history or biography is a legitimate vehicle for theology in his seminal work *Biography as Theology.*[9] Nancey Murphy commented that McClendon has:

> explored the relations between professions of belief and their lived context – picking up the Wittgensteinian point that we do not really know what language (here, doctrines) means unless we can see how it is enfleshed in human life. Furthermore, doctrinal claims fail the test if they cannot be lived out. To put it in philosophical terms, both meaning and justification require exemplification in life. … But how does one describe a life (and the doctrines it exemplifies) apart from narrative? … Here we see in germinal form the rationale for 'narrative theology.'[10]

McClendon stated that the Christian community is informed and enriched by biographical subjects who 'have contributed to the theology of the community of sharers of their faith especially by showing how certain great archetypal images of that faith do apply to their own lives and by extension to our own.'[11] McClendon's premise of biography as theology provides one methodology with which to examine Alison Gent's life.

This thesis will demonstrate that Alison did indeed 'enflesh' her beliefs, but it will not be enough to simply describe the pattern of her devotional life within the Anglican catholic tradition or to document some of the causes, such as gay rights, which she vigorously supported. Her relationships and associations were multiple, complex and antithetical. Alison maintained her attendance within a male-dominated Anglo-Catholic congregation while at the same time participating in radical feminist discussion groups and liturgies, both Christian and non-Christian. Such widely divergent philosophies and behaviours might be seen as chaotic. A methodological process that facilitates the

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[7] Ibid, p. 107.
[8] Ibid.
[9] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*.
[10] Hauerwas, Murphy, and Nation, eds, *Theology Without Foundations*, p. 17-18.
[11] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p. 75.

examination of the complexities, makes a smooth path through the chaos, and leads to an enlightening analysis, is needed. In his *Philosophical Investigations,* philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein noted the interweaving of language and actions in human behaviour.[12] 'I shall call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the "language-games".'[13] He added to this the interconnection of human actions by noting the similarities of games: 'we see a complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.'[14] He also noted resemblances between family members which 'overlap and criss-cross in the same way.'[15]

Wittgenstein did not discuss language without connecting it to what he called a 'form of life', as in two examples. Firstly, 'to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life.'[16] And secondly, 'the term "language–*game*" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of a language is part of an activity, or a form of life.'[17] These are two of the five references Wittgenstein made to forms of life in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Keightley argued that 'Wittgenstein did not use form of life as a simple quasi-sociological term.'[18] Wittgenstein rather made reference to 'natural history'[19] and 'the common behaviour of mankind.'[20]

The truth of Wittgenstein's views about language in general and their general applicability are not argued here; it is rather his illuminating examples that form a basis of a methodology for Alison's life. In the following quotation he provided a metaphor for human interaction:

> How could one describe the human way of behaving? Surely only by sketching the actions of a variety of human beings as they interweave. What determines our judgement, our concepts and reactions, is not what *one* man is doing *now,* an individual action, but the whole hurly-

[12] Wittgenstein, *PI.*
[13] Ibid, 7.
[14] Ibid, 66.
[15] Ibid, 67.
[16] Ibid, 19.
[17] Ibid, 23.
[18] Alan Keightley, *Wittgenstein, Grammar and God*, (London: Epworth, 1976), p. 35-6.
[19] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 25.
[20] Ibid, 206.

> burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action.[21]

Metaphors such as life as a 'weave', referred to in the quotation above and the 'continuous overlapping of fibres' of language provide a practical strategy for telling Alison's complex and divergent story.[22] For the purpose of this biographical study it is proposed that certain areas of Alison's life will be isolated, as warp and weft, named as forms of life and their distinctive language-games considered. The Anglican Church, Marriage, the Women's Liberation Movement and the Ordination of Women will be examined in respect of Alison's activities and language within them.

Language was an all-encompassing and life-giving component in Alison's life. Her education was centred on the use of language and was pivotal to her professional life as a teacher and university tutor. Poetry, in particular, and many other forms of literature, Christian and non-Christian, had a profound influence on her emotional and spiritual development and her social activism. Wittgenstein's thoughts on language can assist in analysing yet another complex aspect of Alison's life. Wittgenstein commented that 'grammar tells what kind of object anything is'[23], and '*essence* is expressed by grammar.'[24] Alison wrote a heading for a leaflet to be used in a demonstration: 'Woman: the Church's half buried talent.'[25] Here Alison's use of language to fight for women's rights stated exactly what the object, woman, is. Wittgenstein further commented that 'grammar … only describes and in no way explains the use of signs.'[26] Stiver explained that in a Wittgensteinian sense 'words do not carry their meaning in a transparent way … their meaning is supported by an entire background of actions and practices.'[27] Alison's banner, 'Women – not only men – can image God with God's attributes', carried a multiplicity of theological propositions.[28] Its message illustrated Stiver's previous comment which 'suggests to some

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[21] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 567.
[22] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 67.
[23] Ibid, 373.
[24] Ibid, 371. Wittgenstein's italics.
[25] Leaflet, 1984. Appendix E:8.
[26] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 496.
[27] Dan R. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol, and Story*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 61.
[28] Appendix D:4.

extent that we must participate in or at least have some sympathy for a particular form of life in order to understand the meaning of language particular to it.'[29]

Wittgenstein used the idea of acting as the underpinning of language games. When a way of acting and living is rooted in one's entire history of learning and in a culture's history then the 'justification of our beliefs [may be concluded] to be imbedded in the entire framework.'[30] This is demonstrated by Alison's use of language which often had theological and scriptural allusions.

Wittgenstein countered the modern view that the meaning of words lies in the inner thought or idea, and therefore, in order to understand the meaning it is essential to have an inner experience or thought: rather he claimed that 'an "inner process" stands in need of outward criteria.'[31] The interrelationship of forms of life and language games is inclusive and interdependent, rather than exclusive (interpreting a life without the context of daily living or giving meaning to words outside of their context) or dependent (a scriptural hermeneutic which draws its understanding from doctrine or dogma). In such cases, of exclusivity and dependency, Wittgenstein said that 'language goes on holidays.'[32] In reference to religious life, Stiver commented that 'we learn the meanings of words through their use in forms of life, which is a more external affair.'[33] Narrative theologian, Lindbeck, concurred, commenting in his discussion on religious experience: 'instead of deriving external features of a religion from the inner experience, it is the inner experiences which are viewed as derivative.'[34]

Wittgenstein's approach has a particular resonance with Anglican worship and therefore to Alison's life. In Anglican liturgy the interplay of language and action reflects Wittgenstein's view that language games can refer to particular activities within a culture.[35] He commented: 'to understand a

[29] Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, p. 61.
[30] Ibid, p. 62.
[31] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 580. See also Part 2 section iv, p. 181, p. 196.
[32] Ibid, 38.
[33] Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, p. 66.
[34] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 34.
[35] Wittgenstein, *PI*, cf 198 ff. and his discussion on playing chess.

language means to be a master of a technique.'[36] The Book of Common Prayer [BCP] 'rubrics' direct that actions are to accompany the words of the church service: 'a general Confession to be said of the whole Congregation after the Minister, all kneeling.'[37] 'Then shall [the priest] read the Gospel (the people all standing up).'[38] The Preface states that these words and actions are to be carried out 'decently and in order.'[39] Within the Anglican church service there is a definite Wittgensteinian atmosphere of 'language being a matter of following rules.'[40] Alison came to Anglican worship as a young child. She learnt the rules of worship, mastered the technique and absorbed a language that would lead her into a life of spiritual ecstasy and prophetic activism. In her journals Alison recounted vivid spiritual union with Jesus. Her Christian feminist activism stirred the church to confront the issue of women's ordination.

Anglican worship is not concentrated on the cognitive assent to dogma or scripture but the intention is prayerful worship which is believed to lead the devotee to faith. Anglican worship is communal both in the delivery of words, the sense they convey and the demeanour of the congregation, all of which resonate with Wittgenstein's idea that language is public.[41] Generally speaking, there is no place for private outbursts or comments in an Anglican service and there is a common understanding that as Anglicans 'we have no access to each other's inner states.'[42]

Wittgenstein's comment that 'religion has to do with living one's life by a picture' connects with Alison's life.[43] An example Wittgenstein used was that of a person who connects illness with punishment.[44] Wittgenstein reflected that he himself thought differently, that this is not the picture he has of punishment. He argued that such a response comes from a dissimilar language game and form of life. Alison's response to those who said her marriage to a drunken husband was

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[36] Ibid, 199.
[37] *The Book of Common Prayer 1662*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), The Order for Morning Prayer. 'Rubrics' is the term for instructions printed in the text.
[38] Ibid, The Order for the Administration of … Holy Communion.
[39] Ibid, The Preface.
[40] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 198f.
[41] Ibid, 243. In 246 he asks, 'In what sense are my sensations *private*?'
[42] Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, p. 66.
[43] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief: Compiled from Notes Taken by Yorick Smythies, Rush Rhees and James Taylor. Edited by Cyril Barrett*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), p. 55.
[44] Ibid. See also Wittgenstein, *PI*, p. 194, for his example of the duck-rabbit picture.

no marriage and urged her to finish it would have been, in Wittgensteinian terms, 'I have a contrastive view of marriage', 'I don't have thoughts of divorce.' Similarly, Alison's response to the inequality of women in the church would be, 'I have a differing ideas of the church', 'I don't think solely in terms of gender.' In each case she was working from a divergent framework to her protagonists.

Wittgenstein's non-cognitive framework was developed by George Lindbeck in his narrative theology, *The nature of doctrine: religion and theology in a post-liberal age*.[45] Lindbeck offered a way of understanding doctrine in relation to narrative and religious experience that connects with the distinctive and esoteric nature of Alison Gent's Christian and feminist formation and praxis. While Lindbeck's whole proposal is not necessarily applicable to this study, his cultural-linguistic approach adds another perspective to religious doctrine and life. It will, therefore, provide fresh understanding and insight into Alison's life and the benefits of telling her story.

Alison's life was lived out within the form and language of the Anglican Church. Lindbeck included the influence of anthropological, sociological and philosophical studies to the theological concerns of his cultural-linguistic framework. 'Religions are seen as comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualised, which structure human experiences and understanding of self and the world.'[46] Lindbeck's premise will assist in analysing, for example, the influence of feminist and Anglican Catholic Marian narratives on Alison's prophetic ministry.

The context of Alison's narrative, rooted as it was in one house in Adelaide and set within the historical and cultural background of that city, demands a narrative approach to time, place, and culture. Lindbeck contended that human experience is 'shaped, moulded, and in a sense constituted by cultural and linguistic forms.'[47] His model emphasised the forms of life which correlate with language and culture. A person's life might consist of many forms. Alison, for example, was a daughter and sister, a wife and mother, a Christian and feminist. In each of these forms there were specific forms of which an example is given here: the youngest daughter, the sister at odds in personality

[45] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*.
[46] Ibid, p. 32-3.
[47] Ibid, p. 34.

and expectations with her siblings, the wife of an Anglican priest, the mother of five children, the form of her Christianity was the Anglican Church and her feminism began with the nascent women's movement of the 1970s. Each of these broad subjects or forms of Alison's life can be understood to meet Lindbeck's criteria of reality and value systems, 'that is, idioms for the constructing of reality and the living of life.'[48]

While Lindbeck developed his approach from a religious model, it can also be applied to secular cultural phenomena. He argued that, rather than set belief systems, it is predominantly the 'communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of the individuals.'[49] Several communities formed and influenced Alison's life; some have a particular focus on place such as her home in Rose Park, the city of Adelaide and its university, and Anglican churches. Other communities centred around Alison's relationships, primarily her marriage. Her family of origin, school and university friends, and interest groups, such as the Charles Jury Poetry Group, were just a small part of Alison's communal life. These forms of life were connected with others, or had subsidiary forms.

A guiding theme for Lindbeck was the need to make a distinction between theology and doctrine and he pointed out that such a distinction can be applied to both theological and non-theological religions.[50] The language of the women's movement developed alongside 'demonstrating' – the practice of public protest against rules associated with dominant and patriarchal institutions. The demonstration's language was acted out in the form of marches, carrying banners and chanting slogans, all of which then paradoxically formed rules of their own. The group, for example, would not accept a marcher carrying a banner that justified rape and therefore contravened the aims of women. The silent vigil of the Women in Black demonstrates Wittgenstein's view that language is also effected without words. The blackness of the women's clothes signified the blackness of war and with silence, these acts were potent carriers of the vigil's message: the meaning of doom and sadness was clear.

[48] Ibid, p. 18.
[49] Ibid, p. 33.
[50] Ibid, p. 25. 'This scholarly ascendancy of cultural and linguistic approaches…characterises the human sciences in general when dealing with nonreligious no less that religious phenomena.'

Alison adopted the language of the women's movement and it shaped her subjectivities.

In order to deal with the complexities of the interconnection between these communities and groups, major facets of Alison's life have been selected for analysis and interpretation. The Anglican Church, as the most dominant community, will be examined in respect of Alison's spiritual life from her youth and including her spiritual experiences recorded in her journals. Marriage and divorce in the Anglican Church will also be examined, as will Alison's involvement in the women's movement. The ordination of women in the Anglican Church is the fourth of the communal phenomena to be examined.

Alison as a Subject for Biography as Theology

As a preliminary exercise, the parameters McClendon set for deciding what person is suitable as a subject of biography as theology will be used as a methodology to justify Alison Gent's selection.

When the then Bishop of Willochra, the Right Reverend Garry Weatherill, preached at Alison's funeral in November 2009, he cited the American nature poet, Mary Oliver, who asked herself the question: 'What is it you plan to do with your one, wild, precious life?' The essence distilled from the ideal of following one's passion Weatherill linked to Alison's drive 'to live and to live and to live.'[51] To live life to the fullest is normally validated by honours bestowed, success in the work place, the market place or family life, in academia, politics or sport. It was, rather, that Alison's one, wild, precious life was a life lived in the sight of God, and in the faith of Jesus Christ with the strength of the Holy Spirit.

McClendon, in the preface to the new edition of *Biography as Theology*, suggested biography as a 'mode of communal self-scrutiny.'[52] He defined the act of self-scrutiny as 'the exercise in which the community holds a mirror to those it finds its finest in order to discover what God has been doing in its midst.' This

[51] Appendix G: 3.
[52] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p. x.

process of communal self-scrutiny 'undertaken under the eyes and in the light of God' may, he suggested, be 'biography as theology.'[53]

As a churchwoman and an Adelaidean, it can be claimed that Alison was one of the finest. Her personal qualities of outstanding intellectual capacity and rigour, her theological perceptions and devout living are testimony to her significance in church and society. The views she expressed were consonant with a deep spiritual understanding and a Christianity that was inclusive and loving. Alison spared nothing to emulate the demands of a righteous life. Father Donald Grey-Smith reported that he first saw Alison in 1959 at the Canterbury Bookshop, then a meeting place for Anglican church people. 'She was obviously the star customer; she had lots of charisma and enthralled everyone.'[54] Grey-Smith's impression was that Alison was an important person in the Adelaide church. He observed that any woman who is now able to receive ordination in the Anglican Church in Adelaide is 'the beneficiary of her tenacity and single-mindedness.'[55] Alison's social and academic position meant that she mixed with Adelaide's intellectual and clerical elite. It is a sign of her substance that she could claim a broad range of friendships. Among those who respected and admired her were atheists, philosopher Brian Medlin and poet John Bray QC, Roman Catholic progressives, Joan van der Sman and Kevin Magarey, and politician and one time Premier of South Australia, Don Dunstan and most of the Anglican bishops and archbishops of Adelaide.[56]

Conversely, there are many Christian heroes who would not have been selected by their community as models of the community's self-perception.[57] The community tends to choose the 'finest' made in their own image. Those sent by God typically challenge the status quo; they are often prophetic figures who are mistrusted and resented. Their difficult personalities threaten the insecure and their presence arouses so much contention they are often left for dead in

[53] Ibid.
[54] Father Donald Grey-Smith, interview, 12 November 2010.
[55] Ibid. Grey-Smith, a priest and activist for social justice, referred here to the Anglican Church in Adelaide where he participated in the struggle for the ordination of women.
[56] Personal letters between Alison and Bishops Robin and Reed and Archbishop Rayner. Alison reported that her daughter played with Rayner's daughter at Bishopscourt, North Adelaide.
[57] The selection of the youngest or weakest is part of the Judaic inheritance of Christianity, of which David is the foremost example.

the community's corporate memory. Such models are not be likely to be 'held up as a mirror' by the community. Edith Wyschogrod commented:

> Saints' lives should not be imagined as emanating from a specific religious community but as found across a broad spectrum of belief systems and institutional practices. A saintly life is defined as one in which compassion for the Other, irrespective of the cost to the saint, is the primary trait. Such lives unfold in tension with institutional frameworks that may nevertheless later absorb them. Not only do saints contest the practices and beliefs of institutions, but in a more subtle way they contest the order of narrativity itself… the saint's *body* is to be taken as the unit of significance in saintly life. Not proclamation nor argument but the flesh acquires general meaning.[58]

Bishop Weatherill, a long-time friend of the Gent family, remarked that 'Alison carried in her body all the pain of struggle for women's ordination.'[59] His observation reiterated Wyschogrod's idea of the body as a unit of significance. Alison's compassion for the other is testified to by her leading role as chair of a committee of a residential mothering unit. She opened her home to a teenage girl taking refuge from an unhappy home in the early 1950s, and in the mid-80s, to a young mother and her baby after a marriage breakdown. Alison said, 'I tried like mad to be ordained, but my [activism for the ordination of women] was really on behalf of women in general than on behalf of MY vocation, I think.'[60] Her compassion knew no barrier of friendship or enmity, difference in creed or status. Bishop Weatherill added that:

> Alison tried to live like Jesus lived, from love. It was not easy for her, as it was not easy with Jesus… She took a loving position in response to whatever came her way. Like old Anglo-Catholics she could disagree with you most profoundly, but never cease to love you ... She tried, and succeeded mostly, in living from love.[61]

As with her compassion, Alison's adversarial attitude and sharp tongue also knew no barrier. This meant that she was unpopular with some and had a reputation as a troublemaker. Alison contested many of the practices of church and society. She was an activist in the church, but she also argued with her

[58] Edith Wyschogrod, *Saints and Post-Modernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), p. xxiii. The author is grateful to Dr Tanya Wittwer for this reference.
[59] Bishop Weatherill, conversation, 2007.
[60] AG *Int*, 13 February 2006.
[61] Bishop Weatherill, funeral sermon, 17 November 2009.

peers against some of their use of inclusive language and advocacy of divorce. Although she was an activist in the women's movement, she argued for the equality of men and women and remained a firm believer in the institution of marriage. Alison's difficult personality made some feel uncomfortable and exasperated. One person who knew her in the 1950s commented that she was too serious and intense to mix socially and engage in casual chit-chat; and added that in the 1990s 'she talked about her latest row or battle, and was pleased with her impact on others.'[62]

Wyschogrod challenged the notion that 'proclamation or argument' assess the person's worth, asserting that it is the flesh, the lived life, that 'acquires general meaning.'[63] Alison's complex character and personality, her compassion and her unpopularity fit Wyschogrod's criterion of 'a unit of significance of saintly life.'[64] The acclamation or disapproval of one's community can be problematic. The worth of both St Therese of Lisieux and the Abbe Huvelin was disputed in their communities of faith. Opinion about Metropolitan Anthony Bloom was strongly divided in his own community, but, warts and all, he was still considered holy.[65]

A person's qualities may also be measured against the test of time. McClendon used the example of Dag Hammarskjöld whose spiritual life was only revealed when his journals were discovered. Time and circumstance conspired to unfold a more complex, and a more spiritual, character.[66] Alison's journals reveal her inner life of deep devotion to the person of Christ, her inner torments of guilt, the awareness of personal failure and of hurt. These thoughts and perceptions were often masked by her outward aggression. Her death in 2009 left a legacy of confused reactions to her character and her contribution to church and society. One Adelaide priest had only known Alison as an adversarial and contentious activist. In 2001, when ministering in the parish where Alison was a young mother in the 1950s, this priest was surprised to hear Alison praised and remembered as a compassionate and loving person.

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[62] Peggy Mares, interview, 11 May 2011.
[63] Wyschogrod, *Saints and Post-modernism*.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Gillian Crow, *'This Holy Man': Impressions of Metropolitan Anthony*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005). Chapter 12 'Starets', p. 191-212.
[66] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p. 24-46.

In her last twenty years, old age, together with the disappointments of marriage, vocation and ambition, exacerbated Alison's irritability and unreasonableness. Any man, offering to assist her parking the car, would be met with a fierce accusation of ageism. On the other hand, she resolved, and attempted to achieve before she died, loving reconciliation with those with whom she had quarrelled. Alison's inner and hidden personal world and her extroverted and overtly passionate living are worthy of scrutiny.

Hindsight as a tool of scrutiny is allied to the test of time. The biographer is able to interview those who can look back on the life, remember and reflect on the person's actions, qualities and character. The distance of time and hindsight give the benefits of disinterestedness and discernment which are essential for research. Research with hindsight enables qualitative analysis. This distance is particularly useful in assessing the prophetic role. In the struggle for the ordination of women in the Anglican Church in Australia, Patricia Brennan stood out as the preeminent prophet. At her death in 2011 her life and work featured in the media nationally. Alison's role as a prophet is less immediately assessable, more complex, fraught with contention, and failures, private and public. Her activities in the church community aroused much antagonism and even hostility so that her contribution to changes such as the ordination of women has not, until now, been adequately documented and the hindsight of the community is therefore blurred. Rowan Williams understood prophecy and protest, not in terms of a message to be articulated, but rather as an honest and accepting life-centred in trust in God. He reflected:

> Prophecy which flows from such a centre is authentically a form of non-violent resistance: non-violent, because it does not aim simply to identify and locate blame so that it can condemn, exclude, and disparage; but resistance because it speaks of a drastic *refusal* of certain styles of individual and corporate life – a refusal which encompasses the whole of a prophet's existence.[67]

Alison's refusal to ignore the church's injustice to women was acted out in every meeting, conference, retreat and study she attended. The whole of her existence was aimed to this end. One of her placards read: 'let the whole

[67] Rowan Williams, *Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel*, Revised ed., (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002), p. 47.

church be more just and loving towards women.'[68] It is hoped that the scrutiny of the communities within which Alison moved will both inform and be informed by this project.

Certain factors which may affect the reliability of the scrutiny of the community are also noted. One is an Australian tendency to attack 'tall poppies.' Susan Mitchell used the term for the titles of her biographies of successful women.

> The 'tall poppy' syndrome – or the desire to see high achievers fail – is … based on envy, and, while certainly not confined to Australia, is firmly established hre. The syndrome is totally destructive: many eminent people are cut down who otherwise have made great contributions to society, and many people are discouraged from ever trying to reach the top.[69]

Julia Baird's commentary on women in politics has parallels for women in the church.[70] Baird saw that the message for women in politics is: 'fly too high, too close to the throbbing heart of power, and you will be shot down. And look like a fool while you fall.'[71] Alison's experience of putting motions to synods from the 1970s through to the 1990s left her battered and broken.[72] Many women who could be regarded as tall poppies made their way in the world of men by keeping their heads down. Baird's comment on female politicians will also apply to some women in the church: 'They play the game better, but they play it more like men.'[73]

Another factor that may affect the reliability of community scrutiny is the reluctance of women to honour their foremothers. Barbara Caine pointed out that 'women often find it hard to establish trans-generational links or to set themselves up as legitimising or authoritative figures for each other or for

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[68] Appendix D:4.
[69] Susan Mitchell, *Tall poppies Too: Nine Successful Australian Women Talk to Susan Mitchell*, (Melbourne: Penguin, 1991), p. 3.
[70] Julia Baird, *Media Tarts: How the Australian Press Frames Female Politicians*, (Melbourne: Scribe Publishers, 2004).
[71] Ibid, p. 5.
[72] AG *PJ* 2, 18 October 1977. Alison wrote six pages of reflections on having put a motion (No 53) to synod, likening the experience to being beheaded and making reference to the Arthurian tale of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Also included is her 'Prayer for Wisdom concerning Women in the Church.'
[73] Baird, *Media Tarts*, p. 267.

future generations.'[74] Caine noted that the pioneer feminist, Mary Wollstonecraft, was 'largely absent from public feminist debate' and yet powerfully present in private discussion.[75]

McClendon suggested that the primary factor in selecting a person as a model for self-scrutiny is the person's active choice to involve God in that life. Alison had been a friend and intimate of the author for three decades when the decision was made to select her as a subject of biography. Alison had been a model for my personal Christian living during that time. The difference in our ages (Alison was twenty- two years older) and her devotion to, and knowledge of, the church, as well as her life experience which mirrored much of my own, impressed and formed me. After the research project began, the interviews I conducted with Alison, her family and others revealed many aspects of her life of which I had no previous knowledge. This was also the case when I read her diaries, letters, and other writings, where her activities, thoughts and reflections on her Christian life and ideals were documented. They reinforced the assertion she made that she never wavered from her commitment to discipleship made as a young girl at her baptism and confirmation: 'Well, I was always very enthusiastic about the church from the time of my own confirmation when I was at school. So, you know, when I was confirmed I really meant it.'[76]

Reference Points for Selecting a Life

It will be in examining Alison's life against the three reference points which McClendon set out for selecting a life as a model that Alison's qualification will be justified. The selection process, for McClendon, is made firstly, by looking at what Christian truths are validated by this life; secondly, by ascertaining what impact the life has on theology and how it changes beliefs; and thirdly, by asking what the life has to offer to being religious in a post-modern world.

Whether Christian Truths are Validated by Alison's Life

[74] Caine, "Women's Studies, Feminist Traditions and the Problem of History," p. 3.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 4.

With reference to Christian truths it is not clear just which truths McClendon would find acceptable. He claimed that 'Christianity turns upon the character of Christ.'[77] Alison, however, would be clear that the person and work of Christ as testified to in the Gospels and clarified by the Pauline gospel and stated in the Creed, were Christian truths to which she adhered and worked to validate. She believed that Christ was human and divine, and that although she attempted to live in imitation of Christ (in respect of suffering, for example) she clearly lived within the parameters of traditional Christian truths. In contrast, McClendon's notion of the 'character of Christ' eschews Christological formularies, the complexities of Biblical interpretation, and the theological and philosophical need for a base on which to argue an understanding of faith and truth. McClendon's is an anti-foundational proposition claiming that:

> the truth of faith is made good *in the living of it* or not at all; that living is a necessary condition for the justification of Christian belief. There is no foundational truth available apart from actual life, no set of timeless premises acceptable to believers and non-believers alike, upon which Christian theology can once and for all found its doctrines.[78]

McClendon rejected a 'once and for all' solution to Christian belief. As Alison's life is analysed in this thesis it will be demonstrated that while she held to certain basic Christian truths, she too would have rejected a 'once and for all' Christian theology. Alison is an example of someone who attempted to live out the truth of the Christian gospel as she had received and understood it. Her praxis was built on her learned theology and experienced ecclesiology, but not in the sense of constructing a Cartesian edifice. Her foundational beliefs were rather a base for continually re-thinking and re-working these foundations. Alison's experience of family life, both as a child and as a mother, informed her understanding of the need for both parents to participate in the rearing of children. She brought this understanding to the gospel birth narratives, for her a basic reference point, noting that Joseph's assent to the birth of Christ was as essential as Mary's. In this Alison saw Joseph as a model for fatherhood. Alison argued that the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity contributed to belittling Joseph's role as earthly parent, and distanced Mary from any role as a wife and

[77] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p. 23.
[78] Ibid, p. viii.

mother that reflected ordinary human life. In this way Alison reworked some foundational beliefs to establish a platform for her own family life.

McClendon stated further that Christ's character must be made relevant to each age by 'fresh exemplars' of that character.[79] It may be questioned whether an ordinary human being can be a typical example or an excellent model of Jesus Christ as he is presented in the Christian scriptures or the creed. In this sense it is only in the imitation of Christ that the term can be understood. McClendon's term suggests that the moral and ethical practices of Christ are to be modelled in reference to contemporary cultural and social needs. Liberation theology and scriptural exegesis brought an understanding of Jesus' radical ministry to the socially and religiously outcast. Alison's appropriation of secular feminism and her support of gays and lesbians qualify her as a 'fresh exemplar' of the character of Christ. She did not reject the foundational beliefs but applied herself to the study of Christian feminist writers, Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether.[80] In this way she was also a 'fresh exemplar' in Adelaide where most mainstream churches were conservative and feminism, Christian or otherwise, threatened the patriarchal status quo.[81] Christian feminist theology will be noted under the third of McClendon's reference points.

McClendon suggested that convictions were one element with which to establish whether a person had (ethical) character:

> We may roughly define convictions as those tenacious beliefs that when held give definiteness to the character of a person or a community, so that if they are surrendered, the person or community would be significantly changed.[82]

These criteria of character and convictions could, he said, be applied to any community, religious, such as Islamic or Christian, or non-religious, such as Communist. His assertion that 'Christian beliefs … are living convictions which give shape to actual lives and actual communities' could then apply to a belief in

[79] Ibid, p. 23.
[80] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*, (Minneapolis: Seabury, 1975); Rosemary Radford Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, eds, *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).
[81] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*.
[82] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p. 19.

communism or the scouting movement[83] McClendon offered no means to establish what shape these beliefs have that will fashion lives. Alison's life demonstrated clearly what gave it form. The traditional truths from scripture, the life and work of Jesus, and the creeds were distilled in three attitudes of life: suffering and Jesus' command to his disciples to 'take up your cross and follow me' (Mark 8: 34-36); the care of others as particularly commanded in Jesus' judgement of the nations speech in Matthew 23: 31-46; and forgiveness. Feminism, which became a conviction in the last half of her life, was woven, in Wittgensteinian fashion, with foundational Christian truths.

Convictions such as belief that there is a God are, for McClendon, the enquiry of the Christian theologian, so that 'these convictions may be negated or enlarged, altered or reinforced by the lives of … significant persons.'[84] While Alison's feminism challenged the church to alter its policy on the ordination of women, her conviction on central truths helped to clarify the process towards this end. The Christian truths as set out in the creeds are statements of Alison's beliefs and practice. God as creator was validated by her love of the natural world; Jesus as Saviour by her sacrificial life and the work of the Holy Spirit by her confidence in God's active presence in world exemplified by her openness to change. Alison understood the corporate nature of revelation and that faith and the communion of saints were given expression by belief in the church as the Body of Christ. The church was her constant point of reference. The statement concerning the continuing relationship of God with her people is 'the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting.' This continuity is demonstrated in a copy of the Book of Common Prayer which she bought in 1976 to use as an office book. Alison had written in it a list of her relatives and close friends who had died and were to be prayed for. It was headed *Libera eas/eos Domine, de morte.*[85] Alison's daily life and practice sunstantiated her adherence to the creedal statements.

It is not possible to examine Alison's life without considering the Anglican Church in which she was formed, and the foundational truths on which it bases its faith and practice. Throughout the centuries since the Reformation,

[83] Ibid, p. 22.
[84] Ibid, p. 21-2.
[85] Deliver them, O Lord, from death.

Anglican thought has varied, at times engaging the propositional theologies and at others the experiential-expressive dimensions of human life. The constant was the wisdom of the reformers who provided what Lindbeck termed 'comprehensive interpretive schemes.'[86] The value of balance in reference points for belief and religious experience was promoted with a homely analogy of a three-legged stool in which Scripture, Tradition and Reason were each represented by a leg.

> [The method] is crucial both in itself and for what it embodies: the conviction that the truth about God is not to be found in an exclusive focus on any of these aspects but in a disciplined dialogue between them … leading to a state of dynamic balance.[87]

Scripture is the Judeo-Christian writings contained in the various translations of the Bible, and tradition is represented by the creeds and the patterns and habits accrued by the church throughout its history. Both scripture and tradition have been variously interpreted and accepted in the post-Reformation church. The sixteenth-century understanding did not limit reason to rational thought but included the emotions and senses. This understanding has been a point of contention since the Enlightenment. It was of particular interest when the status of women, who were often thought of as irrational, was debated. Various adaptations of the 'three legs' have been proposed.[88] McClendon's idea of 'living a life', which he claimed 'is a necessary condition of the justification of Christian belief', equates with reason understood to include experience.[89]

While the truths discussed above were formative in Alison's life, there were two important truths that are reflected in scripture and the creeds that were integral in Anglican formation. These were the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Christian principle of discipleship or witness. Alison lived by the knowledge and belief that God was active in church and the world as evidenced

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[86] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 32.
[87] Alan Bartlett, *A Passionate Balance: The Anglican Tradition*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2007), p. 16-7. Bartlett prefers the 'three-stranded cord' [Ecclesiastes 4:12]. This reference loses the idea of balance inherent in the homely three-legged stool analogy.
[88] John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, Revised ed., (London: SCM Press, 1977). Macquarrie presented six formative factors: experience, revelation, scripture, tradition, culture and reason, p. 4-20. Charles Williams understood reason as 'feeling intellect', illustrating a unity of learning and feeling and experience. He also included accuracy which is careful and honest appraisal as a necessary quality of 'reason'. Charles Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice: A Study in Dante*, (New York: Noonday Press, 1961), p. 63.
[89] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p. viii.

by the incarnate Son of God. She had a strong belief in the divinity and humanity of Christ and that a person's life should be lived out in worship of God and service in the world, an existence in which the divine and the secular were not separated. The gospel imperative to acknowledge Jesus' sonship, to become disciples and to bear witness to the resurrection, was taken as her life's work by Alison at her confirmation and continued to be the impetus throughout her life.

The Impact of Alison's Life on Theology and Whether it can Change Beliefs

The doctrine of the Incarnation asserts that in the earthly life of Jesus God became man. With God taking on human flesh, the status, as it were, of humanity changed. God was then active in the world in a different way from the Jewish understanding. The impact of this doctrine has variously been explained and lived out through the Christian centuries. Alison lived incarnational Christianity in the sense that she understood her involvement in the church and the world as participatory. This word has particular meaning in Anglican theology. Participation, that is, partaking of the bread and wine in the Eucharist, was an act which completed the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It was in this sacramental sense that Alison saw herself as being present in the church and the world. When she went to meetings of 'Integrity', a group for gay and lesbian Anglicans, her rationale was that she was supporting her lesbian sisters who could not attend because they were alienated from the church; she was participating on their behalf.[90]

It was in this sense too that she saw the gathering of women from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds on International Women's Day as the undivided church. Here 'undivided' can be understood as expressing God's revelation of the undivided existence of God and humanity in Jesus.[91] Alison was inspired to rethink moral and gender attitudes in the church and the world. Her vision demanded a fundamental change in attitudes such as an acceptance of others' difference, a willingness to put one's personal self on the line in respect

[90] Father Donald Grey-Smith, interview, 12 November 2010. Father Donald was a founding member of 'Integrity'.
[91] *BCP*. 'Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance.' The Athanasian Creed from the BCP where it is set to be said or sung at Morning Prayer 'Upon these Feasts – Christmas, Epiphany, St Matthias, Easter Day, Ascension, Whitsunday … and Trinity Sunday.'

of being there, as if you were that person, as if you had that person's qualities.[92] Deborah McCulloch, an early leader of the Women's Liberation Movement and former government adviser on women's affairs, understood Alison as 'more radical than any of us.'[93]

This is a critical change in belief concerning the church and human relationships under God for many Christians for whom life outside the church is contaminated with evil. Even if the church member engages in missionary or social justice causes, their solidarity with the marginalised may remain theoretical. A church leader who is an ardent football fan is seen as someone engaging with the world. This engagement may be at a social level, with no conscious thought that the football world might be part of God's creation, where God is active and loving. Alison's pronounced beliefs and actions challenge the notion that the world and the flesh are enemies to be repulsed.[94] While not stated explicitly in A Prayer Book for Australia 1995, the connection between evil and the flesh were made in the baptism services of An Australian Prayer Book 1978 and the BCP.[95] However, with careful reading it is the evil associated with vanity, false values and corruption that is to be resisted; the world and the human body are not to be seen as intrinsically evil.[96] Alison demonstrated that it was not only possible to see God active in both the world and the church but it was also possible to inhabit both spaces as a witness without the impulse to convert her sisters and brothers to Christianity.

Alison's Christian life was lived as a disciple and a witness. Discipleship is understood in terms of learning to live as Jesus lived, through his teachings and those of his disciples both scriptural and in the church's tradition. The stem

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[92] Charles Williams was near this when he named 'Exchange' or 'Co-inherence' as a way of bearing one another's burden. Charles Williams, "The Way of Exchange," in *Charles Williams: The Image of the City and Other Essays*, ed. Ann Ridler, (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).
[93] Deborah McCulloch, interview, 7 September 2011.
[94] Peter Abelard, *Exposition of the Lord's Prayer*. 'There are three things that tempt us: the world, the flesh and the devil.' *BCP*. The Litany contains the petition: 'From fornication, and all other deadly sin; and from all the deceits of the world, the flesh and the devil, Spare us good Lord.'
[95] The Anglican Church of Australia, *A Prayer Book for Australia for Use Together with The Book of Common Prayer (1662) and An Australian Prayer Book (1978)*, (Sydney: Broughton Books, 1995); *An Australian Prayer Book: For Use Together with the Book of Common Prayer, 1662*, (Sydney: The Standing Committee of the General Synod of the Church of England in Australia, 1978).
[96] *BCP*. 'The devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of this world, with all the covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh.'

of the word 'witness' in Greek is μάρτυρ, martyr. A witness is one who gives up their life to follow the teaching of Jesus, with the possibility of martyrdom. In the early Christian community a witness also referred to one who had witnessed the resurrected Christ. When asked what her earliest memory of Jesus was, Alison described an illustration in her aunt's Bible of Jesus on the cross.[97] The artistic depiction of Jesus' suffering, and its reality made immediate by Good Friday observances, made Alison a witness to Jesus' death (and on Easter Day to his resurrection). Alison bore insults, humiliation and privations with a conviction that these sufferings would fit her for heaven.[98] The way of negation was practised by many of the saints in the long line of those who took on Jesus' call to his disciples to take up their cross and follow him.[99] Alison's Lenten study in 1958 was a work on the Passion by St Bonaventure.[100] In Lent 1960 she concentrated on Eric Hayman's *Disciplines,* the last chapter of which is 'Learning to share his pain.'[101] Alison continued to read in this tradition, using John Gent's copy of 'St John of the Cross' in 1991.[102] Her devotion to the saints was practised with an ecumenical fervour, encompassing Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.[103]

Following Jesus' commands and his example of caring for the poor and outcast was, for Alison, more than making generous donations to causes such as Guide Dogs for the Blind or church mission agencies.[104] Her love for God and her

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[97] AG *Int*, 29 November 2006-2, p. 7.
[98] AG *PJ* 2, 25 December 1977. 'To love a person in a way that does not shrink from conflict with them is a vital part of love, I'm sure; conflict with the evil in humanity is the process of the Cross. This is the deeper meaning, then, of what I heard, "the exultation of the holy cross in the heart of Love".'
[99] Charles Williams, *The Descent of the Dove: A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church*, (London: Religious Book Club, 1939). 'The one Way was to affirm all things orderly until the universe throbbed with vitality; the other to reject all things until there was nothing anywhere but He. The Way of Affirmation was to develop great art and romantic love and marriage and philosophy and social justice; the Way of Rejection was to break out continually in the profound mystical documents of the soul, the records of the great psychological masters of Christendom. All was involved in Christendom, and between them, as it were, hummed the web of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, labouring, ordering, expressing, confirming, and often misunderstanding, but necessary to any organisation in time and particularly necessary at the that time in the recently expanded space,' p. 58.
[100] Saint Bonaventure, *The Mystical Vine: A Treatise on the Passion of Our Lord*, (London: Mowbray, 1953).
[101] Eric Hayman, *Disciplines of the Spiritual Life*, (London: SPCK, 1957).
[102] "The Mystical Doctrine of St. John of the Cross," (London: Sheed & Ward, 1944).
[103] The Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, membership card, 9 February 1978.
[104] A note written on an Association of Guide Dogs for the Blind envelope, observed by the author on Alison's kitchen table: 'I have been supporting this for 20 years', 2006.

fellow human beings inspired her embrace of others with unselfishness and a passionate intensity which could overwhelm the recipients and those around her. Her son Peter remembered their home was a refuge to many in need.[105] Her son Chris described as 'a deeper impulse' the discipleship which led Alison to visit the post-war migrant hostel near their home. One night 'she returned carrying a tragically stunned-looking toddler in a grubby nightie', and said that she had offered to care for the child for a fortnight.[106]

In the mystical tradition a witness testifies to their faith as a mirror through which Christ's love shines. It may be that the person mirrors Christ. A person remembers, as a child of eight, seeing Alison at the altars rails during a Sunday service in St Clement's, Enfield. 'She was like an angel. She inspired me to be a Christian.'[107]

Alison's suffering, witness, and charity validated Christian truths in each phase of her life. Feminist and liberation biblical criticism reinforced Alison's ideals of the equality of men and women, and also highlighted gospel texts which revealed the poor and outcast, including women, as models of faith and valid witnesses.

What Alison's Life Offers to Being Religious in a Post-Modern World

The entry in *Australian Feminism: a Companion* puts post-modernism in the context of feminist theory where it 'usually refers to the perceived loss of credibility of the Enlightenment project along with modernist 'grand narratives' or totalizing theories of human nature or history.[108] Being religious in a post-modern world does not seem at first consideration to have much in common with Alison's highly ecclesial view of religion. With the rejection of structure and authority, and with personal feeling determining actions, Alison's praxis of prayer, altruism, and reference to church authority in relation to ordination does not seem to offer anyone seeking religion a satisfying model. However, hers is an example of a life which has re-visioned some of the traditional acculturated beliefs and practices of the church, as well as living out an

[105] Peter Gent, interview, 19 November 2009.
[106] Chris Gent, eulogy, 17 November 2009.
[107] Conversation with R, 2007.
[108] Caine, ed. *Australian Feminism*, p. 475.

incarnational theology that profoundly challenges the fragmentation and commodification of the post-modern world.

It was Alison's feminism which brought a critical late-modernist approach to bear on church life that qualifies her life as an important offering to religion in the modern world. Her theological stance as a witness/disciple meant that she consciously embodied her beliefs in love, justice and hope within varying forms of life and among those who were making conflicting truth claims. Alison supported both sides of the abortion debate, arguing women's right to choose (a post-modern position) but from both theological and feminist views.[109] The Anglo-Catholic branch of the Anglican Church resisted many of the late-modernist reforms that were associated with the rise of feminism. Alison continued to worship at St Mary Magdalene's in what might be best described as hostile ecclesiastical territory while simultaneously promoting feminist theology both in the church and secular groups. Hers was an extraordinary ability to negotiate, what were in the years from 1980 to 2000, openly warring factions in the church and in groups antagonistic or dismissive of Christianity. This ability may be considered post-modern. However Alison not only negotiated, she gave honour to both (while arguing her cause in both arenas), offering the notion that being religious is more than accepting a position on a matter of justice or morals or adhering to a confessional statement. Alison demonstrated that being religious is essentially the art of loving and living with all people under God.

Alison's embodying of the Anglican ethos validates the contemporary Anglican Church for women. Her involvement in the Women's Liberation Movement influenced her ecclesiology, so that her prophetic witness became focussed on the role of women in the church, while at the same time society's attitudes to women continued to be a concern for her. Two aspects of church life affecting women that offer insight into being religious in the post-modern world are the image of God as mother and the inclusion of women into the three-fold ministry of the church. Alison saw these exclusive gender attitudes as matters of justice and as negating the unity of human kind as taught by Jesus.

[109] Alison's activism on the abortion argument will be explored in Chapter 6.

Alison was not alone in speaking out against the prevailing image of God as father. However, her use of God as mother was rather to insist that God possessed the attributes of both mother and father and could be referred to as either. She was less reactionary than early Christian feminist such as Mary Daly, for example, who rejected father as a term *per se*.[110] She warned those who had studied *Beyond God the Father* that they were being invited to a 'leap out of faith in God the Father (if it goes beyond an equal acceptance of God as mother) and out of faith in the Son incarnate in Jesus Christ.'[111] God as father and mother is theologically more unitive and in keeping with many traditional uses which were less fixed on gender exclusivity. Alison argued for greater unity, a stand which is against the dissection and destruction of the post-enlightenment world and post-structuralist feminism.[112]

The imaging of God as mother and father offers a great freedom to both men and women in the post-modern age. God the Father is not trapped in the role of stern, judgmental and punishing father. A feminine aspect of the godhead implies an acceptance of gender as a religious truth, that feminine qualities are credible within religion without disparagement. Forgiveness is also unifying, an aspect of wholeness. To forgive another is to recognise our mutual sharing of the human condition; an acceptance of one's own sinfulness further acknowledges our responsibility as part of created world. According to Rowan Williams, the Trinity is the 'absolute unity-in-difference that is God.'[113] What Williams wrote about so lucidly, Alison lived contentiously.

Alison insisted that acceptance of women into the threefold order of ministry was predicated on an understanding of God as mother and father. Another consideration was justice, a primary Christian precept. Her firm belief in the ordination of women and her work to that end contributed to the

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[110] Daly, *Beyond God the Father*. In 1990, in her copy of Daly, Alison revisioned a hymn:

I have a gospel to proclaim:
Jesus is Queen o'er all the earth.
The God of Sarah and Abraham
Is the Goddess we seek who gives us birth.

[111] AG *PJ* 2, 30-31 May 1979. Alison critiqued Mary Daly here.

[112] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1990). 'The very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms', p.1. Butler quotes Kristeva: 'Strictly speaking, 'women' cannot be said to exist,' p.1. See also Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994).

[113] Rowan Williams, *Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2007), p. 137.

beginning of a unitive structure within the modern Anglican Church while retaining its continuity with the pre-Reformation church. Modern Anglicanism was born out of the Reformation and continued to re-form through the centuries. The Oxford movement, which had such an influence on Alison's early adult life, had been another re-birth. So continuity and re-forming was the dialectic within which Alison worked as she argued for the ordination of women.

Being religious in post-modern society has taken on a new focus with the growth of the environmental movement. Post-modern individualism and the commoditisation of persons and products are challenged by the idea of human responsibility for the health of the planet. Sustainable living and climate change suggest an interconnection between the planet and humans and imply the need for altruism, even spirituality. Biblical scholars have been working with scriptural texts. There is a wealth of spiritual insights in art and writing, which continued to be honoured in Anglican tradition.[114] The holiness of place (the farm, the wilderness, the country town, the suburban garden) and the poets and priests who wrote of their love of nature – these are basic to the Anglican tradition Alison inherited. At a meeting of an eco-spirituality group in 2007 its leader, a priest was astonished that Alison could refer to, and quote, revelvant passages of Wordsworth's poetry. In her journals she often mentioned looking at the stars, observing on one occasion the 'elevation of the Holy Cross' as she gazed at the Southern Cross.[115] Alison connected the mystical tradition with the Australian skyscape and landscape. Hers was a way to use the resources of a tradition grown in the Church of England in a loving partnership with Australia's natural world. Hers was an understanding of the land as holy similar to that of Australia's indigenous peoples.

Alison's is an example of a life lived against the negation of unity by living *in loco Christi*, and with the awareness that others are *in loco Christi.* It is a

[114] *BCP*. The *Benedicte* in Morning Prayer is a reworking of the hymn of St Francis of Assisi.
[115] AG *PJ* 1, Saturday after Ash Wednesday 1972, p. 18-19. 'It's 6.20am, it's Sunday. First, I'll go out to see the stars. The Cross was still visible, and indeed was all I saw from the back doorstep: it is really not the cross itself but the pointers, the Centaurs, who are at the zenith now. I altered the Crux prayer of January 25 a little. 'O God, who in our hemisphere allows nature as well as grace to elevate the Holy Cross, grant us always to trust in you power to save us from all sin and danger by our union in love with the Father and the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son. Amen.'

model of the wholeness of created life in which there is a circular, receptive movement. In *Quest for the Living God,* Elizabeth Johnson presented a framework for new patterns of thought about God that have been influenced by insights gained by life in the contemporary world.[116] The framework is built on ten criteria of which feminism, eco-theology and new thinking on the Trinity offer some comparative examples to Alison's.

In her discussion on feminism, Johnson asked whether 'women's reality can function as a sacramental sign of God's presence and action.'[117] Images of God as love, lover and life-giving Spirit have always been present in the Christian tradition, yet their message of all embracing love that liberates has been overshadowed by 'exclusively male images that imply that women are somehow less like unto God.'[118] Johnson explored metaphors, such as Mother God and Holy Wisdom that legitimise a female face of God and 'by relativising masculine imagery it lassoes the idol [of exclusive maleness] off its pedestal.'[119] She asserted the right of women to stand *in loco Christi*, to function as a sacramental presence. She added that 'the reflective, critical action that flows from this insight is the praxis of justice preferentially oriented toward those subordinated on the basis of gender.'[120] Alison argued publicly for women's right to priesthood, to stand *in loco Christi* at the altar and in the pulpit, on the grounds of justice.[121] Johnson claimed for eco-theology that human's agency of the Divine presence is 'sacramentally mediated through the world's embodiment.'[122]

Alison offers being religious in a post-modern world a belief in gender equality that takes account of unity – unity that models a way for the church to dialogue with cultural trends, to assess relevance to scripture and tradition and to absorb the shocks of contemporary living without suffering mortal wounds. In this sense the caring for and regarding others with love, the working for justice for the undeserving, are contrary to the post-modern notion that persons

[116] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God*, (New York: Continuum, 2007).
[117] Ibid, p. 97.
[118] Ibid, p. 99.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid, p. 110.
[121] Appendix E.
[122] Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, p. 189.

are commodities and units of work which assist production. Historian David Hilliard, writing for a history of Anglicanism in Australia, stated that:

> one clear task for Australian Anglicans in the twenty-first century will be to rediscover the positive insights of their tradition of Christianity and to interpret and express these in ways relevant to contemporary Australia.[123]

Alison approached the influence of post-modernism in the women's movement with equanimity. She attended Womenspirit camps, exchanged ideas with radical leftist lesbian women, was active in the peace movement and supported those who found the church an authoritarian structure they could no longer be part of. Her toleration of difference is a model for those seeking to be religious. While her strength of commitment, and courage in the face of rejection is a model of the classic religious life, she demonstrated that such virtues can bring satisfaction and meaning to life. Alison's life and beliefs offer an example of the stability that a faith commitment can give against the fragmentation of authoritarian structures. Alison can be claimed as a traditional hero described here in phrases 'unfolded' from the Te Deum*:*

> Saints and holy fools of every generation,
> Prophets crying out for justice,
> Martyrs who carried you in their wounds,
> scars embodied in their glory,
> Your holy and stumbling people
> in all times and places.[124]

[123] David Hilliard, "Pluralism and New Alignments in Society and Church 1967 to the Present," in *Anglicanism in Australia: A History*, ed. Bruce Kaye, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002).
[124] Jim Cotter, *Out of the Silence...Into the Silence...Prayer's Daily Round: An Unfolding of Prayers, Psalms, and Canticles for Daily or Occasional Use*, (Harlech: Cairns Publications, 2006), p. 447.

4 ALISON AND ANGLICANISM

I am a catholic woman but my catholic home is the ANGLICAN Church[1]

Introduction

The narrative of Alison's life will begin by setting her within the Anglican Church. This the first of the four forms of life, selected as the most significant and revealing, within which she lived and moved and had her being. Each of these aspects of her life – church, marriage, the women's movement and the ordination of women – contributed to the intricate weave of her life.

As pointed out in the previous chapter, Anglicanism is particularly suited to Wittgenstein's notions of the interplay of language and action. The interrelationship of worship practices, language used and the communal dynamic also recalls Wittgenstein's weaving metaphor and Lindbeck's ideas on the communal nature of religious experience.[2] These notions can be taken to include beliefs as well as human reactions. While Anglicans are said to be formed by worship and poetic language in the context of a community, theological concepts also provided the basis to the religious experience that the youthful Alison encountered in parish life.[3] It was in the church community that

[1] *AG Int,* 6 November 2006, p. 4.
[2] Wittgenstein, *Zettel*. 'The whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action.' Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*.
[3] Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination*.

Alison absorbed Christian truths, and this validates her as a subject of a biographical theology.[4] This chapter will begin with an exposition of some of the concepts that predominated in the Anglican theological circles of Adelaide which Alison inhabited. This theology provided the context for the sermons of parish ministers and the rationale for Christian action.

Anglicanism is broad and diverse in its theology and liturgical practice, and has too broad a compass to fit this narrative.[5] The scope of this study will be narrowed to the particular expression of Anglicanism in Adelaide in the mid-twentieth century which shared much of the inheritance of cultural and linguistic forms of the church of the British Empire.[6] Within the 'interdependent diversity' of the various expressions of Anglicanism, Adelaide was, by the 1930s, a high-church diocese.[7] The dominant theological and liturgical expression was a moderate Anglo-Catholicism based upon a Catholic interpretation of the Book of Common Prayer [BCP]; this was often described as 'Prayer Book Catholicism'.[8] A brief description will include aspects of diversity and change that affected Alison.

The beginning of Alison's life in the church, as a young child in the 1920s and through to her late teens, was a period of formation typical of young Anglicans, whose church attendance exposed them to the beauties of the language and religious thought of the BCP.[9] In these influential years Alison absorbed other riches that were the inheritance of Anglicans of all historical generations. This narrative will give particular attention to the communal, spiritual and theological context of Adelaide Anglicanism and the quality of the clergymen who were Alison's religious mentors.

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[4] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*.
[5] See, for example, Stephen Sykes and John Booty, eds., *The Study of Anglicanism* (London: SPCK, 1988).
[6] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*. Hilliard gives the historical background to the adaptation of Anglican practice in colonial South Australia until the sesquicentenary in 1986 of the state's foundation.
[7] Bruce Kaye, *Reinventing Anglicanism: A Vision of Confidence, Community and Engagement in Anglican Christianity*, (Adelaide: Open Book, 2003). Kaye uses the expression 'interdependent diversity' in Chapter 4.
[8] *BCP*.
[9] Yvonne Lesley McLean, "The Book of Common Prayer: A Detailed Analysis of Its Language, Its Revisioning in Contemporary Australian Liturgies and in the Writing of Jim Cotter and Janet Morley and in the Context of the Relationship between Spirituality and Language, the Implications of the Use of Revised Prayer Books in the Anglican Church in Australia" (Thesis for Master of Arts in Religion and Theology, Monash, 1999).

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The narrative continues with Alison's study of the poet theologians who informed and inspired her reflections on the role of the church and the human condition under God. Her university years stimulated her growth in the church, her sensitivities responding to the interweaving of the intellectual and the spiritual. Alison's natural academic ability and literary sensitivity coalesced with the imaginative domain of the poetic and the affective influence of Anglican worship. Her work on the poets, John Donne and George Herbert, will further explain her Anglicanism. These poets, along with theologians and writers, were part of the development of Anglicanism during and immediately after the Reformation. They came to be known as the 'Caroline Divines' and gave the Anglican Church its characteristic balance which is:

> best exemplified in the treasures of Classic Anglicanism … the depths of Cranmer's prayer books; the wisdom of Elizabeth; the passion of Donne; the simplicity of George Herbert; the joy of Traherne … and Richard Hooker, the great theologian of Elizabeth 1.[10]

Although all these claims have been disputed, they were the aspects known to have contextualised the Anglicanism within which Alison was formed.[11]

Features of Alison's devotional life conclude this section of the narrative, showing her as a 'fresh exemplar' of the tradition, and demonstrating that her adherence to Christian truths was not constrained 'once and for all.'[12] That Alison maintained her devotion to Christian truths while adapting them to her life situation is also demonstrated in the chapters following. Other dimensions of Alison's Anglicanism included in this thesis are: Anglo-Catholicism in relation to marriage and priesthood (Chapter 5), the church's relation to social and political movements (Chapter 6) and the patriarchal nature of the church (Chapters 7 and 8).

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[10] Bartlett, *A Passionate Balance*, p. 16-7.
[11] For a brief overview of Anglicanism see Mark Chapman, *Anglicanism: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). For discussion on the conflicting aspects of this period see Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985*, (London: Collins, 1986). For a contemporary argument on Anglican identity see Rowan Williams, *Anglican Identities*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004).
[12] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p. 23.

Theological Foundations

The foundational statements of Christianity contained in the creeds, the Te Deum and sections of the New Testament such as the Magnificat and the Nunc Dimittis, were incorporated in the daily worship texts. Also during the worship service scripture was read. In this way Alison and her fellow Anglicans were exposed to a religion that was 'embodied in myths and narratives and heavily ritualised.'[13] Prayers of confession, thanksgiving and intercession and the Sunday collects, formalised in easily remembered language, 'structured human experiences and understanding.'[14] This meant that during Alison's youth her attendance at church services provided a formation in theology and Christian practice in which was conveyed a pervading sense of the sacramental and the numinous. Theology and praxis were, however, always open to interpretation because of the tolerance inherent in a reformed and catholic institution with no binding confessional statement such the Westminster Confession.[15] It was incarnational theology and 'liberal Catholicism', expounded by Chares Gore and others in *Lux mundi* in 1889*,* that responded to Darwinism and biblical criticism which was seen by some to be threatening received views of scripture.[16] These writers offered new light on the central doctrine of God made man in Jesus Christ, stressing 'Christianity is a religion of a Person' and that 'progress is only in the understanding of the Christ.'[17] Gore summarised their liberal outlook towards scripture and the role of the church:

> It may be hoped that the discussion which this book has raised may do good in two ways. It may enable people to put the Bible into its right place in the fabric of their Christian belief. It may help to make it plain that in the full sense the Christian's faith is faith only in a Person, and that Person Jesus Christ: that to justify this faith he needs from the Scriptures only the witness of some New Testament documents, considered as containing history: while his belief in the Bible as

[13] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 32.
[14] Ibid.
[15] 'The Confession expounded in 33 chapters all the leading articles of the Christian Faith. It taught emphatically the Calvinistic doctrine of election. [It] established itself as the definite statement of Presbyterian doctrine in the English-speaking world.' F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Revised)*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 1473.
[16] Charles Gore, ed. *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*, 12th ed. (London: John Murray, 1891). The authors felt compelled 'to attempt to put the Catholic faith into its right relation to modern intellectual and moral problems.' Preface to the first edition, 1889, p. vii.
[17] Ibid, Preface to the tenth edition, p. xxix, xxx.

> inspired is, speaking logically, subsequent to his belief in Christ, and even, when we include the New Testament, subsequent to his belief in the Church, as the Body of Christ, rather than prior to it.[18]

Michael Ramsey, reviewing the movement's impact of, identified certain factors of Anglican continuity in this period which we shall see influenced the generation of clergymen who formed Alison's Anglicanism.[19] The four factors were: 'the Platonist strain, [which] had been characteristic of Anglican divinity since the sixteenth century'; 'the sensitivity to the significance of spirituality, the life of prayer, for theology'; 'the constant devotion to Scripture and the Fathers'; and the '*Via Media.*'[20]

The Incarnation, referred to in the subtitle in *Lux Mundi*, means literally 'the putting on of flesh' and is a term and a classical doctrine used to describe the person of Jesus Christ, a historical person at once truly God and truly human.[21] As a result of the work of Gore and his disciples, the Incarnation became the 'centre of a theological scheme concerning man and nature, in which Christ is both the climax of nature and history and the supernatural restorer of mankind.'[22] Their influence extended to the academy so that generations of men and women training for ministry, and studying and receiving theology, absorbed the implications of 'the coming of the New Man, the source and spring of the new humanity.'[23]

This view was marked by an 'otherworldly spirit', an interest in and application to the spiritual life, the inner life, an awareness of divine transcendence. Gore exemplified this spirit; he founded a men's monastic order, the Community of the Resurrection. He 'proclaimed that the church must itself live as a society of "the way", its members disciplined in simplicity and

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[18] Ibid, p. xxix.
[19] Arthur Michael Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War 1899-1939*, (London: Longmans, 1961), p. 164-6. 'This era possessed many permanent characteristics of Anglican theology', p. 164.
[20] Ibid, p. 165. The *Via Media* has been seen as 'the choice between strongly entrenched rival camps'; 'the dislike of pressing aspects of theology with the ruthless logic of a self-contained system', 'the tendency for mediation between schools of thought or religious movements within or without our Church' and 'the instinct for distinguishing doctrines of lesser or greater import.'
[21] The Christology debated by the Fathers in the fourth and fifth centuries, was formally defined at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 and has continued to be subject of controversy throughout the centuries.
[22] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple*, p. 18.
[23] Ibid.

brotherhood, repudiating luxury and exploitation, and shewing the divine community to the world.'[24] The view was marked also by an 'alert social conscience' which 'was an outcome of … an appeal to the Logos doctrine that both democracy and socialism were held as expressions of the working of the divine spirit.'[25] The Incarnation was an act of humility, Jesus' deity issued in generous self-giving, not in self-aggrandisement.[26] From the halls of learning to the pew a new spirit was generated that honoured human activity because God had honoured humanity and the created order. The marks of this movement, the otherworldly spirit, the alert social conscience and the generous self-giving were evident in the lives and teaching of Alison's mentors, her peers and in her life as well, and will be discussed below.[27] A theologian of the next generation, L. S. Thornton, 'wrote one of the most notable works of the half-century, *The Incarnate Lord*.'[28] While it cannot be determined that the Gent's read this particular book, other works by Thornton in their library also present the incarnation in terms of an 'organic' view of the universe.[29]

> Thus the Word becomes part of our nature. The land bearing a rich harvest of corn is something other than it was before the seed was sown. So Christ the Word takes human nature to himself and by that very fact makes it something new. The natural is transformed when it partakes of the supernatural. … The Word must fructify in deeds, not simply acts of piety but acts of love to the brethren.
>
> Contemplating the image of truth, we shall retain [it] in our minds … it will become immanent in the heart and like good seed will fructify in good works. … So our conduct towards the brethren will accord with our faith in the Lord Jesus Messiah.[30]

[24] Ibid, p. 15. The Community of the Resurrection produced scholars and evangelists, and trained men for ordained ministry, notably Bishop Trevor Huddleston, who, while working in South Africa, agitated against apartheid.
[25] Ibid, p. 14.
[26] Ibid, p. 30. A key text here is Phil 2:5-11 which describes Jesus' self-emptying (Gr 'kenosis').
[27] For further reflections on the influence of *Lux Mundi* and development since see Robert Morgan, ed. *The Religion of the Incarnation: Anglican Essays in Commemoration of Lux Mundi* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1989); Geoffrey Wainwright, ed. *Keeping the Faith: Essays to Mark the Centenary of Lux Mundi* (London: SPCK, 1989).
[28] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple*, p. 107. Thornton was a member of the Community of the Resurrection.
[29] Ibid, p. 24-25.
[30] L. S. Thornton, *The Common Life in the Body of Christ*, 2nd ed, (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1942), p. 207. L. S. Thornton, *Revelation and the Modern World: Being the First Part of a Treatise on the Form of a Servant*, (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1950).

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The theology of the Incarnation, by which the whole of creation and its works, such as the arts and literature, were seen as worthy of being uplifted and redeemed, shaped the thinking of writer, poet and lay theologian, Charles Williams. Nurtured in the Anglican Church in the first half of the twentieth century, Williams was a contemporary of C. S. Lewis and one of the Inklings, an informal group of literary and theological thinkers in Oxford in the 1930s and 1940s.[31] The juxtaposition of literature and theology in the expertise of these writers and thinkers followed in the tradition of Anglican thought.[32] This tradition will be further explicated, but it is enough to note here that it was well suited to Alison's academic interest and theological and spiritual progress. Alison and John Gent and leading Anglican clergy in Adelaide, among whom was the Reverend Lionel Renfrey, read Williams' works and were theologically in line with his thinking.[33] Renfrey, later dean and assistant bishop of Adelaide, was the Gents' intellectual peer and a significant influence.[34] In the heroic Anglo-Catholic tradition, he and three other priests in 1944 formed the Brotherhood of St John the Baptist, based at Murray Bridge.[35]

Charles Williams articulated theologically the ways in which numinous experiences of worship had brought him to understand himself as part of the 'blessed company of all faithful people.'[36] In this way he helped to make sense of Anglicanism's affective dimension. Williams began with a clause from the Athanasian Creed: 'not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by the

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[31] Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Their Friends*, (Boston: Houghton, 1979).
[32] Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985*. Hastings gives an extensive treatment of Lewis and many other authors.
[33] Pam Lindsay, conversation, 2012, Rev. John H. Stephenson, conversation, 23 January 2013. The author did not have access to many of the theological works that John and Alison Gent possessed. Alison was acquainted with his theology. AG, telephone conversation, 29 November 2008.
[34] At the University of Adelaide Renfrey gained a First Class Honours degree in English in 1938, the year Alison began her studies there. He won the Bundey Prize for English Literature in 1939. *Year Book of the Church of England: including the diocese of Adelaide and Willochra, 1979/80*, p. 16.
[35] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*, p. 105. All those in the photograph on p. 102 were close colleagues and friends of the Gents. See also Campbell, *Religious Communities of the Anglican Communion*. The order was instituted under the auspices of Bishop Robin who devoted the whole of his pastoral letter to the venture. *ACG,* June 1944, p. 3-4. Renfrey, appointed the first warden by the bishop and directly responsible to him, was installed and inducted at St John's Murray Bridge on 2 July 1944. *ACG*, p. 4.
[36] *BCP*, Post-Communion Prayer.

taking of the Manhood into God.'[37] He explained that 'it is the actual manhood which is to be carried on, and not the height which is to be brought down.'[38] This, he says, is 'the very maxim of the Affirmative Way; and not only of the particular religious Way, but of all progress of all affirmations.'[39] His explanation of the two ways, affirmative and negative, of Christian tradition sheds light on the affective role that worship and liturgy, and their art and poetry, has in turning people to God:

> The one Way was to affirm all things orderly until the universe throbbed with vitality; the other to reject all things until there was nothing anywhere but He. The Way of Affirmation was to develop great art and romantic love and marriage and philosophy and social justice; the Way of Rejection was to break out continually in the profound mystical documents of the soul, the records of the great psychological masters of Christendom. All was involved in Christendom, and between them, as it were, hummed the web of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, labouring, ordering, expressing, confirming, and often misunderstanding, but necessary to any organisation in time and particularly necessary at that time in the recently expanded space.[40]

The way of affirmation of images was, for Williams, 'pre-eminently the way of the poet and the lover.' The poetic prose of the BCP has been an affirmative way for many. Priscilla Napier recorded her experience in twentieth-century Egypt:

> Sitting in the pew, one could swing one's legs as hard as one liked without their actually hitting the pew behind and causing remonstrance. Wonderful sonorous words emerged from the lined simplicity of Mr. Horan's face; his reassuring saintliness came out and embraced one for a fleeting moment of time. The matchless prose of the Book of Common Prayer swam in my ears like some majestic and unearthly sea. There was no question of coming out before the sermon. William and I, aged five and three, and unaware of hardship, underwent the full superb stretch.[41]

Anglicanism as a 'form of life' has a particular ecclesiology. In one sentence, 'we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son which is the blessed company of all faithful people', are expressed the

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[37] Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p.9.
[38] Williams, *The Descent of the Dove*, p. 59.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid, p. 58.
[41] Priscilla Napier *A Late Beginner* (Michael Joseph 1966), p. 16. Cited in Norman Taylor, *For Services Rendered: An Anthology in Thanksgiving for the Book of Common Prayer*, (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1993), p. 13.

metaphysical, incarnational and Christological implications of community.[42] The liturgical shape and actions of an Anglican service of worship, such as people kneeling and/or standing side by side at the altar rail to receive communion, are a potent symbol of unity with God and each other. The word 'communion' denotes co-inherence as does receiving wine from the common cup. Countryman pointed out that 'others have at their root an idea, while Anglicanism has at its root a *community and a conversation.*[43] It is 'defined in terms of a continuum of people in relationship with one another and to God, a kind of family.'[44]

Charles Williams proposed ideas on community which he called 'exchange', a mode of relationship based on the doctrine of the Trinity, and taught by the Fathers.[45] Exchange, he suggested, is prompted by the text 'bear ye one another's burdens'[46], and begins with a 'continual attention to the needs of one's neighbour.'[47] It is encouraged by the view of human society that we are all members, limbs, 'one of another' that we co-inhere.[48] This is to be practised by substitution, 'as if [the person] had put on the actual body of his neighbour.'[49] Substitution is possible because 'the Divine Word co-inheres in God the Father (as the Father in Him and the Spirit in Both), but also He has substituted His Manhood for ours in the secrets of the Incarnation and Atonement.'[50] Williams' theology makes sense of communal acts and sacrifices that range from carrying a parcel for another to participating in armed conflict.[51] 'This sense of mutual interdependence of human beings was basic to Williams' view of life.'[52]

The Eucharist was foremost in Williams' understanding of community 'where co-inherence is fully in action: He in us and we in Him.'[53] He reiterated

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[42] *BCP*, Post-communion prayer.
[43] Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination*, p. 33.
[44] Ibid, p. 34-5.
[45] Williams, "The Way of Exchange," p. 148. St Antony of Egypt, 'Your life and your death are with your neighbour.'
[46] Galatians 6: 2 Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.
[47] Williams, "The Way of Exchange," p. 150.
[48] Ephesians 4: 25b
[49] Williams, "The Way of Exchange," p. 151. Williams here quotes the monk, Thebald.
[50] Ibid, p. 152.
[51] Ibid, p.153. 'The deaths of those English who are being killed every day, in their manner, instead of' us." Williams was writing during WWII.
[52] Glen Cavaliero, *Charles Williams: Poet of Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 5.
[53] Williams, "The Way of Exchange," p. 154.

here the theology of Thomas Cranmer and Richard Hooker which broke with the dominant medieval understanding of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Rather they insisted that Christ was present when the bread and wine were received (Cranmer used 'partake'), hence 'He in us'. The consequence of the reception (the doctrine was called 'receptionism',) was communion with Christ; the communicant 'may be filled with … grace and heavenly benediction', and fed with 'holy mysteries', and 'spiritual food'.[54] Moreover the communicants are now 'very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son', and hence 'we in Him'.

The physical reception of the sacrament was a demonstration of incarnational theology which, for Williams was also expressed in praying that was not just effected by words. As the Eucharist was made manifest by physical elements, so the human body could for him be an image affirmed as a means of praying.[55] Rowan Williams restated this form of Anglican life in the twenty-first century: 'Remember, Christianity is a contact before it is a message. God is at work, God is communicating himself in flesh and blood, from the first moment Mary embraces her child.'[56] He added that:

> there is something to be touched and sensed in the sheer thereness of the Christian community. If the risen Jesus is not an idea or an image but a living person, we meet him in the persons he has touched, the persons who, whatever their individual failings and fears, have been equipped to take responsibility for his tangible presence in the world.[57]

Alison's Formative Years: the 1920s to the 1940s

The translation of the church of 'England's green and pleasant land' to Australia's 'wide, brown land' in a new Australian state, set up to have no established church but religious equality and liberty, brought about conflicting values and cultural norms.[58] The English church fostered allegiance to the

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[54] William R. Crockett, "Holy Communion," in *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. Stephen Sykes and John Booty, (London: SPCK, 1988). These phrases are from the Holy Communion service in the BCP.

[55] Williams, "The Index of the Body." He gave a simple instruction in prayer to those who sought his counsel by taking their hand and reciting the prayers as he touched the knuckles of their hand.

[56] Williams, *Tokens of Trust*, p. 92.

[57] Ibid, p. 93.

[58] The term, 'paradise of dissent', described the hoped-for freedom of dissenters to worship without censure. Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*; Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*. Chapter 1.

British Empire and imparted, through its prayers and polity, the continued association of church, people, parliament and monarchy.[59] Although church and state in South Australia were in fact politically separated, the Church of England was often given preferential status at public events. Despite the intentions of the founders to create a colony free from religious and class distinctions, a century after settlement, in 1936, the Church of England still retained something of the outlook of an established church and was closely connected with the social elite.[60]

The diocese of Adelaide was inaugurated in 1847. Its first bishop, high churchman Augustus Short, and his successor, G. W. Kennion, who was moderate in his churchmanship, both brought an ethos of moderate ceremonial, piety and learning. St John's, Halifax Street, in the 1920s, reflected this moderate ceremonial, with a raised sanctuary, reredos and lighted candles on the altar.[61] Although it was then nearly a hundred years since the Oxford Movement had initiated a greater emphasis on Holy Communion, the majority of Anglicans would have been monthly communicants, normally attending morning prayer (matins) or evensong, for which there was a great affection as acts of divine service.[62] Alison's first introduction to Anglican worship was at St John's. She remembered walking across the parklands with 'very short legs' to evensong there with Aunts Alice and Annie.[63] This parish church, typical of most Anglican

[59] *BCP*. In the Orders of Service for Morning and Evening Prayer there are prayers for the Queen and Royal Family, to be said twice daily.
[60] For a concise overview of the social context of South Australian Anglicanism see David Hilliard and Arnold D. Hunt, "Religion," in *The Flinders History of South Australia: Social history*, ed. Eric Richards, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986). Dirk van Dissel's study of the social elite in the same volume documents connections with Anglicanism. The Makins (Frank Makin, army officer, Anglican, social origin not known) and the Duffields (Walter Duffield, farm manager, Congregationalist) are listed among the 'Old Gentry', p. 343, 346. They were among those families who adopted Anglicanism as they moved up the social strata and/or married into an Anglican family. For the Makin/Duffield connection, see Chapter 1.
[61] The photograph of St John's in 1880, South Australian Collection, State Library of South Australia. For the change in churchmanship in this period, see David Hilliard, "The Transformation of South Australian Anglicanism 1880-1930 " *Journal of Religious History* 14, no. 1 (1986). On Sundays in 1920 St John's had two services of Holy Communion, at 7am and 8am, matins at 11am and evensong at 7pm. It had also instituted the high-church practice of a Holy Communion service mid-week and on saints' days. St John's Church, Vestry Record Book, State Library of South Australia.
[62] W. S. Pickering, *Anglo-Catholicism: A Study in Ambiguity*, Revised ed, (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2008). See p. 17-24 for Pickering's analysis of the confusing terminology associated with Anglo-Catholicism such as Tractarians, ritualists, etc. There is a helpful diagram on p. 40 on the different groups which developed from the Oxford Movement.
[63] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 3.

churches in Adelaide, with its neo-Gothic architecture and Victorian furnishing, represented the Englishness of colonial Anglicanism which suited the sensitivities of Alison's Victorian aunts.[64] Matins and evensong were attractive as musical treats. They also satisfied church-going obligations for Anglicans still suspicious or uncomfortable with more regular Holy Communion which was seen as Romish especially for people moving out of their nonconformist backgrounds. The rise of Anglo-Catholicism and the introduction of early morning Holy Communion did not completely replace these services on Sundays in all but the 'advanced' Anglo-Catholic churches until a combination of liturgical and social factors changed the face of Sunday worship in the 1960s.[65]

Morning and evening prayer have the same basic structure within which canticles vary for morning or evening and scripture readings and psalms are set for morning and evening of each day. The beautiful cadences of the Prayer Book's poetic prose were enhanced by choral and congregational singing. At St John's the music tradition was complemented by a pipe organ and the musical prowess of its then rector.[66] As at many parish churches, a robed choir led the congregation in singing the psalms, canticles, versicles and responses in Anglican chant. The choir performed anthems after the collects as directed by the Prayer Book rubrics, '*in Quires and Places where they sing*.' The congregation joined in the singing of four or five hymns, adding melody and harmony and creating affective means for praise and adoration. The hymns also contributed theological input. Alison's natural ability as a singer, her love of music and her poetic sensibilities, all received stimulation and encouragement and this fostered the development of her spiritual life. She reflected that she was greatly blessed because she grew up within the sound of churches with great music traditions.[67]

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[64] AG *Int*, 14 June 2006-2, p. 6; 13 September 2006, p. 5; 6 November 2006, p. 6.
[65] Gabriel Hebert, ed. *The Parish Communion: A Book of Essays* (London: SPCK, 1961). In the flourish of learned works produced by Anglo-Catholics, Hebert's was influential. Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985*, p. 259. At the same time, worship patterns were affected both by the introduction of television and the liturgical changes within the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican 11.
[66] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*. St John's had the diocese's first pipe organ, p. 12. The rector was the musically gifted Rev. H. P. Finnis, see below.
[67] St Theodore's, St John's, and the Cathedral were all furnished with substantial pipe organs. St Augustine's, her school's church, had a 'fine instrument' which was the first pipe organ used in St Peter's Cathedral. St Augustine's, *Centenary Booklet*, 1970.

4 ALISON AND ANGLICANISM

The Anglican choir tradition owes much to its Benedictine monastic inheritance, not only musically but also architecturally. The stalls, which faced each other across the transept between the sanctuary and the nave, developed in style and purpose from chapels where monks prayed and sang. In the local parish church (and the cathedral) they formed a literal and figurative path through which the worshipper moved to the altar rail to receive Holy Communion. The ministers shared this medieval spiritual landscape; their prayer desks were next to the choir stalls, near the nave and from there they led worship and prayed with choir and people. Here too they said their daily offices as laid down in the Prayer Book.[68] The priest kept the monastic rule so that the people might also learn to pray; the same morning and evening prayer said daily as used on Sunday.[69] Caroline Divine, George Herbert, famously led his family, and the village where he was incumbent, to observe the daily offices. When newly married, Alison wanted to share the daily offices with her husband, John but he refused. In 1976 Alison claimed her right to share the church's public devotional life. She bought a new Book of Common Prayer and labelled it her 'Office Book for use at St Mary Magdalene's.'[70] She accompanied successive parish priests at St Mary Magdalene's in saying the offices until 2007 when she became too infirm.[71]

Alison wrote that the gifts she received from the Church of England 'were solid liturgical treasures.'[72] The most solid of these treasures, the BCP, she encountered at St John's, and the other churches she attended, St Theodore's,

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[68] *BCP*, Concerning the Services of the Church. 'And all Priests and Deacons are to say daily the Morning and Evening Prayer either privately or openly.' For a background of Anglicanism's Benedictine inheritance see Jane Tomaine, *St Benedict's Toolbox: The Nuts and Bolts of Everyday Benedictine Living*, (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2005).

[69] *BCP*. 'And the Curate …shall cause a Bell to be tolled thereunto a convenient time before he begin, that the people may come to hear God's word and pray with him.'

[70] It is inscribed 'Alison Grace Gent. Office Book. 14 July 1976. St Mary Magdalene's Church, Moore Street, Adelaide.' Alison's journals of the time record her daily attendance with Father Stephen Nicholls, incumbent, 1975-1987.

[71] Father Grant Bullen, rector, St Mary Magdalene's, 1998-2003, reported that 'once a week we faithfully shared the morning office and then we'd go out for coffee and she would raise and discuss a dozen or so topics in half an hour and then drive off in her beaten-up Volkswagen. It was a great point of connection between us.' Bullen, email, 21 February 2013. Father Ron Dowling, rector, 2003-10, reported that 'Alison did come to MP and occasionally EP in my early years, but it became less regular as time went by. It probably ceased around 2007. As I remember it was never really daily.' Dowling, email, 21 March 2013.

[72] AG *PJ* 2, 28 January 1979. An allusion to the last lines of John Newton's hymn, 'Glorious things of thee are spoken': 'solid joys and lasting treasure / none but Zion's children know.'

Toorak Gardens, St Augustine's, Unley and St Peter's Cathedral.[73] The content and presentation of the liturgy reflected an Anglicanism that was, and remains for the most part, an 'extremely traditional form of Christianity.'[74] Despite the form, the modesty of decoration and all things being done 'decently and in order', the atmosphere for worship was highly affective. The reading of set pieces of scripture from the Prayer Book calendar (whether for the daily offices or the celebration of Holy Communion) in worship, as prayer, affected the reception the Bible. Scriptural allusions permeated the worship - in prayers, versicles and the chanting of psalms and canticles. The doctrines of the church were similarly received, the creed being sung and often printed, along with the Ten Commandments, as decoration on the walls. Scenes from scripture, representations of the saints and theological and doctrinal statements, such as the Resurrection and Ascension, were rendered affective to the senses in stained glass windows. Such windows were often art works of the highest order.[75] St Augustine's 'had a particularly significant collection' including the east and west windows made by the William Morris Company in London.[76] St John's west window was also made by Morris, but to the design of Edward Burne-Jones.[77] Worship in this context does not encourage a contentious attitude to scripture or doctrine; it is not the place for discussion. What one does in church is 'divine service.'[78] Alison was caught, in her formative years, by this style and content of worship so that, invited into a spiritual experience, she developed 'a certain perspective on life in the presence of God.'[79]

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[73] Kenneth Stevenson and Bryan Spinks, eds, *The Identity of Anglican Worship* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse, 1991). The relatively homogenous practice of Anglicanism worldwide was sustained by the use of the BCP and the Authorised Version of the Bible. A few local revisions to the Prayer Book were attempted, e.g. in USA. In 1978 *An Australian Prayer Book* was published and replaced the BCP Australia-wide with few exceptions.

[74] Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination*. It is 'suspicious of all conceptions of Christianity that know too much, whether through the hubris of the intellect or the unwary pride of "enthusiasm"', p. 34.

[75] Peter Donovan and June Donovan, *A Guide to Stained Glass Windows in and About Adelaide*, (Adelaide: Donovan and Associates, 1983).

[76] Ibid, p. 58-9. The windows are significant 'because of the manner in which they illustrate design tends within the company', p.10. They were installed in 1928 prior to Alison beginning at Walford House School.

[77] Ibid, p. 33-4.

[78] It is useful to note the different titles for church events which reflect the primary purpose and theology of the Christian denomination; cf. meeting, service, communion, mass, chapel, assembly, liturgy.

[79] Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination*, p. 15.

Alison, nurtured in the beauty of holiness, experienced the latent learning contained in other solid treasures such as church architecture and the shape of the liturgy, which was provided, in each of the churches she attended, with minimal variation depending on the taste and resources of the congregation and the rector. St Theodore's was described by one rector as 'a perfect architectural response to the transcendence of God.'[80] When Alison began to attend St Theodore's each week after her baptism in 1929, the pattern of services was similar to St John's a decade earlier except that matins had been replaced by a sung Holy Communion on three Sundays of the month. The popular service of matins was retained for the fourth Sunday. There was a weekday Holy Communion at 10am, and on saints' days. For important festivals, such as Holy Week and the week after Whitsun, there was a Holy Communion service each day. The rector constantly exhorted his parishioners to more frequent and regular attendance at Holy Communion.[81]

In all the churches Alison attended as a young person the centrality of the Lord's Supper was indicated by the altar's central position in the cruciform interior and by its separation from the nave by altar rails. The altar was surrounded by stained glass windows and was modestly adorned with a decorated altar frontal, a plain brass cross and two candles, and covered with a 'fair, linen cloth.' The sanctuary was elevated so that even during non-sacramental services the holiest of holies was in view, reminding the worshipper of the sacredness of Holy Communion. The presence of Christ in the Eucharist was honoured but its precise nature was left undefined.[82] Alison's practice of attending an early morning Eucharist each day, begun in her teenage years, sustained her spiritually throughout her life.[83]

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[80] Judith Dimond, "Celebrating 90 Years of Parish Life. The Anglican Church of Australia. St Theodore's Church Toorak Gardens, 1914-2004," (Adelaide: The 90th Dedication Committee, 2004). Father Anthony Taylor, reminiscences, 2007.
[81] Rector's letter, St Theodore's *Church Notes*, 1929 to 1935.
[82] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*, p. 14, 20. David Hilliard, "The Anglo-Catholic Tradition in Australian Anglicanism," in *Re-Visioning Australian Colonial Christianity: New Essays in the Australian Christian Experience 1788-1900*, ed. Mark Hutchinson and Edmund Campion, (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994).
[83] AG *NB* 4, 24 August 1973. St Peter's Cathedral, in 1907, was the first cathedral in Australia to have a daily service of Holy Communion. Hilliard, "The Transformation of South Australian Anglicanism 1880-1930," p. 46. As a regular parishioner in her teenage years, Alison was introduced to the practice.

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Those churches which represented the extremes of Anglican diversity were small in number and on the margins of the typical liturgical life of the diocese of Adelaide. Holy Trinity, North Terrace, St Bartholomew's, Norwood and St Matthew's, Kensington were the largest of the evangelical parishes.[84] For Holy Trinity 'faithfulness to the scriptures and the Thirty-nine Articles has been a hallmark of the congregation and rectors since 1836 and should remain so.'[85] St Bartholomew's seemed less consistently evangelical. Two rectors of the period, E. L. Harvie (1929-36) and A. E. Weston (1936-1947), who were moderate and not evangelicals, encouraged a more sacramental church life. L.E. W. Renfrey and Malcolm Lindsay, colleagues and friends of the Gents, worshipped there on occasion and men from the congregation went to test their vocations at St Barnabas' College and St Michael's House.[86] Until the 1940s the most advanced-Anglo-Catholic parishes were St George's, Goodwood, St James', Mile End, St Paul's, Port Adelaide, St Oswald's, Parkside and St Mary Magdalene's in the city.[87] Alison's formation was, however, in the moderate high-church tradition; neither evangelicalism nor advanced Anglo-Catholicism held attractions for her before she fell under the influence of John Gent. In the years after her marriage Alison took on many of the forms of piety practised by Anglo-Catholic priests.[88] Even within both extremes the central binding liturgical force for her, as with most Anglicans, was the BCP.[89]

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[84] Brian Dickey, *Holy Trinity Adelaide 1836-1988: The History of a City Church*, (Adelaide: Trinity Church Trust Inc, 1988). Max Cullen, ed. *A Witness to Faith and Mission: St Bartholomew's Anglican Church Norwood 1856-1996* (Adelaide: St Bartholomew's Church, 1997). St Bartholomew's opposed high-church developments under Bishop Short and remained steadfastly low-church throughout its history, p. 5.

[85] Dickey, *Holy Trinity, Adelaide 1836-1988*, p. 7.

[86] Cullen, ed. *A Witness to Faith and Mission*, p. 47f.

[87] These Adelaide parishes were notable in relation to Anglo-Catholicism in the national church. The first recorded use of incense was at St Oswald's Parkside, in 1981 and St George's was one of the four churches seen as flagships of Anglo-Catholicism in Australia. David Hilliard, "Anglo-Catholicism in Australia, c.1860-1960," in *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World 1830-1930*, ed. Stewart J. Brown and Peter B. Nockles, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 118.

[88] AG *PJ* 2, 28 January 1979. 'I was confronted … with some "objects", now vague, which represented the Riches of Christ as Anglican Catholicism – distinct from the Protestant tradition – hands them down to her children.'

[89] Hilliard, "The Anglo-Catholic Tradition in Australian Anglicanism." The two principal Anglo-Catholic parishes, St George's Goodwood and St Mary Magdalene, Moore St, Adelaide, used the English Missal as an adjunct to the BCP.

Priestly Influences

It is one of the blessings of Alison's spiritual growth that during the years she was maturing in her faith, she attended churches led by men who were well educated, spiritually wise, intellectually lively and deeply religious. In Anglican polity, the parish priest, by virtue of his ordination, had the 'the cure of souls.'[90] Such a duty is to be understood as more than being in charge of the parish as a leader. The BCP urged public confession of sin on the people and absolution and remission of sins 'to be pronounced by the Priest.' The need for the acknowledgement of sin and its connection to the cure of souls is made by 'the archetypal guide to the cure of souls in the West, Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis.*'[91] A priest's personal piety could be an example to those in his 'cure', but more importantly, his formation in 'right judgement, prudence and knowledge to fulfil the role of teaching, warning and encouragement to conversion which the reconciliation of penitents demands.'[92]

The Reverend H. P. Finnis MA was rector of St John's from 1918 to 1927. His was the priestly presence, in cassock, surplice and stole, the robes worn for evening prayer, which first impinged on Alison's fertile young mind and soul. This presence, scholarly, devout, gentle and encouraging, comes through in the letters and articles he contributed to the parish magazine.[93] While he exhorted his parishioners to more frequent attendance at Holy Communion, it was so they might participate in a 'divine society [the church], which has a divine source and origin and a divine life for the enrichment and uplifting of the members of that society.'[94] His view of the church came directly from his belief in the Incarnation as propounded by Gore and his co-contributors in *Lux Mundi*. Finnis stated what he believed was 'an essential truth' about the personhood of Jesus Christ, that there was 'no temporary dwelling in a human body, but the union of humanity with the divine nature which was never to be broken.'[95] Finnis's observation of life was infused with this theology which blessed all

[90] *BCP*, The Ordinal. The bishop's exhortation: 'How great a treasure is committed to your charge.' The bishop's question: 'so that you may teach the people committed to your cure and charge.'
[91] Robin Ward, *On Christian Priesthood*, (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 129. It 'largely consists of a list of different sinners whose admonition is the pastor's primary duty.'
[92] Ibid, p. 136.
[93] St John the Evangelist, Halifax Street, *Parish Magazine* 1920-1927.
[94] Ibid, April 1923.
[95] Ibid, May 1923.

human action and endeavour. He wrote on the signs and symbols of the stained glass windows at St John's, not only giving information but also pointing to them as 'God's presence in our midst.'[96] He extolled the spiritual benefits of the atmosphere of church worship, achieved by ceremonial, music and art, on adults and children. He encouraged his parishioners to gives thanks because 'the soul that is sensitive to the touch of God is continually finding cause for thanksgiving.'[97] There are many aspects of Finnis's teaching and way of life that were replicated in Alison's, such as the love of poetry and a knowledge of spiritual writers. He quoted the poets (Tennyson, for example) when writing on preparation for communion: 'God fulfils himself in many ways.'[98] He quoted spiritual writers (Francis Thompson from the nineteenth century and St Leo the Great from the fifth) in his discourses on fasting.[99] It was not only scholarship and wide reading which enhanced Finnis's instilling the art of Christian living in his congregation. Importantly, it was his emphasis on the essential qualities of self and community drawn from incarnational theology. He insisted that: 'the religion of Jesus Christ is for our whole nature, body, soul and spirit.'[100] He urged that all be done 'for Love's sake', because 'Love incarnate was crucified' and to 'let [God's] claim of love upon our lives find a stronger and truer response on our part.'[101]

In the wider diocese Finnis was a leader in scholarship and priestly vocation. It was his initiative that brought together the 'Nara Group':

> a small group of like-minded 'moderate" churchmen [who] began meeting each year for a retreat before Lent. … They were mostly university graduates and met regularly for theological study and discussion. [They] included a number of senior men who were listened to with respect at Synod.[102]

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[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid, July 1923.
[98] Ibid, March 1925. Finnis added that 'the church of our fathers wisely uses all ways that have the sanction of her Lord to bring troubled souls to the source of all comfort, pardon, renewed power and gladness.'
[99] Ibid, February 1925. Thompson, Francis, *Health and Holiness: A Study of the Relations between Brother Ass the Body and his Rider of the Soul.* (1905]. Ibid, February 1922. St Leo the Great, 'the abstinence of the faster must be the refreshment of the hungry.'
[100] Ibid, October 1926.
[101] Ibid, February 1922.
[102] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*, p. 99.

Finnis also shared his thoughts on priesthood with his congregation. We shall see that, in many ways, Alison emulated the qualities of priesthood described in Finnis's quotation from the nineteenth-century French Dominican, Lacordaire: '[A priest is to be] harder than a diamond against pride and corruption, more tender than a mother to all that suffers and that seeks.'[103] Finnis summed up the theological premises propounded by Gore and his successors when he wrote to his parishioners that 'the church of our fathers wisely uses all ways that have the sanction of her Lord to bring troubled souls to the source of all comfort, pardon, renewed power and gladness.'[104]

In 1927 Finnis left St John's to be precentor at St Peter's Cathedral, a position that put him in contact with Alison's godfather, Guy Makin, a warden there. Finnis was also the cathedral organist and choirmaster from 1936 to 1955. As precentor and organist he had a 'deep and lasting influence' on the men and boys of the choir: 'he could make them feel the spiritual power and beauty of what they sang.'[105] Alison began attending the cathedral on Sundays from the age of seventeen and under Finnis's leadership she was admitted to the choir during the war years.[106] It would follow that Alison was similarly affected by his influence as the boys and men, feeling the spiritual power of what she sang. She regarded her time in the choir as her only official ministry in the church.[107] Their connection continued as Finnis was Alison's spiritual director and also counsellor during her early years of marriage.[108] Their long and spiritually intimate relationship carried through to his retirement when he lived near Alison's family in Rose Park and attended St Theodore's until his death on 28 December 1960.[109] In a tribute, Bishop T. T. Reed described him as 'one of the most beloved and distinguished clergyman in the Diocese… a devoted parish

[103] St John the Evangelist, Halifax Street, *Parish Magazine*, July 1925.
[104] Ibid, March 1925.
[105] H. A. Cavalier, *ACG* February 1961, p. 8.
[106] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 6.
[107] AG *Int*, 28-9 November 2005, p. 7. 'That was my one and only kind of Anglican vocation that was ever accepted.'
[108] AG *DJ 2,* 20 April 1958. 'Give thanks for Canon F. – for his long guidance of me and his presence at St Clements, especially today.'
[109] H. P. Finnis, *Meditations on the Sunday Collects*, (London: SPCK, 1962). p.v-vi. Alison recorded in her copy of this book that she 'saw him last on 22.xi.60, on St Cecilia's Day', p. v-vi.

priest, a wise spiritual director, a remarkably fine preacher, and an outstanding musician.'[110]

The rector of St Augustine's was chaplain of Walford House School where Alison's sisters were students, Betty from 1927 and Jan from 1928.[111] All three sisters were baptised at St Augustine's on 15 June 1929 by its popular rector, E. H. Fernie.[112] Alison began at the school the next year, so she briefly experienced his ministry and leadership. On his last Sunday in 1929, before he went to an important parish in Melbourne, Fernie was farewelled at four morning celebrations of Holy Communion with a total of eight hundred communicants. Later more than a thousand people packed the church for Evensong.[113] Fernie also was a member of the Nara Group.[114] He belonged to a generation of clergymen who promoted religious observance, such as the three-hour Stations of the Cross on Good Friday[115] and daily reading of scripture.[116] Fernie's parish letters reveal his joyous and positive faith. He was affectionate and encouraging, giving ardent advice such as 'Lent is an adventure of the soul.'[117] He frankly revealed his disappointments: 'one does feel horribly the growing indifference of those one has come to rely upon.'[118] His enthusiasm for the human spiritual enterprise and God's created universe was testimony to the influence of Gore's incarnational theology. The tutelage of highly regarded, theologically adept priests continued to be available to the young girl.

If Alison recorded her religious insights in her school years they are not available. The consequence of her baptism was that nine-year old Alison went by herself and of her own volition every Sunday to St Theodore's, Toorak Gardens.[119] This was a commitment and expression of belonging and devotion;

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[110] *ACG,* February 1961, p. 3. 'He stood out among men through the depth and intensity of his spiritual life.' H. A. Cavalier, obituary, *ACG,* February 1961, p. 8.
[111] See below for the school's Anglican influence.
[112] Baptised by E.H. Fernie, 15 June 1929. Copy of baptism register entry supplied by St Augustine's, 2009.
[113] *ACG,* October 1929, p. 14. 'The attendances were so large, and the feelings of regret expressed were so obviously sincere that one wonders whether Mr Fernie's ministry in this parish was really finished.'
[114] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*, p. 99.
[115] St Augustine's Unley, *Parish Magazine*, January 1932.
[116] Ibid, March 1932.
[117] Ibid, March 1929.
[118] Ibid, August 1929. Fernie's letter of resignation to the parish council.
[119] AG *Int*, 29 November 2006/2, p. 5. 'I loved Canon King and he was on the side of Fr Wise.'

and in this parish she was again to benefit from the ministry of an able priest. Alison was drawn to the ministry of Canon F. H. King, incumbent from 1908 to 1944, 'a deeply devoted man of God, learned but austere, who was dedicated to leading his parishioners in their intensive involvement in both the spiritual and social life of St Theodore's.'[120] During his time an imposing basilican church, designed in Italianate style by the architectural firm Woods, Bagot, Jory and Laybourne-Smith, was dedicated on 14 October 1914.[121] Halls, rectory and playing courts were added creating an establishment that catered for physical as well as spiritual needs. Canon King 'nurtured flourishing activities which included Sunday School, the boys' choir, senior and junior Bible classes … and also tennis and basketball clubs.'[122] This style of leadership and activity incorporated all human endeavour in its orbit, embracing people's everyday lives and sanctifying their work and play. It substantiates Lindbeck's observation on the development of a spiritual life that 'ritual, prayer and example are normally more important than formulated statements of belief.'[123] Although Alison did not engage in the parish sporting activities and other social past-times, she was, nevertheless, instilled with King's honouring of humanity's ordinariness. With incarnational fervour he declared that 'every true lover of God and of Australia … cannot do too much to extend true religion so that our beautiful land may be a happier place to live.'[124]

While King ministered only in South Australia, his total dedication to people and parish linked him with those priests who worked in the slums of England's large cities and who were the heroes of the Anglo-Catholic movement.[125] His brief letters in the church paper, which constantly exhorted

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[120] Dimond, "Celebrating 90 years of parish life."
[121] Ibid. An S. Pointer is reported to have worked on the drawings. St Theodore's, *Church Notes*, July 1928. An S. Pointer was a server in the parish. Andrew Peake, *St Theodore's Anglican Church, Toorak Gardens, South Australia: An Architectural History*, (Armidale, NSW: University of New England, 1992). Peake's paper gives an account of the building's inception and progress. He noted that the church and hall are on the State Heritage Register. They 'form a strong and attractive visual statement, continuing the historical character of Prescott Avenue and illustrating the early twentieth century character of church architecture through much of the Adelaide suburban area', p. 10. An architectural drawing of the proposed building hangs in the priest's vestry.
[122] Dimond, "Celebrating 90 years of parish life."
[123] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 35.
[124] St Theodore's, *Church Notes*, April 1931.
[125] 'The History of St Theodore's', pamphlet, c. 1988. The unnamed author cited Rev. King as 'working in the London slums.' There is no record of this in either Reed's *Anglican Clergymen* or

his parishioners to more frequent and regular worship, and to take on sacrificial living and giving, indicate the richness of the theology he lived out:

> I urge you to more regular and frequent acts of communion as our most perfect act of worship, as our most acceptable prayer, as the means whereby we have union with Our Lord and receive grace for the strengthening of our souls.[126]

This ministry of action, prompted by incarnational theology, became a model for Alison's own attitude towards others, and especially when she tried to relate to her poor neighbours in Kilburn. There are rare written glimpses of King's passion for spiritual growth, such as the following written shortly before Alison began regular Sunday church attendance. He urged that 'we grow in discipline and in knowledge and peace, use Lent well and be determined to finish it nearer to God than we are now.'[127]

Confirmation and Commitment

Alison was confirmed 17 August 1934 at St Augustine's with other girls from Walford House School.[128] 'We had the Rector of Unley as our chaplain, Frank Weston, actually, and he prepared us for confirmation.'[129] Rev. Weston lacked Rev. Fernie's positive and personal approach. His report of the confirmation is an example of the contrast in their style. Weston noted that one hundred candidates were presented to the Bishop of Riverina. He made no mention of where the candidates were from nor was anyone prayed for by

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King's obituary in *ACG* (May 1948). T. T. Reed, *Anglican Clergymen in South Australia in the Nineteenth Century*, (Gumeracha, SA: Gould Books, 1986). For a discussion on slum priests see below.

[126] St Theodore's, *Church Notes,* November 1929.

[127] Ibid, February 1929.

[128] A Rule of Life in Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving and a Daily prayer was printed on the confirmation certificate. Appendix A: 1. 'The chaplain prepared annual groups for confirmation, assisted by Miss Baker who conducted catechism classes. … The special link with St Augustine's had been strengthened since 1930 when Walford girls had undertaken to care for the Children's Corner in the Church, keeping it dusted and arranging flowers.' Helen Jones and Nina Morrison, *Walford a History of the School: A Memorial to Mabel Jewell Baker*, (Adelaide: Hyde Park Press, 1968), p. 56.

AG *Int*, 28 November 2006/2, p. 7. Her mother, Lavinia Constance Hogben, was confirmed into the Anglican Church some months before at St Theodore's on 6 November 1933. St Theodore's *Church Notes,* December 1933.

name. The large number of candidates was not celebrated nor was Walford House School mentioned.[130]

An Anglican spirit did pervade the school and Alison was deeply influenced by the ministry of Miss Mabel Jewell Baker, who was the owner of Walford House School and its headmistress from 1917 to 1955. Miss Baker was a model of Christian service who reinforced the teaching Alison received at home. She imbued the school with a strong Anglican ethos[131] Alison said that: 'Mother wanted us to go there because she had been at teachers' college with the headmistress, Mabel Baker.'[132]

Alison remembered her confirmation as a profoundly significant religious experience.[133] She committed her life to God, vowing that what she did in the future was to be in God's service. '[I was] a serious person wanting to find out what was there in the things I'd been told mattered.'[134] Alison's response was not unique, although for many it was a cultural or family rite of passage. Those who prepared for confirmation were expected to learn the catechism by heart. A question, 'What is thy duty towards thy Neighbour?', answered with an expository moral code, taught the consideration of others' welfare.[135] Missionary zeal was not a touchstone of moderate Anglicanism but the expectation that Christians would serve God in the church and the world was implicit in such lines from the BCP as 'we here present to thee ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice.'[136]

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[130] St Augustine's Unley, *Parish Magazine*, September 1934.
[131] Miss Baker led the school's morning devotions, spoke of religion as 'the handmaid of education' and in 1931, of the building of a new social order 'based on true values and through which ran, as a golden thread, a spiritual conception of life.' Jones and Morrison, *Walford, a History of the School*, p. 55. Miss Mabel Jewell Baker OBE was a significant and influential educationist as owner and headmistress of Walford House School from 1917-1955, p. 56. See also Marilyn Haysom and Helen Reid, *Walford: A Centenary History*, (Adelaide: Board of Governors of Walford Anglican School for Girls Inc, 1994).
[132] AG *Int*, 6 November 2006, p. 5. 'It was actually a very Anglican school because the Baker family were very Anglican. It wasn't an official church school. We had a more or less official attachment to the parish of Unley.' AG *Int*, 29 November 2005-2, p. 3. Miss Baker supported Alison's mother in the face of 'grandpa's teeth', disapproval from Alfred's father, the Reverend George Hogben, Baptist minister at North Unley.
[133]AG *Int*, 29 November 2006/2, p. 4. 'It was my confirmation I remember taking *very* seriously… I still remember really meaning it.' Alison was proud that acclaimed Anglo-Catholic, Bishop Halse, had confirmed her in the absence of Bishop Thomas. Interview notes, 31 January 2006.
[134] AG *PRH*, p. 12.
[135] *BCP*, A Catechism.
[136] *BCP*. From a post-communion prayer, a paraphrase of Romans 12:1.

Set an example by the scholarly Canon Finnis, Alison expected that her future service in the church would involve learning. Her sights were set high for she wanted to learn Greek. The learned priests at whose feet she had sat would have noted in sermons the original Greek of New Testament words and phrases. It was the language of the Greco-Roman world from which Christianity arose, needed to exegete the New Testament and to read the Early Church Fathers. Alison knew if she had been a boy she would have attended St Peter's College and been able to learn Greek there.[137] The Benedictine ideal of study, prayer and service embodied in Anglicanism inspired in Alison the scholarly pursuit of the Christian life. The love of learning and the desire for God, which stirred the ardent young Christian, began her disenfranchisement in the church for her newly awakened call to the Christian life was curtailed.[138] Her unfulfilled desire to learn Greek, and acceptance of the limitation of not being able to study it in the school context, prefigured the conflicts that were to arise between what she wanted to do in the church in the light of her intellectual ability and religious passions and how little success those aspirations realised.

University, Anglo-Catholicism and the Caroline Divines

Alison's student university years spanned 1938-1946, and during this time she passed from undergraduate to tutor and lecturer.[139] While her academic interest inclined towards English literature, she also studied French and Latin, all of which gave a depth to her understanding of human endeavour. Her particular field was the major English poets. While she developed her intellectual powers and academic rigour, she participated in theological discussions in the ecumenical Student Christian Movement and at meetings with other Anglican students.[140] The stimulating environment helped her gain a wider knowledge and appreciation of the church, theology and scripture which she could then apply to her field of study. While gaining Honours degrees in

[137] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 4.
[138] Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, 3rd ed, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), p. 6. Leclercq explored the relationship between theology, spirituality and cultural history contending they can never be dissociated.
[139] At this time such work in the English Department was often undertaken by post-graduate students who were not appointed to official positions.
[140] AG *Int*, 13 February 2006, p. 7. John Gent was president of both SCM and the Arts Association.

French and English, Alison concentrated her study on the seventeenth-century metaphysical poets, and other Caroline Divines.[141] These literary treasures were guiding lights illuminating all aspects of her academic and church and daily life, surrounding her with their genius and infusing her with their spirit. She becaome an inheritor of the Anglican form of life they had helped create.

Alison's reading of these Divines was reinforced by her spiritual guide, Canon Finnis, who gave her Lancelot Andrewes' *Private Devotions* a few months before her marriage.[142] Some forty-five years later Alison was moved by the comments of Adelaide's newly elected archbishop, Dr Ian George:

> I see the roots of Anglicanism in the Bible, the Early Church Fathers of the Church and the work of Hooker, Jewel, Laud and Andrewes. I'm devoted to the poetry of George Herbert, John Donne and Vaughan.[143]

Alison was pleased that his 'spirituality was formed by an admiration for the Caroline Divines', and that he shared her love of the 'ethos of Anglicanism.'[144] She frequently referred to his statement in interviews and conversations in order to emphasise their common heritage.

Canon Finnis's gift to Alison was dedicated with a quotation from Andrewes:

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[141] The terminology for the Divines and the criteria for those it covers are fluid. Booty referred to them as Anglican Divines suggesting 'a case can also be made for including metaphysical poets, especially for Donne and Herbert.' John Booty, "Standard Divines," in *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. S. Sykes and J. Booty, (London: SPCK, 1988), p. 164. Elmen argued that 'George Herbert's *The Elixir* is perhaps the best known poetical example of the Caroline translation of theory into praxis':

> Teach me my God and King
> In all things thee to see,
> And what I do in any thing,
> To do it as for thee …
>
> A servant with this clause
> Makes drudgerie divine;
> Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
> Makes that and th' action fine.

Paul Elmen, "Anglican Morality," in *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. S. Sykes and J. Booty, (London: SPCK, 1988), p. 327. The poem is a well-known hymn, however its theology and sentiment did not warrant its inclusion in the ecumenical Australian hymnbook, *Together in Song,* published in 1999.

[142] Lancelot Andrewes, *The Private Devotions of Lancelot Andrewes*, trans. John Henry Newman and John Mason Neale, (London: H. R. Allenson, c.1840). Written on the endpaper, 'To Alison, June, 1946 from HPF.' This was six months before her wedding.

[143] *ACG,* April 1991, p. 7. Transcribed by Alison into her copy of *Private Devotions.*

[144] Alison's comments in her copy of *Private Devotions.*

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> Teach me the wholesome things that I know not; Keep me in the true things I know; correct me wherein I am in error, confirm me wherein I waver; preserve me from false and noxious things, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Taken from 'A caution before preaching from St Fulgentius', the quotation seems itself to be a caution to Alison, then preparing for her marriage to the gifted but questionably wholesome John Gent.[145] The style of Alison's own prayers owes much to Andrewes.

John Gent had a commanding impact on Alison's Anglicanism. He was one of a group of militant young Anglo-Catholic priests who emerged from St Barnabas' College in the early 1940s. Among the others were Arnold Bowers, Errol Pfitzner, Malcolm Lindsay, Lionel Renfrey and Gordon Williams. They adopted the title 'Father', hitherto rare in Adelaide, used the English Missal in the celebration of 'Mass', wore birettas, scorned Protestantism and rebelled against moderate Prayer Book Catholicism.[146] Older Anglicans, of whom Alison's godfather, Guy Makin was one, did not approve the Romish title 'Father', or the use of the word 'Mass', or other aspects of extreme Anglo-Catholicism. John and Alison had competing intellects and a shared involvement in the church. If Alison encouraged John to read the Caroline Divines (John's copy of Andrewes' sermons remained among Alison's possessions)[147], John entranced Alison into the Anglo-Catholic tradition. She became as enamoured of it as she was of John himself.

> John was so entangled in the strong Anglo-Catholic influence I experienced which would have begun in the Student Christian Movement because I arrived [at the university] as a fairly ordinary

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[145] Ibid, p. 276.

[146] David Hilliard, email, 23 December 2012. Rejection of the Apostolic threefold order of ministry led to an antagonism towards Protestantism. Anglo-Catholics saw themselves as inheritors with Rome and Constantinople of Apostolic succession. The ancient church comprised differing groups: the orthodox (Greek, eastern, incarnational) and the Latin (western, legalist). Arthur Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed, (London: Longmans, 1956), p. 139f. The formal schism between the two in 1054 did not disrupt the catholicity of either. At the Reformation the church in England claimed continuing catholicity by retaining the 'four outward and visible bonds of unity universally accepted: the tradition of faith … embodied in the catholic creeds; the system of sacraments; the succession of bishops; and the scriptures.' Charles Gore, *The Religion of the Church as Presented in the Church of England: A Manual of Membership*, (London: Mowbray, 1916), p. 166-7; Vernon Staley, *The Catholic Religion: A Manual of Instruction for Members of the Anglican Communion*, 26th ed, (London: Mowbray, 1948).

[147] Lancelot Andrewes, *Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity*, (London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden & Welsh, n.d.). Copy with John Gent's signature dated 1941.

> Anglican with a reasonably high-church parish priest and there were such a lot of Anglican theologians in the group, Malcolm Lindsay, John Gent, Will Thomas.[148]

St Mary Magdalene's, John Gent's family church, was an example of an inner city Anglo-Catholic church with a mission to the poor.[149] A highly decorated sanctuary and elaborate ceremonial were characteristic of the Anglo-Catholic mission church.[150] Despite its bare floorboards and rudimentary seating, the atmosphere in St Mary's was evocative of godliness, with statues of Mary and the saints, the air sensuous with mystery and the lingering smell of incense, and the centrality of the Eucharist heightened by its reserved presence in the embellished tabernacle behind the altar.[151] The altar was adorned with six candles as opposed to the customary two candles on a high-church altar and none on the evangelical holy table. The BCP was supplemented by the English Missal, a sacramentary containing prayers and readings for saints and holy days of both the English and Roman churches. The calendar lists twenty-three feasts for the Blessed Virgin Mary and included popes and obscure Latin saints, far exceeding the moderation of high-church Anglicanism. While Alison's introduction to Anglo-Catholicism opened the door to a wider experience of devotion and piety, it narrowed her into its more legalistic and less tolerant

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[148] AG *Int*, 29 November 2006-2, p. 8-9. The SCM conference at Corio in 1941 debated 'The Movement's work in time of war.' Renate Howe, *A Century of Influence: The Australian Student Christian Movement 1896-1996*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), p. 219-20.

[149] John Devenport, *St Mary Magdalene's Church, Adelaide: The First 100 Years*, (Adelaide: The Author, 1986), p. 5-6. The church was situated in 'Moore Street [which] … had a relatively high population density but was comprised essentially of lower income people.' 'The Bishop commended … this development for he said that the Church of England must make it quite clear that she is the friend of the poor and not only of the rich.' The mission model took its example from the mission 'settlements' founded in the East End of London and other cities by public schools and colleges at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. S. C. Carpenter, *Church and People 1789-1899: A History of the Church of England from William Wilberforce to "Lux Mundi"*, (London: SPCK, 1933), p. 334. It was here the 'slum-ritualists connected Tractarian theology with the life of the poor', p. 327.

[150] Devenport, *St Mary Magdalene's Church, Adelaide*. By 1890 'a set of silver communion vessel, violet frontal, coloured window and an American organ' were gifts to enhance the ceremonial, p. 7. Carpenter, *Church and People, 1789-1899*, p. 213. 'For the sake of the poor whom [the slum-priests] loved, they desired very earnestly to set forth the glory of God and the beauty of holiness. It seemed to them intensely important that the Holy Communion should have the chief place in Christian worship. To this end they adorned and beautified their altars, and they multiplied the number of celebrations.'

[151] The church still had its original pews and untreated floor boards when the author attended Benediction with Alison in 2006. Photograph of church interior, c 1900, Devenport, *St Mary Magdalene's Church, Adelaide*, p. 10. Until the 1960s reservation of the sacrament was confined to definitely Anglo-Catholic churches. The middle-of-the-road churches kept the reserved sacrament in an aumbry set in the north wall of the sanctuary.

attitudes.[152] It might be said that in this period Alison moved to the right theologically.

The 'advanced' Anglo-Catholic clergyman wore distinctive clothing. His day attire was a Roman-style black cassock and cincture over a black clergy shirt, black trousers and black shoes and socks. For non-sacramental services he wore a lace-fringed cotta over the cassock. At Mass, lace-edged and embroidered albs were worn underneath fiddle-backed and highly decorated chasubles. The rich decoration contrasted with the plain Anglican surplice and less flamboyant gothic-styled chasubles worn by moderate clergymen. Worship, too, was elaborate. Benediction, the service for the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, showed the extent to which Anglicanism stretched. Holding the consecrated host aloft in the monstrance was in opposition to Article 28 of the Thirty-nine Articles in a way that taking the sacrament consecrated at the Sunday service to the sick and housebound was not.[153] Regular private confession was encouraged. Its practices elevated what the Prayer Book called 'those five commonly called Sacraments – confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony and extreme unction … to be counted as Sacraments.'[154] The Catechism and Article 25 set apart the two dominical sacraments, 'Baptism and the Supper of the Lord' only 'as generally necessary to salvation.'[155]

Devotional life was strongly external, in word and deed and demand; however the colour, emotion and certainty of purpose which captivated Alison were far removed from the restrained worship of the middle-of-the-road Anglicanism of her upbringing in which communal and devotional activities

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[152] Alison's mother wrote to her sister Alice thanking her for her letter on [secular] Mothers' Day, 18 May 1944. 'Lal [Alison] is a bitter opponent of the day as the church of E[ngland] has one day of its own … So no one had mentioned it to me until you did. As I did put what effort I could into mothering them. … I do like to think some one gives me a pat for it occasionally.'
[153] The Articles of Religion of 1563/1571 are commonly referred to as the Thirty-nine Articles. They are a statement of the theological principles of the Reformed Catholic Church of England and are bound into the BCP, along with the Ordinal as the reference for Anglican theology. The Articles grew out of the early years of the Reformation and belong, together with the Prayer Book, in the Settlement of Elizabeth (1559) and the later one of Charles 11 (1660-1662. Peter Toon, "The Articles and Homilies," in *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. Stephen Sykes and John Booty, (London: SPCK, 1988), p. 133-4; Peter Toon, "The Articles and Homilies," in *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. Stephen Sykes and John Booty, (London: SPCK, 1988). Article 28: *Of the Lord's Supper*. 'The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.'
[154] *BCP*, Articles of Religion.
[155] *BCP*, The Catechism: Articles of Religion.

were quietly accomplished and done decently and in order.[156] Alison did not take up some of the more 'extreme' devotions, such as those advanced by the Society of Mary and the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, until 1960.[157] By that time the liturgical landscape in the Adelaide diocese had changed and it was almost uniform in its worship style with the Eucharist as the main service on Sunday in almost every church and the wearing of eucharistic vestments taken for granted.[158]

Although she 'went in for everything' to do with Anglo-Catholicism, Alison said that 'learning to be a heartfelt catholic in most respects is probably what I was most about in my worship.'[159] She embraced her role of minister to her children, encouraging and teaching them at home and in church. During church services she would point out what was happening in the ritual and explain the meaning.[160] We shall see in further chapters how Alison lived out the incarnational tradition so richly expressed by John Illingworth: 'a man imprints his spiritual character upon all the things with which he deals, his house, his clothes, his furniture, the various products of his hand or head.'[161] He concluded:

> We finite beings who die and pass away, can only be impersonally present in our works; whereas He must be conceived as ever present to sustain and animate the universe, which thus becomes a living manifestation of Himself; no mere machine, or book, or picture, but a perpetually sounding voice.[162]

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[156] Chris Gent, interview, 6 August 2011. Alison wrote to her mother and aunts extolling the virtues of Anglo-Catholicism.

[157] Alison and John were members of the Society of Mary and many examples of Marian devotion were found among Alison's papers, such as prayer books and cards, magazines and books. For Marian devotion in the Roman Catholic Church in Adelaide see Katharine Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia 1922-1962*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1996).

[158] David Hilliard, "The Religious Crisis of the 1960s: The Experience of the Australian Churches," *Journal of Religious History* 21, no. 7 (1997); Hilliard, "The Anglo-Catholic Tradition in Australian Anglicanism." Chasubles were worn at Adelaide diocesan events and in parishes on Sunday, compared to the diocese of Melbourne where seasonal stoles only were permitted for diocesan services and the diocese of Sydney which had a total ban on the wearing of chasubles.

[159] AG *Int*, 7 June 2006, p. 9. Commenting on reactions to the introduction of ritual in the nineteenth century, Carpenter noted that 'the cure of souls included the duty of teaching and teaching is not conveyed only by word of mouth but also by visible act.' Carpenter, *Church and People, 1789-1899*, p. 222.

[160] Lavinia Gent, interview, 17 December 2012.

[161] J. R. Illingworth, "Divine immanence in Nature," in *Contemporary Religious Thinkers: from Idealist Metaphysicians to Existential Theologians*, ed. John Macquarrie, (London: SCM, 1968), p. 35. Illingworth was a contributor to *Lux Mundi.*

[162] Ibid, p. 39.

The breadth of that vision enabled Alison to accommodate both the difficulties of her marriage and the challenges of the women's movement. It did, however, overtake her: the philosophical and theological idealism strained her capacity to accomplish all she wished. The centuries old debate about Anglicanism's continuity with pre-Reformation catholicity still worried Alison in her last years. She recalled her difficulties with both Protestant Anglicanism ('I was really afflicted by its predominance') and Roman Catholicism ('I wanted to join the Catholic Women's League to balance it … and couldn't')[163], but she concluded that her 'catholic home is the Anglican church.'[164]

Imagination and the Caroline Divines

The connection of the intellectual and poetic with piety in the Anglican tradition, which Alison had experienced in parish and school life, was enriched by the English literature courses she took at Adelaide's secular university. These courses included many of the great poets and writers who had shaped English spirituality. Wittgenstein can help in understanding how it is that words have an impact beyond the rational. He suggested that 'uttering a word is like striking a note on the keyboard of the imagination.'[165] Imagination, like words, was for Wittgenstein, never just a personal activity or experience: 'to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life.'[166] Thus imagination has a significant part in the weaving together of language and actions.[167] A core element in the Anglican experience is that of appealing to the imagination. The language of the BCP and the poetic style of the metaphysical poets and prose writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries depended on the imagination for interpretation and meaning.[168] To pray for God's defence against the 'assaults of our enemies' may be interpreted with a twenty-first century imagination as fear of consumerism or global warming or one's own shortcomings.[169]

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[163] AG *Int*, 17 August 2006, p. 6.
[164] AG *Int*, 6 November 2006, p. 4.
[165] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 6.
[166] Ibid, 19.
[167] Ibid, 7.
[168] Maxwell Thomas, "Distinctively Anglican," in *Anglican spirituality*, ed. John Bayton, (Melbourne: Institute of Spiritual Studies, St Peters' Eastern Hill, 1982). See also Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination*. Chapter 1 'A poetic spirituality', p. 16.
[169] *BCP*, Morning Prayer, Second Collect for Morning Prayer Collect for Peace.

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Apologists and spiritual leaders of mid-twentieth century Anglicanism, such as Evelyn Underhill, C. S. Lewis, Dorothy L. Sayers, Charles Williams and T. S. Eliot, were well equipped in the tradition of intellectual imagination to pass it on to their readers.[170] Charles Williams displayed his erudite knowledge and his intention to inform his generation of Anglicanism's heritage in a volume of quotations.[171] In her *Worship,* Underhill cited Caroline Divines (Andrewes, Herbert, Archbishop Laud, Henry Vaughan, and Jeremy Taylor) in the 'Index of Persons.'[172] In his work on sixteenth-century literature, Lewis devoted eleven pages of his chapter 'Prose in the "Golden" Period' to Reformation theologian Richard Hooker. His style, Lewis claimed, 'is, for its purpose, perhaps the most perfect in English.'[173] Dorothy L. Sayers' introduction to her radio play, *The Man Born to be King,* exhibited her literary, theological and scriptural credentials.[174] The play proved popular because it passed on the Christian story in a language which invited the listener's imagination. Sayers commented:

> Fortunately, the English language, with its wide, flexible, and double-tongued vocabulary, lends itself readily to the juxtaposition of the sublime and the commonplace, and can be stepped up and down between the two along an inclined plane which has at one end of the flat pavement –
>
> In the south suburbs of the Elephant
>
> and the other among
>
> The cloud-clapped towers, the gorgeous palaces.[175]

Sayers concluded, 'The smooth execution of this movement is the technician's job.'[176]

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[170] Margaret Cropper, *Evelyn Underhill*, (London: Longman, Green and Co, 1958); Charles Williams, *The Letters of Evelyn Underhill*, (London: Longmans, Green, 1943); Alice Mary Hadfield, *Charles Williams: An Exploration of His Life and Work*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography*, (London: Collins, 1974); Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot*, (London: Penguin, 1984). 'He declared himself an Anglo-catholic', p. 174. Barbara Reynolds, *Dorothy L. Sayers: Her Life and Soul*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993); Ann Loades, ed. *Dorothy L. Sayers: Spiritual Writings* (London: SPCK, 1993).
[171] Charles Williams, *The New Christian Year*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1941). The volume was designed to emulate John Keble's *The Christian Year.*
[172] Evelyn Underhill, *Worship*, (London: Nisbet & Co Ltd, 1936).
[173] C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 451-62.
[174] Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Man Born to be King: A Play-Cycle on the Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1944).
[175] Ibid, p. 24.
[176] Ibid.

A line may be drawn from Richard Hooker to T. S. Eliot which vividly illustrates one particular form of Anglican life regarding prayer and assurance. In the twentieth century Rowan Williams continues the tradition:

> We ought to know that faith, like other aspects of our humanity, grows and changes. Faith is not something inhuman. It is bound in with our human emotions and experiences, and therefore the concrete sense of faith is not something on which we can place excessive reliance. Faith may be there but, like other aspects of our humanity, is susceptible to change and chance. We misjudge ourselves as faithless, says Hooker, when we don't see the results quickly. And so we need another kind of assurance. We need the assurance that in our darkness or doubt or failure, God is faithful.[177]

Williams tells us that T. S. Eliot continued the tradition of God's capacity to be anywhere and everywhere:

> 'Quick now, here now, always' – this [little phrase] captures surely one of the most unforgettable characteristics of the poetry of the twentieth century, of the vision of a God who will not be restricted but whose presence is so elusive, so dark and so mysterious precisely because it is everywhere, and not obvious, because it is not to be restricted to the religious area, to that safe territory which is marked off as just God's.[178]

The works of these twentieth-century Anglicans and their predecessors were discussed by the Gents and other Anglo-Catholic clergy with literary and theological interests.[179] The Gent library contained many contemporary and traditional texts, which, with similar works, were available at secular bookshops as well as dedicated denominational suppliers.[180] The Canterbury Book Depot provided Anglicans with a wide range of material which included high-church books and other items such as prayer cards until it closed on 30 June 2002.[181]

The Poets

[177] Rowan Williams, *Christian Imagination in Poetry and Polity: Some Anglican Voices Fron Temple to Herbert*, (Oxford: SLG Press, 2004), p. 26-27.
[178] Ibid, p. 36-37.
[179] Pam Lindsay, conversation, 8 August 2012.
[180] Ibid.
[181] The author bought an English Missal there in 1972. 'Canterbury' began as the ABM Bookshop, an outreach of the Australian Board of Mission, the catholic arm of Anglican missions in Australia. It then traded for fifty years as the Canterbury Book Depot before finishing as Canterbury Books. Stewart Perkins, email, 21 February 2013.

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The most important poets for the present study are John Donne and George Herbert because of their impact on Alison Gent's imagination. She in turn was able to pass on her understanding and interpretation of the metaphysical poets when she tutored and then wrote and delivered three lectures which contributed to her Master of Arts Degree.[182] These lectures give an insight into the theology of the two poets, and the part they played in the Anglican spiritual tradition. With these lectures Alison, in Wittgensteinian terms, was striking a note on the keyboard of her students' imaginations.[183]

John Donne

The assessment that 'Donne seeks to come to terms with his own person, in relation to Christ, his own personal vocation and his own nature' could be said to describe Alison.[184] Her life story does witness to characteristics which she discerned in Donne's poetry: 'his defiant unconventionality, his irritable self-conscious shrugging-off of the polite rituals of the so-called Petrarchan sonneteer', his 'individual defiance'; and his 'calling a spade a spade with the combination of honest truthfulness and daring rudeness.'[185] We can see from her critical appraisal that appreciation of Donne's innovative powers excited her imagination and combined with a shared, if unequal, intellectual capacity, proved a vital inspiration for her life journey. She noted that: 'it was one of Donne's innovations to put into lyric the weight of thought, the "passionate paradoxical reasoning" which was more familiar in the sonnet.'[186] Passionate paradoxical reasoning would become the cornerstone of Alison's character. Whatever she did she was 'putting into poetry the emotion of the moment.'[187]

Donne's love poetry taught Alison about human sexual love. With him she was the 'discoverer interested in the effects of the passion.'[188] When we come to look at their marriage, it will appear that she and John Gent represented the 'two extremes of the heartless triflings of youthful wit and the

[182] AG *LMP*.
[183] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 6.
[184] Thomas, "Distinctively Anglican," p. 9.
[185] AG *LMP* 2, p. 2.
[186] Ibid, p. 5.
[187] Ibid, p. 9.
[188] Ibid, p. 8.

ardent expressions of passionate and sincere love'[189], and 'wilful sensuality backed up by an intellectual enthusiasm for the amorous philosophy.'[190] Donne's 'series of poems of unsatisfied love'[191] and his 'inquiry into the relation of body and soul in love'[192] provided resources for Alison to bear the pain of her difficult marriage.[193]

Donne translated the metaphor of human sexual love to divine love. Alison explained that:

> even from the new force which Donne's intellectual interests had brought to religious sonnet and lyric by way of psychological inquiry and new means of expression, there was something peculiarly intriguing about the relation of his amorous poems to his sacred poems. Donne repented of his pagan, profane poetry for a more subtle way than the palinode gave him precedent for: not by flatly renouncing all the devices of profane love, but by using (occasionally) for the praise and pursuit of the Divine love, some of the same methods he had used for praising the mistresses of his earlier days.[194]

A corollary to this connection was that holiness included human sexual love and family life. The metaphors describe the emotions in both contexts and illustrate Lindbeck's point that inner experiences are derivative.[195] The notion is understood theologically: that people's reading, worship and sensual experiences, the awareness of their fallibility, and a connection with the world, are all under God. Donne and his contemporaries were inheritors of Hooker's 'theocentric humanism'.[196] The handing down of language and theology that is so much part of the Anglican form of life is illustrated in Allchin's use of C. S. Lewis, who commented on and quoted Richard Hooker:

> Few model universes are more filled – one might say, more drenched – with Deity than his. 'All things are of God', (and only sin is not) 'have God in them and he them in himself likewise', yet 'their substance and

[189] Ibid, p. 6.
[190] Ibid, p. 8.
[191] Ibid, p. 11.
[192] Ibid, p. 13.
[193] See Chapter 5.
[194] AG *LMP* 3, p. 2. Alison points out Donne's attitude 'is clearly not the same thing as the Petrarchan or Platonic transformation of human love into divine love by increasing detachment from senses,' p. 3.
[195] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 34.
[196] A. M. Allchin, "Anglican Spirituality," in *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. Stephen Sykes and John Booty, (London: SPCK, 1988), p. 319.

> his wholly differeth.' God is unspeakably transcendent; yet unspeakably immanent.[197]

Louis Bouyer, a French writer on spirituality, observed that 'Donne as a writer, and especially as a poet, expressed, with a power seldom equalled, the drama of … sensual men.'[198] God is then 'unspeakably transcendent; yet unspeakably immanent' in human sexual love as in divine love. This drama affects 'the way in which Anglicanism has engaged society' (the political) and 'how Anglicanism nurtures and preserves its sense of the divine mystery.'[199] Rowan Williams believes this development 'owes something of its inspiration to the Platonic education of the soul, through beauty and through love towards the highest.'[200] One of the results was an Anglican attitude to marriage and the rearing of children. The reasons for marriage given in the BCP look beyond the reining in of 'carnal lusts and appetites' towards the care of children and 'the mutual society, help and comfort' that should exist between the man and the woman. All these human activities are to be lived in a 'holy estate' under God. There would be few husbands and wives, few teachers and school principals, few parents throughout the past centuries who would not have benefitted from sermons such as delivered by Jeremy Taylor, who depicts the drama of sensual men as God's gift in married and family love:

> Nothing can sweeten felicity itself but love; but when a man dwells in love then the breasts of his wife are pleasant as the droppings on the hill of Hermon, her eyes are fair as the light of heaven; she is a fountain sealed, and he can quench his thirst, and ease his cares, and lay his sorrows down upon her lap, and can retire home to his sanctuary and refectory, and his gardens of sweetness and chaste refreshments. No man can tell, but he that loves his children, how many delicious accents make a man's heart dance in the pretty conversation of those dear pledges – their childishness, their stammering, their little angers, their innocence, their imperfections, their necessities, are so many little

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[197] Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama*, p. 459-60. The quotations are from Hooker's *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity.* v. lvi. 5.
[198] Thomas, "Distinctively Anglican," p. 9. Thomas is quoting Louis Bouyer, *Orthodox Spirituality and Protestant and Anglican Spirituality*, vol. 3, A History of Christian Spirituality (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), p. 112.
[199] Williams, *Christian Imagination in Poetry and Polity*, p. 1. Williams identifies these ways as the 'leading and formative themes in the development of Anglican identity since the sixteenth century.'
[200] Ibid, p. 24

> emanations of joy and comfort, to him that delights in their person and society.[201]

George Herbert

The most successful and accomplished of Donne's successors was George Herbert. In Alison's words:

> Herbert's achievement is to bring into [the religious lyric] that curiosity and minuteness proper to a personal relationship which Donne's 'Songs and Sonnets' gave him the technique to express. Herbert's religious lyric gives the same kind of attention to his religious life as Donne's 'Songs and Sonnets' had given to his life as a lover, and with the modifications imposed by his subject and his own sensibility, uses the same means to express it. The poems in 'The Temple' have the simplicity of some of Donne's poetry, the dramatic personal directness, the scorn of the merely decorative image, and many of the best of them have that intellectual evolution which was Donne's way of giving toughness and a more organic form to lyrical expression. But an even higher compliment to Donne than Herbert's copiousness of imitation is the intelligence and sincerity of his imitation. Donne's poetry not only provided Herbert with certain attitudes and techniques which were like Donne's: it inspired him to work out others which were suitable to his own gentler nature, his less probing intellect, his calmer emotions, his more submissive temper.[202]

Herbert restricted his writing to religious poetry but even within this limitation his work addressed a wide range of human emotions and activities while extending Donne's work in a new way. In his poetry 'theology and spirituality come into their own.'[203] Herbert's treatment of feelings of failure or abandonment by God resonated with the passions of his readers. Alison commented that 'it is a triumph of Herbert's sincere and sensitive genius to have transformed a *tour de force* of wit and emotional savagery' into the 'great expostulation' in the opening lines of his poem on priesthood, *The Collar*:

> I Struck the board, and cry'd, No more.
> I will abroad.
> What? shall I ever sigh and pine?[204]

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[201] Jeremy Taylor, *Holy Living and Dying with Prayer: Containing the Complete Duty of a Christian*, (New York: Appleton, 1857), p. xii. Bishop Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), a prose writer, was a contemporary of Donne. His works continue to be read.
[202] AG, *LMP* 3, p. 3.
[203] Williams, *Christian Imagination in Poetry and Polity*, p. 29.
[204] AG, *LMP* 3, p. 4.

Alison explained that Donne's 'colloquial vividness and intensity of feeling finds a new use in expressing the conflicts of Herbert's soul with God.'[205] The confusion and guilt associated with such conflict had, in Hooker, a steadying source 'in the sense of continuing by faithful act of the will to believe that God is gracious, and to hold to that belief whatever ups and downs may be characteristic of the inner life.'[206] Alison was one who, in emotional and spiritual distress, was 'clinging and crying', but also could say with Herbert, 'onely my soule hangs on thy promises.'[207]

The passionate acknowledgement of conflict and despair finds its balance and meaning in Christian hope and the idea of community. These saving graces, Williams suggested, are fostered by the nurture and preservation of a sense of the divine mystery. Hope and community depend on what motivated all Hooker's work, as he explains:

> Those two principles of prayer remain central: that prayer can and must be offered for all, because the grace of God is not limited and certainly not limited in our present apprehension of it; and that our feelings moment by moment do not determine our ultimate standing before God. We have to dig deeper to find what it is we most lastingly want and long for.[208]

Alison's Devotional Life

Alison's personal prayer life demonstrated the Platonic notion, or *idea,* of the 'ongoing process of transformation' which some see lies at the heart of Anglican worship.[209] How this was to be accomplished found expression in many phrases from the BCP and devotional writings which resound with the hope of transformation.[210] At a retreat just after her wedding Alison set out a plan for her devotional life which, we can understand, would have been in addition to the daily office and daily Eucharist.[211] Alison's desire was to fulfil the

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[205] Ibid.
[206] Williams, *Christian Imagination in Poetry and Polity*, p. 31.
[207] Ibid, p. 31-32. Williams is quoting George Herbert's poem 'Perseverance'.
[208] Ibid. p. 29.
[209] Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination*, p. 35.
[210] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 33. Lindbeck believed transformation is 'made possible [by] the descriptions of realities, the formulation of beliefs and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings and sentiments.'
[211] AG *DJ* 5, 11 May 1947. 'Prayers to be said daily: Morning-Place myself in the Presence of God, make a humble act of love and ask for grace to pray. Our Father, etc. Act of Praise: Act of Thanksgiving: Act of Penitence and prayer for grace: Act of Oblation: Pray for the day's work

prayer 'that we shew forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days.'[212] She was aware of her frailty, and yet her striving hope remained the pattern of her prayer life:

> This plan, and the resolution to keep it, to be offered to God solemnly and often renewed with prayers for grace to enable me to keep it. Considerations of love and duty to God, responsibility.[213]

The notion that the believer can work towards being a better person was also vital to the health and wellbeing of the community, understood as in being 'in love and charity with your neighbours.'[214] Rather than believe she had the inner resources to solve the problem of her combative nature, Alison sought external wisdom.[215] She copied out George Herbert's poem:

> Be calm in arguing: for fierceness makes
> Errors a fault, and truth discourtesie
> Why should I feel another man's mistakes
> More than his sickness or povertie?
> In love I should: but anger is not love,
> Nor wisdome neither, therefore gently move.[216]

The poem addresses the problem of the moment (arguing) and its personal and community consequences. Next we see Herbert eschewing extreme censure of another's wrong.[217] Herbert follows Hooker's principle to pray first for the other person and only then to 'determine our ultimate understanding before God.'[218] This is expressed with Herbert's wonderful economy of words, 'In love I

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and the people concerned in it, and pray to use time well. Evening-Remember the Presence of God: Self-examination for the day, with contrition and resolutions: Deprecations: Thanksgivings: General Intercessions: Act of Adoration: Commendation: Some devotional reading. Meditation on Wednesday and Saturday at least.'

[212] *BCP*, The General Thanksgiving. Allchin has a tantalisingly short note of praise to Bishop Edward Reynolds, writer of this prayer and the prayer for 'all conditions of men'; 'All Anglicans owe him a debt of gratitude for two of the best-loved prayers in the 1662 BCP.' Allchin, "Anglican Spirituality," p. 322-3.

[213] AG *DJ* 5, 11 May 1947. Also 'Counsel at Confession', 2 April 1971.

[214] *BCP*, General Confession in Holy Communion. 'Ye that do earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God.'

[215] Wittgenstein, *PI*, p. 227.

[216] This verse, copied by hand, was found marking 'An Act of Thanks' in Andrewes, *The Private Devotions of Lancelot Andrewes*, p. 242-3.

[217] Herbert is speaking against the Puritans, whose attitude equates to the denominations Lindbeck critiques as less interested in 'human experiences and understanding of self and the world' and placing more emphasis on 'cognitive capacities and objective realities, information and truth claims that could be intellectually assessed.' Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 33.

[218] Williams, *Christian Imagination in Poetry and Polity*, p. 29.

should.'[219] In 2008 Alison reacted to the scandal of child sexual abuse in the Anglican Church in Adelaide by expressing concern for the perpetrators. She drew outrage from her listeners but protested that 'anger is not love'.

Alison frequently recorded her experiences of worthlessness and despair, but she found such experiences well documented in spiritual writings[220], and in Andrewes' devotions:

> What is Thy servant, Lord God and
> what is my house,
> that Thou should'st look on such a
> dead dog as I am?[221]

It was typical of the way Alison responded to her feelings of despair that she turned to Andrewes' devotions. For example, he described 'An Act of Thanks' as a spiritual sacrifice from his soul and asked God to change his thoughts into piety and to sanctify his spirit, soul and body.[222] The desire for transformation is evident. The last stanza of the poem voiced the hope in God's saving power that was evident in Alison's resilient faith that prevailed in the face of difficulties and disappointments. The stanza below has become part of the Anglican lexicon, often used as a prayer to conclude church services and meetings:

> To Him, That is able to do exceeding
> abundantly above all that we ask or think,
> according to the power that worketh in us
> To Him be glory in the Church in Christ,
> throughout all ages, world without end.
> My soul shall be satisfied as it were with
> marrow and fatness;
> and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips.[223]

Alison was attracted to the monastic life; she was an associate of both the Society of the Sacred Mission and the Community of the Holy Name.[224] She made

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[219] Herbert calls on the reader's imagination with his allusions to 'God is love' and similar scriptural texts. The imagination is further taken to the idea of participation in the divine.
[220] Bonaventure, *The Mystical Vine: A Treatise on the Passion of Our Lord*. Alison indicated her feelings of isolation by marking the passage: 'At last the knife of fear cut away all his friends and family from him, so that among his lovers he had none to comfort him,' p. 16.
[221] Andrewes, *The Private Devotions of Lancelot Andrewes*, p. 242. 'An Act of Thanks.'
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.
[224] For CHN in Adelaide see chapter 7. Alison agitated to become an oblate of the order for many years. However she insisted on remaining an associate and the community did not see that the two functions were compatible. She was finally admitted as an oblate in 2001 (without giving up

frequent retreats, recording her thoughts and experiences, such as awareness of her shortcomings:

> For pride and folly in not seeking God's face and voice, for if I seek them not I cannot know His will to do it, not in *any* thing and for failing to fall back into His arms and call upon Him in weariness. For selfish readiness to seek my own ease. For an unthankful heart[225]

and ending her prayer with thanksgiving in the knowledge of God's immanent love and care:

> For God's goodness and that of His Church, for patience with my faults and failings, for receiving me here. For the presence of my friends.[226]

Alison was alert to the way in which her piety and her personal spiritual growth were impacted by events in society and the wider world. As an inheritor of Anglicanism's 'grammar', she had literary and spiritual resources on which to draw when she appropriated feminism and began to think seriously about the gender of God. She re-formed God as Mother re-working of a line from the *Venite*: 'The Lady is a Great God and we are the people of her pasture and the sheep of her hand.'[227] Alison responded to Mary Daly's feminist critique of the church in her book, *Beyond God the Father*, by asking, 'How far beyond God the Father?'[228] She responded herself: 'the answer is no distance at all. The image of God as Mother occupies exactly the same "space" as that of the Father. God occupies all space and no space at all.'[229] She then elaborated:

> God the Mother, that deeply disturbing concept/revolution cry for Christians owes its power to disturb us all, both male and female, to its analogical precision. There is a region in the experience of us all – our pre-natal life – when Mother was indeed God, was She in who we lived and moved and had our being. If we acknowledge God as female, we admit an identification of humanity with God during a phase of human life which has hitherto been excluded from our concept of the divine.[230]

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as an associate!). For SSM in Adelaide see chapter 7 and their involvement in the CJM see chapter 5

[225] AG *DJ* 3, p. 50-51. CHN Associates' Retreat, 1963. Alison's preparation for Sunday Mass was divided into Repentance, Adoration, Thanksgiving, and Ask, closely written over three pages.

[226] Ibid, p. 52.

[227] AG *PJ* 2, 25 October 1977.

[228] Daly, *Beyond God the Father*.

[229] AG *PJ* 2, 22 December 1977.

[230] Ibid, 18 November 1977.

Making reference to a phrase of seventeenth-century writer, Sir Thomas Browne, 'The night of our fore-being', Alison explained that Browne was 'speaking of a previous existence with God in terms which only thinly veil an analogy with life in the womb.'[231] She framed a connection between 'home' and 'womb' with lines from William Wordsworth: 'Trailing clouds of glory do we come/From God who is our home.'[232] Alison drew on poetry and spiritual writing to counter the radical nature of Daly's work and to reassure and inform those in her company who were unused to such analogies.[233]

The devotional life nurtured by Anglican worship and learning has as its end the conforming of the Christian to the mind of Christ. That religion's purpose is to 'structure human experiences and understanding' is spelled out in the first line of Alison's writing on peace.[234]

> Peace to me is the rule of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Not that I expect to talk about peace in those terms to most people. But I'm sure the only kind of behaviour that will lead to peace is the kind we learn from Christ; it's the kind we can't find in ourselves but can, and do, if we ask, receive from God. (I mean immovable goodwill, expressed in love and forgiveness.) If we can achieve that in our ordinary living, the idea and reality of peace will spread.[235]

Alison set her devotional life within 'the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see any action.'[236] She continued:

> Peace begins with me only if I am learning from Jesus Christ to love, forgive, to abstain from vengeance and overcome resentment – to work hard in all these ways at achieving reconciliation with those who are opposed or hostile to me. In doing this conflict can't and shouldn't always be avoided – it must be kept separate from violence, but endured on our way to peace.[237]

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[231] Ibid, Sir Thomas Browne, 'In the chaos of preordination, and night of our forebeings.' This phrase was used by Roman Catholic poet, Francis Thompson, *The Night of Our Forebeing: An Ode After Easter.* Thompson's influence can also been seen in JRR Tolkien and Episcopalian (Anglican) writer, Madeleine L'Engle.
[232] William Wordsworth 'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood', lines 65-66.
[233] Alison attended a group studying Mary Daly's book. See Chapter 7.
[234] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 32.
[235] AG, *What to Me is Peace?* 25 March 1986.
[236] Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, 56-9.
[237] AG, *What to Me is Peace?*

The poetic Christian imagination was evident in the way Alison applied her knowledge.[238] She concluded:

> The 'Iron Curtain' that we have talked about for so long seems to me perhaps polished like a mirror. When we face it, trying to see the person on the other side, it is really our own face that we see – distrustful, angry at differences, full of fear and hatred and of impulses to violence. Change our own faces as we look towards that 'other', and we shall at last see through the mirror, and find a person we can meet without violence, even with love.[239]

Conclusion

Alison developed, within the medium of Anglicanism, a deep spirituality, an awareness of God's presence in her life, and the practice of devotion to the person of Jesus, particularly through the Eucharist. Her knowledge of Christian truths and history gave her the insight and understanding to adapt to change and the ability to interconnect, weave together, the forms of life within which she moved while retaining her love and loyalty to the Anglican Church.

This church, this community, because it is 'in search of a revised self-understanding', is interconnected and progressive.[240] Alison was instrumental in the revision of Anglican understanding of women's position in the church. In order to do this she drew upon what she saw as its foundational and historical theology and ecclesiology. In this she belonged to a line of thinkers and agitators for change who found inspiration in the Caroline Divines and their inheritors. 'It was some lines of George Herbert which marked a decisive point in the spiritual journey of Simone Weil.'[241] Lancelot Andrewes was influential in the development of T. S. Eliot's faith.[242] Jim Cotter, reworking Psalm 56 for the twenty-first century, alluded to Eliot's poem, *The Waste Land* to express despair: 'From the midst of my wasteland of needs never met, / knowing my emptiness, I wait to be filled.'[243] The drama of sensual men has been handed down from Donne to the contemporary Anglican writer, Janet Morley, who

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[238] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 34. 'There are numberless thoughts we cannot think, sentiments we cannot have, and realities we cannot perceive unless we learn the appropriate symbol systems.'
[239] AG, *What to Me is Peace?*
[240] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 6.
[241] Allchin, "Anglican Spirituality," p. 322.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Cotter, *Out of the silence*, p. 178.

revisioned the Scriptural image of God 'with mighty hand and an outstretched arm' in her poem, 'With your warm hands.'[244]

In this modern age 'there is a need for a recovery of memory, which will allow for a recovery of identity.'[245] Alison Gent, Anglican, met God in all things. Her life shows the value of recovering traditions and reworking them for the twenty-first century.

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[244] With your warm hands heal me
in your body know me
to your darkness draw me
at your breast hold me.
For I was homesick,
and you brought me home;
I was alone,
and now I am in touch:
my words were alien to me,
you spoke my mother tongue.
The allusion is to Deuteronomy Chapter 4. Janet Morley, *All Desires Known*, (London: SPCK, 1992), p. 111.

[245] Allchin, "Anglican Spirituality," p. 322.

5 ALISON AND MARRIAGE

> If you can't love one person without being hindered by this that and the other, how can you love humanity? And if you take a vow as a foreseen shape of your Christian life, that's what you promise to do, you promise to love that man until you or he dies.[1]
>
> The wasteland of our needs unmet.[2]
>
> I thought I was Alison Wonderland.[3]

Introduction

The second phase of Alison's life took shape when she married John George Moyns Gent on 1 February 1947. Married life in the Anglican Church had particularities in the mid-twentieth century that qualify it as a 'form of life'. In the case of marriage, the Anglican Church taught that when a man and a woman married, they created just such an arena, what Lindbeck termed a cultural-linguistic framework.[4] Within the cultural framework the couple lived their life, using language that pertained to the culture, in this case the church. The sum of the culture, the praxis and the language is the 'grammar' derived from reflection upon that life.[5] The grammar of the Anglican Church in respect of marriage will be examined in order to demonstrate the distinctive nature of marriage in the Anglican Church. The changes in church and society around marriage in the

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[1] AG *Int*, 4 June 2007.
[2] Cotter, *Out of the silence*. A reworking of Psalm 56.
[3] AG *Int*, 13 February 2006, p. 7.
[4] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*.
[5] Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, p. 68.

latter half of the twentieth century will also be considered. Alison's marriage as a form of life is set out in terms of this grammar.

Marriage in the Anglican Church was conducted according to the rite set out in the Book of Common Prayer [BCP]. As with much of the church's theology and doctrine, those around marriage were open to various interpretations. In both the Catechism and the Thirty-nine Articles marriage was named as one of five lesser sacraments in relation to the two dominical sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist.[6] Conversely, in Article 25 marriage is 'commonly called [a] sacrament' and is one of the 'states of life allowed in the Scriptures'. While 'The form of Solemnization of Matrimony' describes the two as bonded within the sanctity of marriage by becoming one flesh in 'a mystical union' which is lifelong. This is clearly the grammar of a sacrament, similar to the description of a sacrament in Article 25: 'by the which [God] doth work invisibly in us.' Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic Anglicans have differing interpretations of the Articles and the marriage service. The biblical texts from the book of Genesis, and the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline letters satisfy the evangelical impulse to determine doctrine on biblical precepts and Article 25 divides marriage from the dominical sacraments. The sacramental language referring to a 'spiritual union' which 'God hast consecrated … to an excellent mystery' and the ambiguous language in Article 25, support the Anglo-Catholic understanding that an ontological change has taken place.

The belief that a sacramental, ontological change occurred in marriage strengthened the conviction of its indissolubility. Those Adelaide Anglicans who wished to remarry after divorce with a church wedding, before the 1980s, had to go to a Protestant (usually Methodist) church.[7] The major Protestant denominations such as the Baptists and the Methodists (and the evangelical wings of the Anglican Church) held strong views on the sanctity of marriage derived from biblical precepts.[8] Although those Anglicans who remarried

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[6] *BCP*. See also Chapter 4.

[7] David Hilliard, "Church, Family and Sexuality in Australia in the 1950s," *Australian Historical Studies* 109(1997). In some other dioceses, however, bishops were willing to allow remarriage in church after vetting the parties concerned; nevertheless numbers were very small. The Sydney diocese allowed the 'innocent' party to remarry in church.

[8] Methodist Church England Conferences, *Ministry, Baptism and Membership in the Methodist Church,* (Bedford: Methodist Publishing House, 1962). 'For the sake of Church Order and not

'strictly speaking excommunicate[d] themselves', they were allowed to receive communion at the discretion of the bishop, though some zealous priests may have tried to discourage them.[9] In 1947, the year of the Gent marriage, there were intense societal pressures against divorce and solidly patriarchal attitudes to women's role as homemakers and carers of husbands and children. Divorce was legal but not common as the conditions were forensic or lengthy.

Within Anglican marriage as a form of life, two particularities make Alison's marriage distinctive: John Gent was in Holy Orders when they married so Alison became the wife of a clergyman, and John was a clergyman in the Anglo-Catholic tradition. These factors, the Anglo-Catholic tradition and the role of a clergyman's wife, made their marriage a form of life within a form of life within a form of life. Each form, clergy marriage in the Anglo-Catholic tradition in the Anglican Church, inhabits a peculiar culture with its own sense and language. When Alison married she did not simply go from a single to a married state, she entered a form of life that carried great expectations.

These expectations will be noted, beginning with descriptions of what marriage entailed in the Anglican Church in Adelaide in the middle of the twentieth century. The aims and objects of the Mothers' Union, an influential women's organisation will be examined. Thirdly, the form of life of an Anglican priest in Adelaide in 1947 will be considered, together with the added expectations held of married clergymen, and fourthly, the more specific form of life of Anglo-Catholic clergymen and their wives. The role of the clergy wife and the church's teaching on divorce concludes the first half of the chapter. A study of the Gent marriage, divorce, John's remarriage and Alison's widowhood will make up the last half of the chapter.

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because of any priestly virtue in the office the Ministers of the Methodist Church are set apart by ordination to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, (Deed of Union, CPD, p. 265)', p. 10-11. Joint Commission on Church Union, *The Church – its Nature, Function and Ordering,* (Melbourne*:* Aldersgate Press, 1964). The report of the Commission expressed the same views on ministry and the administration of two dominical sacraments.

[9] Excommunication meant not being permitted to receive Holy Communion. Bryan Robin, "The Position of the Church of England regarding Divorce," (Adelaide: Church Office, 1963; reprint, Preface by The Lord Bishop of Adelaide the Rt Rev T. T. Reed, M. A., D. Litt., Th. D.). It was not until 2002 that the Church of England agreed that divorced people could remarry in church under certain circumstances. However, because the church views marriage to be lifelong, there is no automatic right to do so and it is left to the discretion of the priest. www.churchofengland.org website.

What Marriage Entailed in the Anglican Church in Adelaide in the Middle of the Twentieth Century

'The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony' in the BCP contains clear statements about what is happening in marriage. The opening exhortation sets the marriage 'in the sight of God' and 'in the face of the congregation.' The 'joining together' of the man and the woman is therefore both holy and public: their union is not understood as inward looking, rather it is under God and has social obligation.[10]

The purposes of marriage are stated: 'the procreation of children', 'a remedy against sin' and 'the mutual society, help and comfort, that the one ought to have for the other.' Marriage is deemed 'an honourable estate', a 'holy estate': matrimony was thus holy matrimony. The Prayer Book, which developed from the English Reformation, is clear that marriage was no longer reserved for the nobility as a means of negotiating property entitlements and securing inheritance. In England, a state under God, marriage was to be seen as intended for all unions; and for this the authority of Scripture was cited: marriage was 'commended of Saint Paul to be honourable among all men.' The permanence of marriage is attested to and reiterated in the solemn questions asked of both the man and the woman, 'wilt thou … keep thee only unto her/him, so long as ye both shall live?'; in the vows, 'till death us do part'; and in the priest's declaration, 'Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder.'

The union is seen as involving God as an active participant. This is described in a prayer as God 'knitting them together.' The final prayer describes the 'state of Matrimony' as a spiritual union which 'God hast consecrated … to an excellent mystery.' Here the Anglican preference for a non-prescriptive, non-delineating doctrinal view has the last word. Whatever is said about marriage it is in the end, as with all things, holy and a mystery. Within this mystery the man

[10] For the use of the BCP in Australia at the time of the Gent marriage see David Hilliard, "Once Loved, Then Discarded: The Book of Common Prayer in the Australian Church since 1945," *St Mark's Review: a Journal of Christian Thought and Opinion*, no. 222 (2012). The unauthorised 1928 BCP or Interim Rite, in which there were significant revisions to the marriage service, was not commonly used in the Diocese of Adelaide. *The Book of Common Prayer with the Additions and Deviations Proposed in 1928*, (Oxford: The University Press, 1928). In Australia in 1978 the publication of *An Australian Prayer Book* included revision of the marriage service. Church of England in Australia, *An Australian Prayer Book: For Use Together with The Book of Common Prayer 1662*, (Sydney: Standing Committee of General Synod, 1978); Gilbert Sinden, *When We Meet for Worship: A Manual for Using An Australian Prayer Book 1978*, (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1978). Chapter 8.

and the woman are both exhorted to do their best. The priest then gives the couple a blessing.

The Aims and Objects of the Mothers' Union

The Mothers' Union [MU] is the bastion of teaching on marriage and family life. A study of its aims and objects will offer further insights into the church's teaching and expectations around marriage.[11] The society was established by Mary Sumner in the United Kingdom in 1876.[12] Within twenty years of its inception, Mrs Dorothy Harmer, wife of the bishop of Adelaide, had set up a branch, as the society spread throughout the British Empire to New Zealand, Canada, India and Australian dioceses.[13] Many of the diocesan (though not parish) leaders were drawn from the social elite of the day. The first president, Lady Victoria Buxton, was the wife of the governor.[14] The precedent did not survive past the first decades of the twentieth century. However the organisation continued to enjoy vice-regal patronage to the 1990s and again in the twenty-first century.[15] The traditional leadership and/or interest of bishops' wives in the organisation was shaped by Mary Sumner being the wife of a bishop and also by its position within the diocesan structure that she established.[16] The MU aims were threefold: 'the upholding of marriage as the

[11] From the inception of the Mothers' Union, marriage and family were understood in very traditional terms. The organisation has radically adapted its membership, profile and aims.
[12] A brief history of the origins of the society is found in Florence Hill, *Mission Unlimited: The Story of the Mothers' Union*, (London: Mothers' Union, 1988). For a comprehensive, scholarly account to the modern era see Cordelia Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union: Women, Anglicanism and Globalisation 1876-2008*, (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2009).
[13] Brian Dickey, *Not Just Tea and Biscuits: The Mothers' Union in the Diocese of Adelaide 1895-1995*, (Adelaide: Mothers' Union, 1995). Adelaide, in 1895, was the second diocese in Australia to introduce MU, after Tasmania in 1892. Avis Matheson, *A History of the Mothers' Union in Australia*, (Toowoomba: Mothers' Union in Australia Council, 1992), p. 11-13.
[14] A. E. Kain and E. L. Harvie, *The Mothers' Union Jubilee Book: Diocese of Adelaide 1895-1945*, (Adelaide: Mothers' Union, 1945), p. 15. Lady Victoria was the goddaughter of Queen Victoria, and had worked with Mrs Sumner in England. She was welcomed at the first meeting as President, and the first council consisted of women from early (and subsequently, for some, well known) South Australian families, Marryat, Russell, Stow, Hamilton, Bowen, Gawler, Dutton and Milne.
[15] From 1991-1996 the governor was Dame Roma Mitchell, a Roman Catholic and from 2001-2007 Margery Jackson-Nelson, a Presbyterian. The vice-regal connection was noted in a report of Lady Day, 22 March 2013. 'Our current governor's wife, Mrs Liz Scarce, is our patron. We are pleased that Mrs Scarce was able to join over 100 members in St Peter's Cathedral.' *Mia Mia: the Magazine of MU Australia* Winter 2013, p. 21.
[16] Dickey, *Not just Tea and Biscuits*, p. 21, 78. Wives of the bishops of Adelaide served as diocesan president, Mrs Reed concurrently as national president 1959-1965.

holy and unbreakable relationship which in the beginning God had made it; the upbringing of children as "baptised soldiers of Christ"; and the creation of a band of women united together in prayer.'[17]

The ethos and activities of the MU reflect the church's attitudes to marriage and family life that prevailed when Alison married John in 1947. The aims and objects of the society were translated into literature, service books, and children's publications from the United Kingdom which were readily available for purchase in Adelaide. The Canterbury Book Depot sold some titles but the MU had a commitment to education and an organisational structure (worldwide, diocesan and parish) which facilitated information dissemination from its London headquarters down to local level. Its Education Department published prayer books and material on marriage and family. The Mothers' Union Room and Bookshop in Leigh Street promoted and supplied material to the branches enabling members ease of access and purchase.[18] As prayer life was the fundamental action of the society, a service book was available for 'the diocese, the deanery and the branch', for personal use and 'for use at Mothers' Union Services and Meetings.'[19] Service books were adapted for use in Australia in 1982 and 1994.[20]

As wife of the priest-in-charge Alison was expected, by custom, to be at least a member and preferably the president of the local branch of the MU.[21] Although she said she felt inadequate to the task as she did not have interests such as handiwork in common with the women at St Clement's, she was keen to

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[17] Hill, *Mission Unlimited*. Section headed 'A Union of Mothers.'
[18] Kain and Harvie, *The Mothers' Union Jubilee Book*. 'The Room is open from Monday till Friday every week from 1 to 5 pm', p. 48. Situated near the railway station, it offered respite and companionship to women coming into the city. Alison purchased her 1974 prayer book from the 'MU Room' in June 1978.
[19] *The Mothers' Union Service Book: Revised Edition 1948*, (Westminster: Mothers' Union, 1948), p. 1.
[20] Matheson, *A History of the Mothers' Union in Australia*; Erna Lee, *Mary Sumner and the Mothers' Union: a Brief Account of the Story*, 2nd ed, (Sydney: Mothers' Union in Australia, 1995). 'In 1994 the Publication and Promotion Department produced the first "really Australian" Service and Prayer Book,' p. 22. *The Mothers' Union in Australia Service and Prayer Book 1994*, (Mothers' Union in Australia, Council, 1994).
[21] The MU had an uncertain beginning at St Clement's, Enfield in 1943. It was revitalised in 1959 when Rev. T. R. Fleming encouraged the forming of a branch of the Fellowship of Marriage (for younger women) within the already existing MU branch. Ray. T. Harris, *A History of the Anglican Parish Church of St. Clement South Australia 1858-1998*, (Enfield: R. T. Harris, 1998), p. 110-12. Alison was admitted to the MU in 1950. AG *DJ* 2.

fulfil her ideals of marriage to a priest.[22] The spiritual attitudes of the MU did reflect Alison's own proclivities to the spiritual life of the church and enunciated her high view of marriage, as in this prayer:

> Father, all powerful and everlasting God, we do well,
> Always and everywhere, to give you thanks.
> You created man, in love, to share your divine life.
> We see our high destiny in the love of husband and wife
> Which bears the imprint of your own love.
> Love is man's origin;
> love is his constant calling:
> love is his fulfilment in heaven.
> The love of man and woman
> Is made holy in the sacrament of marriage
> And becomes the mirror of your everlasting love.[23]

The last three lines describe the sacramental nature of marriage to which Alison adhered. When the Gent family were parishioners of the mission church at St Francis of Assisi, Northfield, Alison appears as an enthusiastic member of its MU branch in an undated photograph.[24]

The MU had a prominent role in most parishes in the diocese of Adelaide. Its literature was circulated, prayers read, and special days such as Lady Day (the observance of the Feast of the Annunciation on 25 March) and regular quiet days promoted the role of women in family life.[25] While women's responsibility in maintaining harmonious relations and nurturing children was acknowledged in the wider society, the MU was the active arm of the church in the promotion of women's duty. Mary Sumner's aims referred to above are stated more strongly in the service book of 1948. The second object is 'to awaken in all Mothers a sense of their great responsibility in the training of their boys and girls – the Fathers and Mothers of the future.'[26]

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[22] AG *Int*, 7 June 2006, p. 9; 28 November 2005-1, p. 2.
[23] *The Mothers' Union Service Book 1974*, (London: Mothers' Union, 1974), p. 38. *The Mothers' Union in Australia Service Book 1974*, (Sydney: Mothers' Union in Australia, 1974), p. 38.
[24] Harris, *A History of the Anglican Parish Church of St. Clement*, p. 77. The St Francis, Northfield branch began in 1957. The Gents were worshipping there in 1963 when they were listed in the revised roll, Alison as MU member, John as the Sunday School Superintendent, p. 85.
[25] Dickey, *Not just Tea and Biscuits*. Lady Day was a diocesan event with branch members gathering at the cathedral and filling in to capacity. This was repeated in dioceses all over Australia. Dickey gives an account of the provincial centenary service in 1995. The accompanying photograph shows a packed cathedral, p. 67.
[26] *The Mothers' Union Service Book: Revised Edition 1948*, p. 11.

The MU prayer was a cornerstone of its faith and liturgies; known by heart, it was a mantra that formed hearts and minds. The original was written by Mary Sumner and was used as the official MU prayer until 1974 when the prayer was revised to meet changing worship patterns and societal views and to be more inclusive.[27] Nevertheless, the original prayer was prominently placed on page three of the 1974 revision and continued to be recited at meetings.[28] Sumner's phrases 'faithful wives and loving mothers', 'train our children for heaven' and 'homes of peace and love', however prayerful and encouraging, reiterate the obligations and responsibilities on women for the success of Christian home life. This was an obligation and responsibility that Alison took on cheerfully and faithfully.

Mary Sumner's personal prayer below is consonant with the churchmanship that had formed Alison and well describes her fervour to be a witness to her faith which she had taken on at her confirmation:

> All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee: and every life I touch, do thou by thy Spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live. Amen.[29]

The spiritual nature of motherhood and family life is further enunciated in the MU prayer:

> Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who gave marriage to be a source of blessing to mankind, we thank you for the joys of family life. Pour out upon us your Holy Spirit, that we may truly love and serve you. Bless all who are married and every parent and child. May we know your presence and peace in our homes; fill them with your love and use them for your glory. Bless the members of the Mothers' Union throughout the world; unite us in prayer and worship, in love and service, that strengthened by your grace, we may seek to do your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.[30]

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[27] "New Dimensions: Report of the Bishop of Willesden's Commission on the Objects and Policy of the Mothers' Union," (London1972); Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union*.
[28] *The Mothers' Union Service Book 1974*, p. 3.
[29] Ibid, p. 35.
[30] Ibid, p. 3. Inside her MU prayer book Alison had a postcard with Mary Sumner's colour portrait, signature and personal prayer, along with another postcard showing the chapel at Mary Sumner House, 24 Tufton Street, Westminster. Alison had written out Mary Sumner's prayer on this card.

What was the Form of Life of an Anglican Priest in Adelaide in 1947?

The service conducted to ordain a priest has the title 'The Form and Manner of Ordering of Priests'.[31] The use of the word 'order' is redolent with meaning: that the person enters into a state within which there is an expectation of obedience to the 'ordinary', that is, the bishop – the one who oversees the manner in which the church is governed.[32] The exhortation prays for those entering holy 'order', that God will 'adorn them with innocency of life', that they will be a 'good example' to those in their care, and further, 'may be wholesome and godly examples and patterns for people to follow.' The importance of the order of priest is emphasised by the phrase, 'into how high a dignity', which is repeated three times, and by the clause, 'to how weighty an office and charge ye are called.'

Other expectations cited are that the person in holy orders will shoulder the responsibility of the office, in devotion, prayer life, and daily Bible reading. For married clergymen there were further expectations. One of the six questions in the ordering of priests addressed the priest's responsibilities to his family; to the unmarried priest who may have relatives in need of a home and support and to the married priest:

> Will you be diligent to frame and fashion your own selves, and your families, according to the doctrines of Christ; and to make both yourselves, and them, as much as in you lieth, wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ?

A similar question dealt with the responsibilities of the deacon. No comparable question is asked at the consecration of a bishop; however the set reading from 1 Timothy 3 is specific in respect of marriage:

> A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?)

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[31] *BCP,* Ordinal.

[32] The phrase 'decently and in order' (1Cor: 14:40) is alluded to in the BCP introductory dissertations. In Concerning the Service of the Church: 'godly and decent order of the ancient Fathers'; in Of Ceremonies: why some are abolished, and some retained: 'those… which do serve to a decent Order and godly Discipline.' A protest badge produced during the 1980s struggle for women's ordination made a witty comment on this aspect of the Anglican form of life: 'Anglicans do it decently and in order.'

C. B. Moss's theological textbook illustrated the issues and resolutions that were being debated and taught about priesthood in Adelaide in the middle of the twentieth century.[33] Moss explained that the priest was set aside for the 'essential duties which cannot be performed by anyone but a priest … [which] are to consecrate the Eucharist, to give absolution to sinners, to anoint the sick, and to bless in the name of the Church.'[34] He added that 'the priest is also ordinarily a pastor, teacher, and evangelist. He is the normal minister of baptism. … The priest's highest duty is to consecrate the Eucharist, and the next, to give absolution.' Preaching, teaching and counsel must accompany these duties. 'Therefore the priest must be a man of holiness, of learning, and of knowledge of human nature; he must know his Bible, be trained in dogmatic, moral and ascetic theology, and in the art of teaching.'[35] With regard to marriage 'the Church must have a stricter rule for her members than the civil law.'[36] The decision to allow clergy to marry, taken at the Reformation, 'provided the church with a spiritual asset, not a disgrace.'[37] Historian Adrian Hastings observed that in the 1920s:

> Probably the most formative training centre for many an Anglican priest was still the home: a quite extraordinarily high proportion of the clergy were sons of priests. Nothing has been more characteristic of the Church of England with its gentle transition from the natural to Christian relationships. The influence of the clerical family both as a wider humanising and Christianising agency in society and as the communicator to new priests of the spiritual values and pastoral methods of the older generation has been remarkable.[38]

In the 1940s and 1950s the incumbent usually lived in a house next door to the church provided by the parish. The clergyman's dwelling, being in close proximity to the church, was a potent symbol of the association of the priest's

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[33] Claude Beaufort Moss, *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Dogmatic Theology*, (London: SPCK, 1943). The first edition, published in 1943, reflected the teaching for clergy and people in Adelaide's mostly high-church diocese. 'It was widely used by students as a textbook, giving a clear, crisp summary of the conservative Prayer Book Catholic view on everything. It was the despair of theologians who disapproved of his simple categories and conservative dogmatism.' David Hilliard, email, 6 February 2013.
[34] Ibid, p. 393.
[35] Ibid, p. 394.
[36] Ibid, p. 422.
[37] Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985*, p. 69.
[38] Ibid.

calling to the whole of his life. From his dwelling the clergyman came twice daily to pray the daily office in the church recalling the Benedictine monasticism inherent in Anglicanism. On Sundays he led worship: most churches would have had three Sunday services, 8, 9.30 or 11 am and evensong at 7pm. In those churches that were definitely Anglo-Catholic Holy Communion was celebrated daily at an early hour. Most other churches had a weekday celebration once or twice a week and on major saints days. Other priestly duties included religious instruction classes at local state schools, preparing children for confirmation, and officiating at baptisms, weddings and funerals. The basic administrative duties associated with parish life are mentioned neither in the ordinal nor by Moss. The paperwork involved with marriages, baptisms and funerals required some organisational skills and it was expected that the officiating minister would deal with these matters. Parishes did not have paid or volunteer secretarial assistance. While priest-in-charge of the district of Enfield and Broadview missions, John Gent was remiss in attending to these matters. After John's licence was revoked in 1956, the locum appointed during the period, the Reverend Norman Crawford, wrote in the parish newsletter, 'There are some folk who brought children to baptism and failed to get baptismal certificates or memorial cards. I would be most grateful if they could drop me a line giving me their name and address.'[39] Failing to comply with provisions of the Marriage Act 1936 was a more serious matter. The minister conducting a church marriage was required to file reports with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. John Gent was prosecuted for breaches of the Act and fined.[40]

The Culture of Anglo-Catholic Clergymen and Their Wives

Something of the responsibility of the clergyman for the church is conveyed in this description from the Anglo-Catholic Congress held in London in 1923: 'The ministry is, in the fullest sense, a part of the divine equipment of

[39] Harris, *A History of the Anglican Parish Church of St. Clement*, p. 39.
[40] *Advertiser*, 30 September 1953, p. 8. John Gent was fined 1 pound with 2 pounds 12/6 costs for a breach of the Marriage Act, for having failed to forward an authenticated report of marriages performed by him. He was described as a nuisance, and casual in making returns. He pleaded urgent work in his parish.

the Church; it is a necessary provision for the due functioning of the Body.'[41] The clause in the ordinal 'the cure of souls' carried the same weight, specifying responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the congregation and beyond. The priest had a special vocation … to a ministry in spiritual things, to be a 'steward of the mysteries of God.'[42] The priest *in loco Christi* was the benchmark of the Anglo-Catholic position: 'Before all things he is to be the minister of Christ, that through him Christ may give to his people supernatural gifts of truth and power, his own Light and Life.' The writer bemoaned the fact that:

> we are faced with the lamentable spectacle of Priests who are snowed under by all manner of secondary things – organisation, routine work, Societies, Clubs, Committee, and a host of other little and big jobs, things for which they were not ordained to do, things which ought to be done by the laity.[43]

Contrary to this view of the priest distant from everyday life was the witness of the Anglo-Catholic priests in the London slums, of whom Father Wainright of St Peter's, London Docks, is 'the superlative example of a parish priest who lived entirely for his people.'[44] He was, for years, a member of the Stepney Borough Council.[45] He described his priesthood in these terms:

> The share of work that has fallen to me has ranged from stoker to vicar. I have made wills, taken care of lunatics, acted as a kind of amateur policeman in breaking up street rows … I have presided over nigger troupes, cricket, football, boating clubs, gone on begging tours, beside the ordinary avocations of a parish priest.[46]

Such priests, another being Father Mackonochie of St Alban's, Holborn, were the heroes of the Anglo-Catholic party.[47] However, it was a vocation best lived out as a single person and admiration of it fostered a perception of the superiority of celibacy over marriage. The dilemma for many in the Anglo-Catholic tradition

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[41] Francis Underhill and Charles Scott Gillett, eds., *Report of the Anglo-Catholic Congress: The Gospel of God* (London: Society of Ss. Peter & Paul, 1923), p. 113.
[42] J. C. H. How, "The Manifestation of the Spirit (Vocation)," in *Report of the Anglo-Catholic Congress*, ed. Francis Underhill, (London: Society of Ss. Peter & Paul, 1923), p. 123.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Lucy Menzies, *Father Wainright: A Record*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947), p. xviii. Far from avoiding the societies, Wainright formed them. He rallied financial support for the out-of-work and starving, and for the parish schools.
[45] Ibid, p. 124.
[46] Ibid, p. 60. See Appendix G:2 for Chris Gent's eulogy.
[47] Michael Reynolds, *Martyr to Ritualism: Father Mackonochie of St Alban's, Holborn*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).

was satirised in the accompanying cartoon:



Nov. 6, 1929 *D. L. Ghilchip*

Fiancée. 'After we're married, dear, you won't mind if I don't come to your church much, will you?'

Curate. 'But why ever not, precious?'

Fiancée. 'Well, you see, I don't really approve of married clergymen.'

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The Anglo-Catholic clergyman who did choose to marry nevertheless deemed his vocation to sacramental ordination to have priority over his vocation to marriage: in fact the diocese would concur that the family of the priest had less claim on his time than parishioners. The priest's main duty was prayer and liturgical responsibilities: a wife took care of his needs, his house, and his children.[49] His social life often revolved around his clerical peers.

Clergymen – and their wives – in Anglo-Catholic circles were also subject to peer pressure to follow Roman Catholic Church teaching on contraception. An insight into the expectations facing Anglo-Catholic clergy couples was given in the 1923 Anglo-Catholic Congress Report.[50] A woman medical practitioner stated categorically that 'artificial contraceptives are wrong, morally, medically,

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[48] Michael Edwardes, ed. *The Reverend Mr. Punch: A Pictorial Record of a Sixty Years' Ministry* (London: Mowbray, 1956), p. 52. The cartoon puts an amusing slant on a serious conflict between marriage and celibacy intensified by the Anglo-Catholic tendency to emulate the ethical and moral disciplines of the Roman Catholic Church. The cartoon was used for the invitation to the Parsonettes' eightieth birthday in 1995.

[49] Howell Witt, *Bush Bishop*, (Adelaide: Rigby, 1979). Witt gives a summary of an Anglo-Catholic priest's mission. In the Gent family, Alison also was fired by the vocation to help the poor and dispossessed. See Appendix G: 2 for Chris Gent's eulogy. Peter Gent, interview, 19 November 2009. Peter remembered that at home 'it was waifs and strays' and there was once a chap who had 'just come out of jail sleeping under the kitchen table', p. 15.

[50] *Report of the Anglo-Catholic Congress*.

rationally' and that 'they injure the nervous systems of both husband and wife; sometimes they cause sepsis, occasionally death.'[51] In a pamphlet (found among Alison's papers) published by the MU, Mrs Theodore Woods argued that 'the normal house is not complete until a husband and wife become father and mother, and the natural basis of a happy married life is the possession of a family.'[52] Her advice on limiting pregnancies came with the assurance that 'where a husband and wife are at one in trying to do what is right in God's sight, He will give that grace of self-control, which is as much needed in married life as elsewhere.'[53] With regard to abnormal conditions she asserted that:

> the Mothers' Union desires to lead its members to a careful and reverent study of the Christian principles which govern the relation of the sexes and to warn them that it is in the light of these principles only that the subject of birth prevention, with all its implications, can rightly be regarded. The Mothers' Union affirms that the ideal for Christian men and women in this matter is self-control.[54]

This and similar material would have impressed the devout and serious Alison in the years leading up to, and following, her marriage.

Such views were consistent with those conveyed during the 1920 Lambeth Conference, and were 'wonderfully in accord with MU principles.'[55] The Mothers' Union in the diocese of Willochra, in the north of South Australia, upheld these principles by printing and distributing a card.[56] The resolutions of 1920 were overturned at the 1930 Lambeth Conference but for the MU and some prominent clergymen, the practice of birth control was still a matter of

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[51] Mary Scharlieb, "The Family (the Spirit of the Christian Home)," in *Report of the Anglo-Catholic Congress*, ed. Francis Underhill, (London: Society of Ss. Peter & Paul), p. 127-32. Mrs Scharlieb MD. MS. was a celebrated surgeon and devout Anglo-Catholic. She worked to improve the conditions for women in India and the United Kingdom. Obituary, *British Medical Journal* (29 November 1930), p. 935-7.
[52] Mrs Theodore Woods, "Ideals of Christian Family Life," (Westminster: Mothers' Union), p. 3. 'Mrs Woods preceded Mrs Fisher (wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1945) as Central President of MU.' Kain and Harvie, *The Mothers' Union Jubilee Book*, p. 15. Nina Katherine Woods' husband was Frank Theodore Woods 1874-1932, bishop of Winchester 1924-1932. For the Woods' contribution to the debate see Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union*. Nina Woods was Central President from 1933- 1944, p. 130. For the wider debate at this time see p. 126-131.
[53] Ibid, p. 4.
[54] Ibid, p. 5.
[55] Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union*, p. 127.
[56] Appendix B: 3.

debate.[57] Adelaide's leading Anglo-Catholic clergyman, Father Percy Wise, rector of St George's Goodwood 1900-1940, denounced the 1930 Lambeth Conference resolutions 'from the pulpit' and was reported in the press.[58] Although many Anglo-Catholic clergy did not hold this view, there were still clergy families in the 1940s and 1950s who did.[59] When Alison and he married, John Gent indicated his preference for the Anglo-Catholic policy, while Alison countered what she saw later as his reluctance to take responsibility for birth control by saying that she would not carry the responsibility on her own.[60]

Role of the Clergyman's Wife

The woman married to a clergyman is in danger of being type cast. If she is forceful and has strong opinions, she may be referred to as a Mrs Proudie, the manipulating, interfering wife of the Archdeacon in Anthony Trollope's *Barchester Chronicles.* A shy and unassuming wife, or one who dutifully fulfils the role, is recognisable as the timid, mousy, blandly-dressed wife of Mrs Bucket's vicar in the television comedy, *Keeping up Appearances.* These parodies illustrate both ends of the spectrum of the stereotypical clergyman's wife, while those women for whom willing participation in the life of the church did involve them in marriage and rectory life have been awarded little recognition.[61] Hastings, while extolling the spiritual asset of clergy marriage, does not consider the influence of clergy wives nor of their daughters.[62]

Clergy wives are not indexed as a distinct group in recent studies of women in the church, even though praised in the text for their contribution to church life.[63] Sean Gill attributed most of the active church work done in the nineteenth century to the women in the parsonage, but his inclusion of daughters deprived

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[57] Bishop Charles Gore CR preached against contraception in the 1930s after the Lambeth Conference resolutions on the subject. G. L. Prestige, *The Life of Charles Gore: A Great Englishman*, (London: William Heinemann, 1935), p. 515-18. Gore was one of the last voices in the English church to oppose the practice.
[58] *Advertiser* 24 November 1930, p. 8.
[59] Hilary Waterhouse, conversation, 2006.
[60] Charles Gent, interview, 28 October 2008. He described Alison's reaction as 'tit for tat non-contraception.'
[61] See also the chapter on clergy wives in A. N. Wilson, ed. *Faber Book of Church and Clergy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 209-19.
[62] Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985*, p. 69.
[63] Sean Gill, *Women and the Church of England from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, (London: SPCK, 1994), p. 139.

clergy wives of their distinct identity.[64] This identity was dependent on another's identity and although a person in her own right, the clergyman's wife was nevertheless, 'an incorporated wife.'[65] While the importance of marriage and family life has been acclaimed in historical studies, it was those who worked outside the home in either a voluntary or paid capacity who earned a place in history. Peter Sherlock, commenting on studies of Australian churchwomen, observed that 'the few works which have discussed clerical wives portray them solely as "unpaid curates", denying them any self-determination and ignoring their access to genteel society.'[66] He noted a lack of concern in the historical treatment of 'women who were crucial to the development of the Anglican Church in the colonies and elsewhere by providing work without pay.'[67] In Anne O'Brien's *God's Willing Workers*, the central chapters deal with women mainly taken up with family life, and women 'who dedicated their lives to the church by working as missionaries or religious sisters.' O'Brien thus divided churchwomen into those who married and those who did not.[68] She did not give consideration to the willing work of women who married clergymen of any denomination as a distinct group. O'Brien rarely made the connection between a well-known willing worker and their marital status: Mary Sumner being married to a bishop is the obvious omission. Mrs Mowll (who is not identified as the wife of the Archbishop of Sydney) is criticised for orchestrating a situation which 'conferred considerable opportunity for exerting authority.'[69] Being a wife in modern Australia did not count for a qualification for a position sacred or secular, or as an entry in a curriculum vitae. O'Brien, nevertheless, assumed that Winifred Kiek was 'well placed for ministry, being the wife of the principal of Parkin (Congregational

[64] Ibid, p. 139-140.
[65] Peter Sherlock, "Wholesome Examples and the Getting of Wisdom: Colonial Clerical Wives at St Peter's," in *Anglo-Catholicism in Melbourne: Papers to Mark the 150th Anniversary of St Peter's Eastern Hill 1846-1996*, ed. Colin Holden, (Melbourne: History Department, University of Melbourne, 1997), p. 43.
[66] Ibid, p. 36.
[67] Ibid.
[68] O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers*, p. 13; Kathleen Bliss, *The Service and Status of Women in the Churches*, (London: SCM, 1952). Bliss takes a similar view.
[69] O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers*. Perhaps we may forgive Mrs Mowll her grasp at authority; her husband 'had tried to keep deaconesses in their place', p. 117-118.

theological) College in Adelaide.'[70] During the decades of debate for the ordination of women, being married to a clergyman in the Anglican Church did not guarantee being accepted for ordination. Alison's story is just one case in question.

In Adelaide, wives of clergy have exercised their collegiality in a variety of ways, the longest lasting being Parsonettes which began in 1915.[71] Mrs Houison, wife of the rector of St Oswald's Parkside, wanted to give companionship to young wives who came with their husbands from the country for synod; from that a monthly mutual interest group developed. In the 1980s the diocese of Adelaide began to accept married men into training colleges; their wives necessarily were supportive. One wife spoke of Alison's special encouragement to them as prospective clergy wives. Groups of twelve or more would travel from the theological college to Parsonettes where discussion of issues involving rectory life was valuable for those who saw their marriage as part of their calling.[72] Alison became conscious of the alienation suffered by former wives of clergy after she herself was divorced. She encouraged these women and others who had shared experience of rectory life, such as clergy daughters, to enjoy the Parsonettes' supportive and non-critical company. What was seen as inevitable domesticity and a vocation to parish life was nevertheless held lightly and with humour, as its banner attests.[73] The motto 'either a parochial autocrat or a parish doormat' is, however, a choice that is neither helpful for the strong, devoted women such as Alison nor complimentary for those whose temperament is quiet devotion. The banner was kept in Alison's drawing room; it has been with the secretary since her death. The banner or its photograph is displayed at meetings. The participants have an amazing ability to laugh at themselves and their common heritage of the vocation that was inherent in living in a rectory.

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[70] Ibid, p. 111.
[71] Parsonettes was briefly introduced in Chapter 1. Some clergy wives felt called to the ministry themselves. In the 1990s the Mathiesons were the only clergy couple in Adelaide while in Melbourne a group of 17-20 couples were brought together at diocesan initiative, to discuss vocation and difficulties.
[72] Jeannie Minnis, interview, May 2008.
[73] Appendix B:9. On the shield's quarters are a bunch of keys errant, a telephone vibrant, a doorbell strident and alms bag suppliant. The crest was a teapot constant on a bar.

5 ALISON AND MARRIAGE

The decision whether to marry or remain single was relevant to any woman who wanted to devote her life to the church. A fulfilling life in the church was limited to ministry as a deaconess, nun or missionary, or vocational careers such as teaching and nursing.[74] These vocations were predicated on being single, and even teaching and nursing offered little chance for advancement if not pursued full time. Women of Alison's generation usually had to make a choice between marriage and family or a career.[75] In her interview with Helen Chryssides, Alison discussed choosing between marriage and career.[76] Her dilemma was resolved because she was, she said, more interested in the church, and she reiterated that she 'had become very interested in marrying an Anglican priest.'[77] John Gent, as a candidate for ordination, added the dream of a shared ministry to his other attractions. Alison portrayed herself as full of idealism and naivety in respect of marriage in the interviews she gave in 1981 and 1992. Her tendency to put herself down may also be noted. In 1981 she was conscious of her lack of achievement professionally, and talked lamely about her entrance into marriage:

> I blithely went on and got married and into a situation, which was possibly the least likely to encourage me to pursue an academic career, because I married a clergyman. The combination of marriage and the church is or was then probably the most conservative of situations.[78]

It was not until later in the twentieth century that the wives of clergy asserted their choice to pursue a career beyond the rectory.[79]

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[74] Ruth Teale, "Matron, Maid and Missionary: The Work of Anglican Women in Australia," in *Women: Faith and Fetes: Essays in the History of Women and the Church in Australia*, ed. Sabine Willis, (Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1977). Teale discussed the choices that in nineteenth century had to be made by women wanting to participate in church life – to marry a clergyman, or to not marry and either work in a helping profession such as nursing, or join a religious community. The last option was to leave one's homeland and home comforts for the missionary field.

[75] AG *PRH,* p. 50. 'Marrying was a goal … I wanted to use my talents for public life in the church and for domestic life.'

[76] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 2.

[77] Ibid, p. 4.

[78] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 60. This assessment of her attitude and circumstance belies the evidence of dissension in her family over her decision to marry John Gent. See Chapter 1.

[79] 'Rectory' will be used as a generic title for the home of an Anglican clergyman and his family in this thesis, although a rectory is technically only used if the church has the status of a parish and in some instances the house where the Gents were living when John was priest –in-charge, did not have this status. The term varies from state to state in Australia. In Melbourne vicarage is used. The English 'parsonage' is rarely used in Australia.

Marriage to a clergyman, however, did offer the opportunity to combine both family and ministry.[80] The vocation of the clergyman was attractive to women for whom the church was their home, and also for those who were deeply spiritual and had gifts for ministry which they could exercise by virtue of living in the rectory and being party to the administration and devotional life of the parish. Many clergy wives in the history of the Anglican Church since the marriage of priests, were evangelistic. In the seventeenth century, Susannah Wesley, mother of John and Charles Wesley, famously exercised an outstanding ministry; and in Melbourne in the nineteenth century, Frances Perry, wife of the Bishop of Melbourne, 'was the first bishop's wife to adopt a philanthropic role in Australia.'[81]

Many women in the mid-twentieth century in Adelaide would have regarded their marriage to a clergyman as a vocation, while others saw themselves in the unrewarding role of unpaid curate.[82] Alison certainly considered her position as a priest's wife as a vocation.[83] These clergy wives viewed their marriage as part of their Christian ministry, because consciously or unconsciously, the closest they could be to the holy things of God was to share their husband's ministry. A priest's wife could also exercise her own ministry talents by, for example, leading the local MU branch or teaching Sunday school. Alison commented:

> I was very uncritical about what was expected of me in a suburban parish… He said, 'Oh, you'd better start a Mothers' Union,' and I just sort of meekly went ahead and did these things (laughs) so I don't know that I was particularly suited to them.[84]

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[80] AG *Int*, 28 November 2005-1, p. 2; 14 June 2006, p. 9. 'Well, I think marrying John was the only way I could then see of getting into [the priesthood].'
[81] West, *Daughters of Freedom*, p. 89-91.
[82] By the 1980s clergy wives were questioning their position. Shelagh Brown, ed. *Married to the Church?* (London: Triangle, 1983). In Australia the matter was studied sociologically. Kenneth Dempsey, "Ministers' Wives: Continuity and Change in Relation to Their Husband's Work," in *The Force of the Feminine: Women, Men and the Church*, ed. Margaret Ann Franklin, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986). See also Joanna Trollope, *The Rector's Wife*, (London: Black Swan, 1994). The issue of women married to clergy who themselves felt called to ordained ministry will be examined in Chapter 7.
[83] AG *Int*, 28 November 2005-1, p. 2; 14 June 2006, p. 9: AG *DJ* 1, p. 190, 29 October 1966. 'Also I must face the truth that John does not want to be a licensed and functioning priest, and that the belief (wilful, perhaps?) that he did went for much in my desire to marry him, and in my behaviour since we married.'
[84] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 5. See above for comments on the 'clerical club' and Alison's exclusion from its conversations.

Domesticity and dutiful rectory ministry was not, however, the primary way Alison wanted to share John's priesthood. She had the habit of attending the Eucharist daily but also wanted a fuller devotional life. She complained that he had never wanted to say the daily offices with her and that she had asked him to share that with her from the earliest days of their marriage.[85] Church authorities (lay and clerical) viewed women with religious conviction with unease. They particularly frowned upon wives of clergymen who expressed their religious convictions with fervour. The clergyman and his children were considered to be her primary concern, together with offering works of charity and the teaching of women and children.[86]

Alison's devotional life also encompassed her felt responsibility for her children and she worked hard to build a Christian family. Her daughter Lavinia remembers her mother drawing her attention to the sacred moments in the liturgy or sharing her hymnbook with her.[87] Alison purchased a book of family prayers in 1957, for her three boys aged ten, six and four years respectively. [88] Her evident desire was to fulfil the ideals of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, that 'there is a necessary place for family prayer in the home, where in the intimacy of family life members of the family kneel together and in prayer demonstrate that their unity as a family is a unity in the love of God.'[89] Alison depended on the church's traditional teaching to create her family's spiritual life in the home. Her son, Chris, did not recall the book, however, and commented that life was too chaotic, their father absent and the sons too resistant, for anything so organised to be effected. He remembered that they did Lenten devotions one year.[90]

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[85] AG *DJ* 1, 29 October 1966, p. 190. 'The disappointment I have had over his lack of desire for any formal prayers together is perhaps something I can do something about? Certainly, to accept my own Christian priesthood is something I can, perhaps "do" formally on our 20th anniversary.'

[86] This unease persisted into the late twentieth century in Adelaide. In 1979 a candidate for ordination was asked, in an interview, what he was going to do about his wife, as parishioners may wonder who was the priest of the two. Author's personal experience.

[87] Lavinia Gent, interview, 17 December 2012.

[88] C. M. Chavasse, *Walking with Christ: A Little Book of Family Prayers*, (London: SPCK, 1956).

[89] Ibid, p. 4. The timing of this purchase coincided with the bishop withdrawing John's licence. See below for a full discussion.

[90] Chris Gent, conversation, 21 May 2011.

Divorce

The church's attitude on divorce and remarriage was an integral part of marriage as a form of life. It was disapproving of the former and unequivocally condemning of the latter:

> As members of the Church we are bound not to make use of the right of divorce in any circumstances. A husband or wife who is prevented by adultery, desertion, or lunacy of the person he or she has sworn to be faithful 'for better or worse, till death us do part', is bound to live in chastity until the other repents, recovers, or dies. However, the breach of the marriage vow is not being divorced, but marrying again in the other's lifetime.[91]

From the beginning of the 1950s the official view of the Anglican Church in Adelaide on divorce and remarriage was set out in a pamphlet published by the diocese. Bishop Bryan Robin wrote the first edition in 1952; it was reprinted unchanged by his successor, Bishop T. T. Reed. Correspondence in the press on the subject was cited as prompting the need for 'a clear statement of an authoritative kind.'[92] Reed 'heartily commend[ed] the booklet to both Clergy and Laity of the Diocese.'[93] The reprint in 1963 was a stern warning there would be no consideration by the church of the changing society.

The document presented its arguments forcefully, in tone, expression and the format which is reproduced here. The argument starts with Scripture, 'the teaching of the Master' which is 'clear and unmistakeable': '**Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.'** Four points explain why the 'so apparently hard and uncompromising a principle' should be adhered to. Divorce will be an escape clause, faithfulness will be undermined, early difficulties will not be worked through, and the happiness of the two individuals will be the prime consideration rather than the nurture of the children. The clause from the BCP marriage service (which was also used by the state) 'till death do us part' is interpreted thus: '**in her Marriage Service she means what she says, and expects those who willingly take those vows to mean what they say and stand by their word.'**

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[91] Moss, *The Christian Faith*, p. 423. 'Duty of Members of the Church.' One is reminded of the mad Mrs Rochester and Rochester's dilemma in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.
[92] Robin, "The Position of the Church of England regarding Divorce." The Foreword. Robin's emphasis in bold.
[93] Ibid.

This document was made available to every parish, and recommended for marriage preparation.[94]

The last page of the leaflet discussed remarriage and excommunication by referring to the debate in the United Kingdom.[95] Resolutions of the Convocations were passed in 1963:

> that in order to maintain the principle of lifelong obligation which is inherent in every marriage contract between Christians and is expressed in the plainest terms in the Marriage Service, the Church should not allow the use of that Service in the case of anyone who has a former partner still living.[96]

The MU reinforced the church's teaching in a petition in 'A Litany of Prayer and Praise': 'That all Christian people may be brought to realize that divorce is a sin against God, and to fight against the evils of the divorce court.'[97] There was an implicit presumption that clergy families were the cornerstones of societal and church morality so they bore the expectation that their marriages would be successful.

Alison's Marriage

The Gent Marriage will be examined in four periods: from 1947 to 1971, the year Alison joined the Women's Liberation Movement, from 1971 to 1980 when divorce proceedings were initiated, from 1980 to 1998, the year of John's death, and 1998 to 2009 the year of Alison's death. An introductory passage on the events of each period will be followed by an analysis of Alison's reactions and mode of interpretation of the 'language games' and form of life within which she found herself. The theological motivations in Alison's life will be considered. Suffering, in particular, was a constant theme in this form of life.

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[94] Ibid.
[95] Geoffrey Fisher, *The Church and Marriage: Evidence Presented to the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce by His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury on Behalf of the Church of England*, 2nd ed, (Westminster: Church Information Board, 1954).
[96] Archbishop's Letter, *ACG* December 1973, p. 3.
[97] *The Mothers' Union Service Book: Revised Edition 1948*, p. 35.

The Years from 1947 to 1970

When Alison and John married he had already been the priest-in-charge of the district of Enfield and Broadview Missions for nine months. John Gent was licensed on 15 March 1946 and came prepared for his task with experience in a multi-centred country parish on South Australia's Yorke Peninsula. In a letter to Alison he described his Sunday duties:

> I said Mass here at Yorketown, then matins, and left for Warooka, which is 15 miles. There I picked up my guide who brought his family too, and we all went on to Corny Point. I said Mass in the schoolroom, with about a million flies, which made it a little nearer Calvary somehow. The Point is very small, and everybody comes to whose-ever service is on. There were several Methodists there this morning. They did NOT make their communion. The altar was a school desk, and we had no candles, as I, city mouse that I am had not thought to bring them. Then the Cope family who are pretty good gave me the open air lunch they had brought from Waroooka. Cold duck it was and mighty fine too. Then the twenty mile drive back to Warooka and evensong there at three. Afternoon tea there and so back here [Yorketown] for Evensong again – same sermon too. The road is not good, and I feel that today's 70 miles have tired me more than yesterday's 150 [coming from Adelaide].[98]

In 1946 neither St Phillip's, Broadview nor St Clement's, Enfield were financially viable, so St Phillip's was attached to St Clement's.[99] Both churches had been at various times supported by the diocesan agency, the Bishop's Home Mission Society [BHMS], which supplied clergy and assistance to buy land and buildings. Together, with BHMS financial aid, they were the Enfield and Broadview Mission District.

The Australian population burgeoned during the post-war period, but of particular interest is that the increase was threefold in the ten years from 1946 to 1954 when the Gents were in the mission district.[100] In the nearby suburb of Kilburn (which was a separate mission district), the British Tube Mills had been

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[98] John Gent to Alison, c. 1945.

[99] St Clement's had been established in 1858, and had intermittently been attached to the new church community of St Phillip's Broadview since 1923. Donald Grey-Smith, *The Church of St Phillip's Broadview 1926-1976*, (Adelaide: 1976).

[100] Susan Marsden, *Business, Charity and Sentiment: The South Australian Housing Trust 1936-1986*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), p. 88-9. 'Between 1939 and 1963 South Australia experienced the greatest percentage increase in population (67.8 %, compared with the second largest, 61.4% in Victoria).'

established in 1938.[101] Housing had been built nearby for the workers.[102] The Church of England in Australia struggled to accommodate the post-war influx of British immigrants who provided swelling congregations for the churches in these mission districts.[103] The socio-economic challenge warranted an unmarried, single-minded priest similar to the slum priests of the London Docks.[104] John Gent, however, was married and within weeks of the wedding Alison knew she was expecting their first child.

Further difficulties faced the newly married couple: the impoverished church community could not afford to provide a house for the clergy family. The couple initially lived in a tiny cottage (now demolished) belonging to St Barnabas' College opposite St Peter's Cathedral on King William Road, North Adelaide. Later they moved to a rented semi-detached house in 7 Moorang Street, Kilburn on the outskirts of suburban Adelaide. Beyond Kilburn, which bordered Grand Junction Road, farming land stretched over flat plains to the country towns of Salisbury and Gawler. The South Australian Housing Trust, a state government department, built housing some of which was for rental to the 'deserving poor.'[105] The Trust was not permitted to rent to institutions, but invited businesses, factories and local authorities to seek applications from their employees.[106] Under these terms clergy could apply to be tenants and then have the rent subsided with an allowance from the diocese.[107] The clergy who went to minister in these disadvantaged areas, such as the Gents (and later Father Stuart Smith), were highly educated and sincere Anglo-Catholics, who took on

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[101] Susan Marsden, *Business, Charity and Sentiment: The South Australian Housing Trust 1936-1986*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), p. 149.
[102] Ibid, p. 167.
[103] Ibid, p. 88. One-third of the immigrants were British and Irish and a high percentage would have been nominal or active Anglicans.
[104] In 1959 the parish recorded 3,000 souls, 1,000 under 14 years, with 44 Religious Instruction classes weekly, and a youth membership of 140: figures advertised by John's successor, Rev. T. R. Fleming. Harris, *A History of the Anglican Parish Church of St. Clement*, p. 42.
[105] For background on the inception and operation of the Housing Trust see Marsden, *Business, Charity and Sentiment*, p. 65. Bishop S. Smith, conversation, 17 February 2013. Smith remembered the clergy being 'needful individuals.' The Trust had a sensitivity to the social status of its tenants and in certain suburbs bungalow rental housing was set aside for newly graduated professionals so they had neighbours of like standing. Author's personal experience.
[106] Marsden, *Business, Charity and Sentiment*, p. 62.
[107] Bishop S. Smith, conversation, 16 February 2013. The General Manager of the Housing Trust at this time was Alex Ramsay, an Anglican who was also head of the Bishop's Home Mission Society which funded the mission districts. 'Ramsay's contribution towards the good of his fellow men was also in keeping with his active Christian faith.' Ibid, p. 81-2

these appointments in the tradition of the slum priests. They were 'needful' tenants indeed.[108] Kilburn was one of Adelaide's most underprivileged Housing Trust suburbs where rental dwellings predominated.[109] Nearby was the Gepps Cross migrant hostel.[110] There may have been public rental housing available to the Gents in a less depressed area than Kilburn, but the people of St Clement's, the older church, would have wanted the priest to live nearby and the Gents themselves would have preferred to be as close as possible to the church. Nevertheless, there was a walk of just under a kilometre, uphill, on unmade footpaths to the church for daily offices and daily Mass to which both Alison and John were assiduous in their observance. In 1949 an autocycle was purchased [by the mission district] for the priest-in-charge, so he would have 'easier contact with the two parishes (*sic*), St Phillip's Broadview contributing.'[111]

That Alison lived in a Housing Trust semi-detached dwelling in Kilburn when the founder of the South Australian Housing Trust (with [Sir] Keith Wilson) was Horace Hogben, her uncle, presents a certain irony.[112] Besides the surrounding neighbourhood being so unfamiliar to both Alison and John, the home offered just nine square feet of living space which was insufficient space for professional duties and raising children.[113] Their first son, John Timothy, was born forty-one weeks after their wedding on 14 November 1947. Two more sons arrived, Christopher Guy, on 14 July 1951, and Peter Clement Joachim on 16 August 1953. The three boys shared the second bedroom. John used the third bedroom as a study 'with all his books in it – but it doubled as the piano-room.'[114] For the cultivated, intellectual and disorganised Gents, this situation was disorienting and difficult. Marital disharmony accompanied the cramped conditions. Alison expressed much disappointment at John's obvious disinterest in family life very early in their parenthood. She felt John did not adequately

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[108] Father Stuart Smith was licensed as mission chaplain/priest-in-charge of the Kilburn/Prospect North Mission district on 14 March 1958. He and his family also lived in a rental semi-detached house. Bishop S. Smith, telephone conversation, 16 February 2013.
[109] Marsden, *Business, Charity and Sentiment*, p. 182.
[110] Ibid, p. 126-9.
[111] Harris, *A History of the Anglican Parish Church of St. Clement*, p. 35.
[112] Marsden, *Business, Charity and Sentiment*, p. 17-46, 306, n. 12. Alison's father's younger brother was an accountant and shared her birthday. See Appendix B:2 for his biography.
[113] See Appendix B:1 for a floor plan of the housing, and Photograph 1:25 for the streetscape.
[114] Chris Gent, email, 9 August 2011.

share the care and loving of their children. 'I ran away after three and a half years. Only I came back after about four days.'[115]

Not only did the Gents have accommodation inadequate for their purposes, but they did not enjoy the extra benefits which supplemented the stipends of clergy in prosperous parishes. They were even more constrained because John spent money on beer and cigarettes. Gifts from family such as a luxury perambulator eased the monetary situation but heightened their social disconnection.[116] However, thrust into this environment, Alison learnt to identify with the poor and working class and to understand, live with and then to embrace their culture. Her capacity for loving friendship for 'all sorts and conditions of men' began to flourish here.[117] 'Kilburn was my finishing school', she said, and where she 'cut her women's liberation teeth.'[118] Her son, Chris described the incongruities and difficulties which brought Alison into the form of life, marriage, which would prove to have extraordinary consequences on her formation:

> And this is where the story really starts. This is the blue-stocking in the tailored dress pushing the luxury perambulator up the steep dusty unsealed road to early morning Mass. This is the beautiful cultured lecturer's voice pleading meat-scraps from the butcher to feed a burgeoning pet cat population. This is the Walford girl coming to grips with stray dogs, disapproving parishioners, unpaid bills, violent neighbours, piles of ironing, hungry children, 6 o'clock closing, geographical, social and institutional isolation – life in a red-brick semi-detached housing-trust, 7 Moorang St, Kilburn. She was still in touch with but oh so far from life at either Alexandra Avenue or Strangways Terrace. [119]

Difficulties also arose in church life. The friendly accommodation of country people John had experienced had been an antidote to the geographical isolation but the Anglicans in the expanding suburbs of Adelaide seemed less able to accept John's Anglo-Catholicism and other character faults. John was one of the radical young Anglo-Catholics whose behaviour included insisting on being

[115] AG *Int*, 17 August 2006-3, p. 6.
[116] Chris Gent, eulogy, 17 November 2009.
[117] *BCP*, Prayers and Thankgivings.
[118] AG *Int*, 13 February 2006-2, p. 3.
[119] Chris Gent, eulogy, 17 November 2009.

called 'Father'.[120] He was a brilliant teacher and a faculty member of St Barnabas' Theological College.[121] Such extremes of personality and practice brought reaction. He was not liked by some of the parishioners who thought he was 'too high'; 'they gave him a terrible time, made life hell for him'; because of his intellectual abilities, 'he was too clever'. [122] In 1950 John's priestly duties were reduced when the Broadview Mission was detached from Enfield, although the post-war immigration continued to fill St Clement's.[123] John's lack of organisational abilities proved a constant source of frustration and annoyance to his parishioners and brought him censure.[124] Although he was the priest-in-charge for ten years, the discontent is evident in the parish history where no details of his ministry are to be found only that 'things progressed very quietly from 1951-1955.'[125] There was an unwillingness to offer any reflection on a period when church leaders were agitating for John Gent's removal.[126]

Alison commented somewhat bitterly that three of her children were born while they were there and received no mention in the history. But she too caused reaction. Alison disturbed the commonly held view that a woman should not outshine her husband; her outspokenness and interest in intellectual and theological pursuits were so offensive that Alison was told it was her they really wanted to remove.[127] The piety which impressed a young girl and the kindness and care given could not outweigh the discomfiture Alison aroused.[128]

In 1956 Bishop Bryan Robin withdrew John's licence to officiate as a priest. His action was prompted by a letter of complaint written by the wardens of St Clement's on 27 December 1955 claiming general dissatisfaction with the affairs of the parish (*sic*) by the majority of those present at the vestry

[120] See Chapter 4,
[121] Photograph 7:2.
[122] Helen Taylor, interview, 27 July 2010.
[123] Grey-Smith, *The Church of St Phillip's Broadview 1926-1976*, p. 14.
[124] See above for John's failure to provide baptism certificates.
[125] Harris, *A History of the Anglican Parish Church of St. Clement*, p. 38.
[126] No documentation is available for this period in John Gent's file. Bishop Robin destroyed many of his own papers. Anglican Archives, May 2011.
[127] AG, unrecorded interview, c. 2006.
[128] Comment to author, Aldgate, 2009. Comments made to the rector of St Clement's, 2006.

meeting.[129] Lack of leadership and support of parishioners, the need for 'a wider range of services to meet spiritual needs' and personal failings of the priest-in-charge were cited as the reasons for the disaffection. Such disquiet can in part be attributed to the pressure on church communities in this post-war period and that 'church leaders were regarded as moral guardians of the community.'[130] A growing divorce rate, the new teenage sub-culture and its attendant 'juvenile delinquency' were perceived threats to traditional family values that were seen as the duty of the churches to uphold.[131] St Clement's was also close to the new housing estates which were full of young families.[132]

The bishop wrote to John on 29 December informing him of the complaint and inviting him to a meeting on 2 January 1956. The salient points of that meeting are set out below:

> (a) no specific charges were made by the Bishop; i.e. no specific charges giving dates times or places or things done or undone; but (b) three disabling factors were stated by the Bishop and they were: (i) - excessive drinking, (ii) evasiveness and persistent lying, (iii) complete failure to cope with the practical and material side of the ministry of a parish priest; and (c) in the discussion which ensued the plaintiff [Gent] admitted that these were defects of his character.[133]

After a warning, the bishop gave John the required three months notice and on 7 April 1956 John's licence was cancelled.[134] The effect was wide-ranging, public and catastrophic for a priest with John's profile as an educator and preacher within the diocese. He was not permitted to exercise any priestly function in the diocese, a notice being sent to all clergy in the diocese and to all bishops in Australia.[135] Not only was there a loss of identity, position and prestige for both partners, but also there was a loss of income, as the priest was often not trained

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[129] These matters were addressed in the case of *Gent v. Robin and the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide Incorporated* [1958] SASR 328 at 344, discussed in more detail below.
[130] Hilliard, "Church, Family and Sexuality in Australia in the 1950s," p. 145.
[131] Ibid, p. 136-143.
[132] Ibid, p. 142.
[133] *Gent v. Robin and the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide Incorporated* [1958] SASR 328, p. 344.
[134] John Gent's file in Anglican Archives starts in 1974. Bishop Robin reportedly destroyed most of his own file when he left the diocese consequently no documentation on this situation survives in Anglican Archives. The author has checked the files with the Gent children's permission. The material relating to the withdrawal of John's licence has been sourced from the Supreme Court case.
[135] *Gent v. Robin and the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide Incorporated* [1958] SASR 328. 'The bishop requested [John] withdraw from giving a series of talks on the Church of England Half-hour [radio] on Sunday afternoons in Lent on Lenten discipline, and from giving New Testament lectures in the theological course', p. 345.

for alternative employment and in the 1950s clergy wives rarely had employment outside the home. The family housing was dependent on the priest's position in the church: if the clergyman could not work because of illness, or was dismissed (as in John's case), or died, the clergyman's widow and their children were left homeless. The Gents' housing in the rental Housing Trust property ironically became a source of some stability for them because, as the official tenants, they were not required to move although they now had to pay the rent themselves.

John, believing the withdrawal of the licence to be unlawful, took proceedings in the Supreme Court of South Australia against Bishop Robin and the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide, Incorporated, the writ for this action being issued on 23 July 1956. The matter came on for hearing in September 1958 before Acting Justice Piper. Mr D. A. Dunstan represented John, Mr V. R. Millhouse QC, together with Mr G. E. H. Bleby, appeared for the bishop and the synod.[136] Mr Dunstan argued that:

> the bishop had no power to revoke the licence of a priest without the consent of the priest and without any hearing before an ecclesiastical tribunal as provided by the Canons and Regulations of the Diocese, under which an incumbent minister or rector was removable only after he had been charged with an offence and that charge had been dealt with in the manner set out in the Canons.[137]

The judge did not accept the argument advanced on John's behalf by Mr Dunstan. He found that a priest-in-charge was not an incumbent minister or rector within the meaning of the relevant canons. He considered the terms of the licence which had been granted to John and found, further, that the bishop was entitled under the power, which was reserved in that licence, to revoke John's licence upon giving the notice prescribed. In the course of his judgement

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[136] Don Dunstan AC, QC was Labor Premier of South Australia, winning elections in 1970, 1975 and 1977. He was a reformer and brought profound change to South Australian society. He is recognised for his role in reinvigorating the social, artistic and cultural life of South Australia during his nine years in office, remembered as the *Dunstan Decade.* www.flinders.edu.au/library/info/collection/special/dunstan/biography.cfm
The Dunstans and Gents were personal friends. 'John and Don met at university: John was proud that he had tutored Don in history [at St Mark's]. John officiated at Don and Gretel's marriage, was godfather to their daughter and Alison their son's godmother. Alison maintained her friendship with Gretel until the latter's death. The couples visited each other after Don became premier.' Chris Gent, email, 23 October 2013. Chris remembered having lunch with Don at his restaurant.

[137] *Gent v. Robin and the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide* [1958] SASR 328, (the Headnote).

he considered matters including the financial situation at St Clement's Church, which, as a church receiving help from the Bishop's Home Mission Society, meant that the bishop was 'sole patron.'[138] The judge found in favour of the defendants and ordered John to pay the costs.[139]

During the intervening years, from 1956 to the day the judgement was delivered on 14 October 1958, the Gents were hopeful that John would be reinstated. The uncertainty meant that another clergyman could not be appointed; the delay was reported in the church history:

> For three years, since 1956, St. Clements did not have a regular Priest-in-Charge (this was due to the fact that the last Priest-in-Charge and the then Bishop of Adelaide were involved in a court action concerning the wrongful removal from the position of the Priest-in-Charge of the Parish Church of St. Clement, Enfield, SA) until Rev. Fleming was appointed to Enfield.[140]

This account was set beneath John's photograph, implicating him by association.[141] While waiting for the court decision Alison's family tried to revive John's reputation. The prestigious *Adelaide Theological Circle*, attended mainly by faculty members of theological colleges, and of which John had been a member since 1954, was hosted at 'Mount House', the North Adelaide Makin mansion, in May 1957 and May 1958.[142]

For the Gent family, suffering domestic and financial crisis, the loss of permission to officiate was more than a matter of justice. The Anglo-Catholic view of sacramental ordination, that the act of ordination effected an ontological change, meant that, like marriage, the fact of priesthood could not be erased. Moreover, Alison's passionate dream of fulfilling her vocation as a clergyman's wife was subverted. When Alison spoke about this time, she moaned, as in pain.[143] The pain of the church's rejection of her husband was her pain. Her marriage was built on a deep devotion to God and the church and all it taught

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[138] *Gent v. Robin and the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide* [1958] SASR 328, p. 333.
[139] Ibid, p. 342.
[140] Harris, *A History of the Anglican Parish Church of St. Clement*, p. 42. 'The new priest-in-charge, Rev. T. R. Fleming, was inducted in 1959 with much acclaim.'
[141] Harris, *A History of the Anglican Parish Church of St. Clement*. p. 28.
[142] *Adelaide Theological Circle*, minutes, 1945-1960. The group was established in 1924. It was an ecumenical select group of 12, then 15. Members were admitted by invitation only. In 1957 'Mrs Gent was asked to be present at the deliberations.'
[143] John's licence was not reinstated until 1968.

about the indissolubility of orders. This was the grammar of the form of life in which she lived with an idealism that intensified the difficulties. Belief and reality were in conflict. A friend, on first meeting Alison in 1957, observed that 'she looked dreadful, the situation was very grim.'[144] Despite the hostility of the congregation, Alison continued to attend St Clement's on Sundays and MU meetings. Alison's persistence was enforced suffering, a pattern she assumed during periods of great distress.[145]

The Gents remained in Kilburn until they moved out of 7 Moorang Street on 23 November 1959.[146] Throughout this time Alison sought reconciliation with both the people and the new priest at St Clement's. She and John attended services there and were farewelled at a service on 29 November 1959, some twelve months after the end of the court case.[147]

Even in adversity Alison and John were in conflict with each other. Chris remembered as a small boy witnessing their clashes and wishing his mother would give in to his father's attempts at reconciliation.[148] Within the form of life that extolled 'faithful wives and loving mothers' and 'homes of peace and love.'[149] Alison's adversarial nature clashed with John's profligacy and his perceived (or actual) neglect of the family. In this time of uncertainty he returned to St Mary Magdalene's for Sunday worship until Fr Stuart Smith was made the priest-in-charge of St Christopher's Kilburn in 1958 and the Gents then worshipped there as a family.

In 1960 another crisis arose, when John fell in love with Barbara Peters, the wife of John's close friend, Jack. Jack Peters, who came to Adelaide from New Zealand to take up an appointment as lecturer at the Elder Conservatorium, was also appointed university organist, and organist and master of choristers at St

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144 Peggy Mares, interview, 11 May 2011.
145 Sybil Harton, *The Way of the Cross: Arranged for Private Devotions*, (London: Mowbray, 1947). Alison wrote on the end-paper 'Pray Station XI for N: that they may know Christ in themselves as not reflecting evil upon their brethren in the world like hard, bright surfaces, but absorbing evil in the form of suffering: yet not as suffering wilfully incurred and embraced – only as God wills.'
146 AG *DJ* 2. Then the family moved to 'Mount House', Strangways Terrace, vacant while the Makins went on an extended overseas trip.
147 Ibid.
148 Chris Gent, interview, 6 August 2011.
149 Mary Sumner's prayer. *The Mothers' Union Service Book 1974*, p. 3.

Peter's Cathedral.[150] Alison recalled this as a time when she and John talked about divorce. They chose not to: the pressure against clergy divorcing was great. As mentioned above, divorce was very much in the public arena and had prompted the reissuing of Bishop Robin's document by Bishop Reed.[151] The censure of their intimates and colleagues would surely have added to the shame as well as being some incentive for both John and Alison to keep the marriage going.

The marital crisis of 1960 was concurrent with the birth of a fourth son, Charles Alfred Patrick, on 17 March 1960, the departure from Kilburn and the Gents' temporary residence from late 1959 to late 1960 at 'Mount House'. A house at Clearview, built with an extra room added at the Gents' specifications to accommodate the growing family, became the first home the Gents owned. The land was a gift from Alison's mother and stepfather and the Gents took out a loan from the Savings Bank of South Australia to build the house.[152] The family moved to 428 Grand Junction Road, Clearview, on 18 October 1960, an exhausting prospect for Alison with seven-month old Charles. It was, like Kilburn, on the outskirts of Adelaide: both Chris and Peter reported experiencing geographical isolation from their social groups and conversely cultural isolation from their working-class neighbours. Lavinia, John and Alison's fifth child, was born on 17 February 1965. Both parents were delighted at the birth of a daughter who Alison hoped would be a new bond between them.

While on retreat in 1963 Alison expressed intense spiritual and social responsibility for marriage and family life:

> *Repentance*: For pride and fear in my long hesitance over committing myself entirely to my love for John, and my life with him (and the children) though it was blessed by God and sacramentally made my true obedience long ago: For great sins of worldliness. For

[150] 'Peters had a quixotic brilliance and a touch of genius, but was a dreamer who was unable to cope with the difficulties of life.' www.adb.anu.au/biography/peters-jack-vernon-11378 Barbara Peters returned to New Zealand after their divorce in 1963. She and John intermittently, but constantly, continued their love affair from 1960.

[151] The convoluted connections between the bishops and the Gents added to the pressure of implied failure. Bishop Robin had de-licensed John, and Bishop Reed refused to reissue him with a licence until 1968. The personal tension increased later when Barbara and Jack Peters separated in 1963 and divorced in 1968 leaving Barbara free to remarry.

[152] Chris Gent, email, 23 February 2013. AG, 'Goodbye; forever or not', Appendix C.

> unwillingness, sloth, neglect in caring for my [crossed out] our family & home & making it a blessed place.
>
> For neglect of prayer for my children and godchildren and their needs.
>
> *Thanksgiving*: For this retreat, especially for John's love in encouraging me to come to it and working to that end. May he be blessed for and in this. … For my children, their loveliness, their health.
>
> *Ask*: for grace to overcome my sins, esp. to speak well and lovingly at home. For Tim, sight and studies: for Chris, a more obedient spirit: for Peter, less resentment: for Charles, manliness and strength.[153]
>
> *Resolve:* How greatly I long for John to be here with me in Retreat, and to belong with him to the fellowship of a religious community!
>
> Offer to God my prayers for the married, and ask in the light of the Holy Spirit to show me what I shall do with it.[154]

Alison's belief in the efficacy of prayer and the strength acquired from being actively part of the Body of Christ, together with her belief in Christian marriage materialised in her vision and formation of the Company of Joseph and Mary [CJM]. This group would live out 'the great traditional Christian domestic vocations of permanent monogamous marriage and the celibate life in religion.'[155] An Anglican men's religious community, the Society of the Sacred Mission [SSM] welcomed the company as one of those outside the religious life which wanted to be associated with the Society by following a rule of life.[156] The CJM had as its motto, 'Persevere in love'. Its aims were:

> To glorify God by seeing and living our married lives as our proper vocation, and (to that end) to accept our fellowship with those who are called to the life of the religious.
> and
> To ask God for his love, and believe that we receive it, so that in all faith and hope we may persevere in loving.

The motto and aims reflected church and society sentiments of the time and Alison's own ideals and desires for marriage. When she wrote the company

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[153] AG *DJ* 3, p. 50-52.
[154] Ibid, p. 57. Alison's resolve foreshadows the CJM.
[155] AG *DJ* 2, 23 January 1978.
[156] The Society of the Sacred Mission Australian Province, leaflet, c. 1960. See chapter 7 for SSM in Adelaide.

prayer, aims and motto, Alison found the task cost her personal and spiritual pain.[157] The Company celebrated its inauguration on 8 April 1967 with a Mass at St Michael's House, the Society's Australian motherhouse and theological college. Alison called it 'a glorious day' in her notes for the meeting of the company in May 1967.[158]

The group attracted married couples, particularly clergy couples, where the woman was actively living out her Christian vocation in her marriage and sharing her husband's parish ministry. There were lively meetings and discussions with SSM members. The Prior saw merit in Alison's vision and the company continued to meet into the 1980s. The women's religious order, Community of the Holy Name, did not join the CJM.[159] Some church people saw the group as a means for Alison to hold the Gent marriage together. There may have been some truth in that idea but there can be no doubting the sincerity of Alison's motivation was sincere as her retreat reflections testify.

Another preoccupation for Alison at this time was the role of the father in family life. She looked to scripture and Christian tradition to discern and justify the need for the father in parenting:

> A Christian world without devotion to St Joseph: without the cultivation of the virtues of the Father of God – chastity and respect for a woman's vocation – has made nonsense of the cultural and sexual scene.[160]

Alison was motivated by her own marriage and her desire for John's greater interest and participation in family life. To make the point she adapted the Angelus for use at the CJM with phrases such as 'Hail, Joseph and Mary, just, and full of grace' and 'Holy Mary and Joseph, virgin parents of the Son of God.'[161]

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[157] Appendix B:4.
[158] AG, CJM meeting handwritten notes, 22 May 1967.
'I think that if your minds have been occupied at all in the same way as mine, since the glorious day of the Company's Inauguration, you will see that what we have to consider at this next gathering is the matter of how to express our love. We pray for love in the Prayer of the Company, and we may not doubt that we receive it. Within our marriages we have perhaps felt the joy of its increase already. But there will be, - there is – love to be expressed in other directions, and it will be best for us to have certain clear ways of doing this, and to know what the "other directions" are.'
[159] They ran Retreat House in Belair, an Adelaide Hills suburb. See chapter 7 for more details of CHN in Adelaide.
[160] AG *DJ* 2, 16 July 1978.
[161] Appendix B:4.

However, as Alison became more energetic in devotion in part to comprehend the trials of her marriage, John grew less so.[162]

The Years from 1971 to 1980

The decade leading up to the Gents' divorce in 1981 was fraught with marital tension, despite John being re-issued with a licence to officiate in 1968. After nine years teaching in state public schools, and following the endorsement of colleagues, Bishop Reed appointed John to Pulteney Grammar School as a chaplain and teacher. Alison tutored part-time in English at the University of Adelaide, the older boys finished university and Charles and Lavinia were at St Andrews School, Walkerville. They had financial and residential security, professional status (if not totally satisfactory) and were socially active. In spite of Alison and John's tumultuous relationship, their nurture of their children, if haphazard, was genuinely loving. Charles always felt loved by both parents.[163] A friend observed that John adored Lavinia.[164] Lavinia had a very close and intimate relationship with her mother and extolled her virtues as a loving parent while acknowledging their fiery exchanges.[165]

The first day of February 1971 marked the Gents' twenty-fourth wedding anniversary. Such milestones were, for Alison, events of great moment to be marked with ceremony.[166] However, her expectations were thwarted and her reaction was immediate. That night she went by herself to 'the Pop Festival at Myponga.'[167] She expressed her despair at John's absence in a poem describing

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[162] AG *DJ* 2, 2 February 1978. 'My old prayer grew… the one which realises the prevenient love and grace of God 'My God, I love Thee and desire Thy love: give it me, that I may long for Thee *and be satisfied*.' Peter Gent, interview, 19 November 2009.
[163] Charles Gent, interview, 28 October 2008.
[164] Pam Lindsay, interview, 21 October 2008.
[165] Lavinia Gent, interview, 17 December 2012.
[166] Alison despaired again a year later. Cards received for their twenty-fifth anniversary, which would have contained congratulations, had the inserts torn out. Cards in possession of the author.
[167] AG *NB* 3. 'I had gone to the Pop Festival at Myponga by myself on John's and my wedding anniversary, (24).'

this time as 'a drought.'[168] This event was a catalyst. Six weeks later she was 'driven into the women's movement.'[169]

The beginning of the women's movement in Adelaide and Alison's very public involvement in it, will be documented in Chapter 6. Alison's participation in this social revolution meant that she was armed with a new form of life and a language which she knew would damage John's 'traditional dominion'. Later in that year she wrote 'a *Dedication* for the article or booklet I must soon write for Women's Liberation Movement about my life and its freedoms and oppressions':

> To John,
> who managed to go on loving me somehow or other through all
> experiences and discourses damaging to his traditional dominion.
>
> To Teresa of Avila and Mary McKillop (*sic)*,
> those notable stirrers among the saints,
> and to the object of their – and our – great devotion,
>
> Joseph
> son of Jacob and husband of Mary,
> from whom
> (by the familiar technique of putting his wife on a pedestal)
> the world and the Christian Church have successfully averted their
> eyes since he demonstrated, nearly two thousand years ago, what can
> happen when a man gives real liberty to a woman and a child.[170]

Alison's writing shows that she was aware of the implications of her new life after just seven months in the women's movement in the company and conversation of women whose opinions and beliefs were so radically different from those of the churchwomen, university colleagues and poorer and less educated women of her acquaintance, let alone her family. For twenty-four years she had searched her faith tradition for advice on wifely duties, patterns of sacrificial living and means of spiritual devotion in order to make sense of the

[168] AG *NB* 3. *To John, my John, in my drought.* Appendix C. Written 4 February 1971 and alterations added 5, 23, 25 February 1971.
[169] AG *NB* 2. 'On March 25, 1971, I began to attend meetings of the Women's Liberation Movement.' AG *DJ* 2, 14 October 1977. Alison wrote to Father Len Goggs, 'How savagely grieved you were at what seemed my unreasonableness and perversity when the Spirit drove me into the women's movement and blew John and me apart.' Alison here alludes to Mark 1:12. 'And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.'
[170] AG *DJ* 3, 2 October 1971, p. 83-4.

chaos of her marital problems. After March 1971 she embraced the ethos of the women's movement but did not abandon the church.

Alison claimed she lived simultaneously in the church and the women's movement. However, her involvement had profound effects on her marriage. The realisation of her call to the ordained ministry of the church happened at the same time. As John was opposed to the ordination of women and he chose to draw attention to their differing opinions when they were together in company, they were set on a public collision course. Alison's work for the ordination of women and her own vocational journey is discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

When Alison came into contact with other women in the Women's Liberation Movement [WLM], where they talked openly of their marital difficulties, she began to face the reality of John's behaviour and its repercussions. She had long accepted the church's teaching that the wife bore responsibility for harmony within marriage but now recognised that this obscured the man's responsibility as husband and father. Alison began to rail more vocally against John's laziness about home chores, and his reluctance to spend time with her and the younger children. She adopted (and adapted) mantras about freedom, justice and women's right to speak openly for the equality of women and men in marriage. Her prayers and banners insisting on shared responsibility were some her most significant statements.[171] At the first International Women's Day march on 11 March 1972, Alison took her own placard: WOMEN'S FREEDOM BEGINS WITH RESPONSIBLE NOT HEAVY FATHERHOOD. She wrote in her journal it was 'probably the only banner, i.e. statement in the procession which had a good word to say for fatherhood! To God, St Joseph and John.'[172] In her Mothers' Union Prayer Book, Alison wrote the following slogans:

CHILDREN NEED GOOD
FATHER-CARE
AND
MOTHER-CARE

[171] See Chapter 6. Also Appendix D:4 for a photographic presentation of Alison's banners.
[172] AG, *NB* 2; AG to Father Cameron chaplain to the Mothers' Union, 17 November 1975. 'But how many of us are aware of something that Mary Sumner herself said in her later years? "We cannot do anything without the fathers."'

FROM BOTH
PARENTS AND STATE
and
WHEN WOMEN WORK
OUTSIDE THE HOME
MEN MUST
WORK
INSIDE IT[173]

Alison's attempt to come to terms with John's heavy drinking, by seeking help from people or groups outside the church, can be seen as an extension of her 'simultaneous involvement' and one where she adapted secular methods to her faith and praxis. Two weeks after joining a self-help group, the Booroo Group, the serious nature of Alison's distress is evident as she recorded the use of suggestions against panic. She was led to reflect: 'I wonder how much my life and sanity owe to fact that even before I met John I was established in the habit of going to early Mass, and that throughout my life as a mother and wife I have maintained, and in severe straits always had recourse to it daily?'[174]

This contemplation demonstrates one of the many contributions Alison's way of life has to offer the post-modern world. She reflected the modern psycho-analytic teaching that the only person you can change is yourself and this is further demonstrated when she said that '[her] *maladjustment* is (and has long been) to John's alcoholism.'[175] Her perceptions about his nature and spiritual state are sharp and realistic and seem to hint at an attempt to forego control:

> John seems reasonably well adjusted to it –… an anecdote about an alcoholic, probably not unlike John, who was very content with his alcoholism in relation to the part his wife had perforce to play in his affairs. 'I've got it made!' But where John is not well-adjusted is as a Christian in relation to God and to other people – he lacks the ardour of

[173] *The Mothers' Union Service Book 1974*. On the verso of the title page Alison noted: 'originally written on the back of my Parsonettes' invitation to the Synod lunch of 29 September 1977, and kept in this book until 19 September 1982 in that form.' See Appendix D:5.
[174] AG, *NB* 4, 24 August 1973.
[175] Ibid, 1 November 1974.

> true love in acquiring the virtues (shedding other loves), and he lacks consideration. Help him there.[176]

Any consistent attempts to withdraw from John's company were, however, at odds with Alison's desperation to restore her marriage and her need to be loved. Her plea to God to help John was motivated by Christian service and bearing another's burdens: and she bore John's burdens resolutely. Chris commented that Alison's attentions to John were for the most part unwelcome and that John tried to avoid her interference.[177] Alison sought marital advice from all her spiritual directors, so that her use of separation as a way to ease tensions between them was always done with church approval. 'Separation *a mensa et thoro* (from bed and board) … has always been allowed by the Church in certain cases and the canons of the Church of England provide for it.'[178]

In August 1972 Alison wrote that she had felt the 'full grief' of seeing no future for herself in the family home, and suggested that John spend seven weeks (Monday to Friday) of the university term at St Mark's University College.[179] In April 1973 Alison herself found accommodation in a 'half-house share', on her own, in a place where it was easier to cope with her work and the children's schooling and 'easier mainly because John was not with us, or not "not with us" in his usual manner.'[180] Later in 1973 Alison tried another configuration, what she described as a 'social experiment', with her 'living apart from [John] for the weekdays of each week' with the idea of 'achieving a proper balance of inter-dependence … and share more evenly our responsibilities in

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[176] Ibid. See Chapter 2 for Alison's attitude in later life to John's very heavy drinking. In interviews thirty years later Alison denied John was an alcoholic, and extolled him as a model Christian, praising his theological powers. As we proceeded with the interviews she did admit some failings in him and her distress about his drinking. She was nevertheless, reluctant to say that he was an alcoholic although, as we see above, she used the term herself in her journals.
[177] Chris Gent, email, August 2011. Alison persisted in ringing John, offering to chauffeur him to his preaching engagements, to ask him for meals and to sleep at Clearview.
[178] Moss, *The Christian Faith*, p. 418.
[179] AG *PJ* 1, p. 61-2. Alison prefaced this journal on the inside cover with 'A record – of rational converse or the lack of it between myself and John from the time when I realised (around midday 1 June 1972) that the danger confronting us is that it may come to my having to separate from him if he refuses the help he needs, from God and man, over his dependence on alcohol. 1 June 1972.' See AG *DJ* 4, p. 11-2 for another account of John at St Mark's.
[180] AG *PJ* 1, p. 66-69.

coping with the dependence of our children and the work of our household.'[181] The experiment did not work because John was 'childish, brutal and revengeful', 'a Lazy Rat', and 'a brutal and malicious sluggard in domestic affairs', Alison wrote, 'with love and wounds.'[182] In her efforts to maintain the marriage, she resorted to threats, such as issuing a 'three months notice of the virtual cancellation of our marriage licence'[183] and intermittent moves.[184] Alison sought the assistance of church authorities who shared her concern for his health 'problems' (a euphemism for drinking).[185] John balked at the suggestion that he go to St Michael's House to be looked after.[186] Their relationship deteriorated and early in 1976 she and the two youngest children boarded away for a short time.[187]

Alison's awareness of her personal spiritual shortcomings was always counter to her post-modern feminism. Her reference points took her to a traditional application of self-examination, which involved confronting the reality of one's human propensity to sin and then to the confession of sins, a sacramental act with a priest. While Alison, in the quotation below, addressed her 'idolatry', her actions and reactions in relation to John were never consistent:

> It occurred to me that the lines [in the hymn 'O my Saviour lifted... which I often use as a preface to meditation] 'lift my earth bound longings, Fix them, Lord, above' may be read as a prohibition to my idolatry of John. I must not dwell in sad and fruitless longings for his company, but turn to seeking God, and accepting the human company that is given to me in letter writing and telephone conversation and receiving as well as in person.[188]

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[181] AG autobiographical notes, 11 October 1973. Alison had noted in 12 August 1973 that 'for the first time since 2 September last year the four of us are home together with no future temporary separations planned for John and me.' AG *PJ* 1, p. 82.
[182] 'An open letter to John', 1 December 1974. Cellotape indicated it being posted on a wall.
[183] Notice to John, April 1976.
[184] Lavinia Gent, conversation, March 2010.
[185] Archbishop Rayner to Father Douglas Brown SSM, 18 November 1976; and to J. McKinnon, 18 November 1976. The principal of Pulteney Grammar School, J. McKinnon, to Archbishop Rayner, 22 November 1976. AG *PJ* 2, 21 February 1978.
[186] Archbishop Keith Rayner to AG, *PJ* 2, 21 February 1978.
[187] AG *NB* 4. 'While I was boarding at St Peter's with Mr Gilbert, [the Recovery Group] saw me through the crisis since going back to live with John at Clearview till June 1976.'
[188] Julian of Norwich, "Revelations of Divine Love," (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1966). Alison's hand-written notes on inside back cover, 6 April 1975.

The dominant theological paradigm in her life, suffering, Alison identified here as rejection:

> If one experiences rejection, it is impossible for anyone but Christ himself that rejection is not also experienced by the other – spouse, friend, child, parents etc. We reject another, unconsciously, because we are ourself suffering from intellectual, spiritual, social male/or female [or whatever other] pride, so I said to John this morning when I had awakened him (the thought of reading the Psalms with him with this new preamble had occurred to me during Mass at S. Francis' sometime after 7 am) 'Will you read the psalms with me?' He said, as usual, 'No.' But then, as never before, I said, 'If you'll try to see me not as an over-righteous woman hypocritically practising religion at you, but as an ordinary sinful person trying to begin a new day, so that it will be better than the one before, could you?' And he did.[189]

This account contains both the perception of sin by both parties and Alison's own will to effect change. What she saw as a victory was to no avail. Chris Gent believed that from 1960 his father had given up, that he had lost the love he once had had for his mother.[190] Alison showed that she understood this: 'I take the point – that even when an outing with John goes well, I still face at the end the fact that he wants no more of me.'[191] She pragmatically noted the effects: 'And I must deliberately take measures to recover from that shattering deprivation. … Make no mistake, close contact with John even on a well-judged occasion, even when free from disasters, is almost lethal to me.'[192] Alison was later to describe this period of her marriage as 'love in a *very* cold climate.'[193] Nevertheless she was persistent in her belief in the restoration of their relationship and in her justified control of an outcome:

> My course is to accept encounters with John when this is not setting up a rejection by being too positive (that is urging him farther towards me than he is willing or able to go): to achieve them; and in the sequel to exercise patient and (I hope) reconciling love by dealing uncomplainingly with the effects.[194]

[189] AG *NB* 3, 20 August 1975.
[190] Chris Gent, interview, 6 August 2011.
[191] AG, *PJ* 2, 20 September 1977.
[192] Ibid.
[193] AG *PJ* 3, p. 164. An allusion to Nancy Mitford's novel, *Love in a Cold Climate.*
[194] Ibid.

5 ALISON AND MARRIAGE

In 1976 Alison and the two younger children moved to the home where she had spent her childhood, 49 Alexandra Avenue, Rose Park.[195] Her Uncle Stanley and Aunt Grace were still living at this address. They had been a constant source of support to Alison and her children over the intervening years. The older boys had often spent holidays there and loved their elderly relatives; Peter spent a whole school term there. Timothy took his bride, Elizabeth, to live there and it was when they went to their own home that Alison, Charles and Lavinia moved in. Alison described the move as 'establishing an extended family':

> So I've continued to accept domestic responsibility, rather than seek a paid job because I do feel it's important not to leave children (and the old, for that matter) unsupported and because my husband isn't prepared to help with the last of our child-rearing responsibilities. It got to the point where I found it more possible to function as a parent in an extended family than in a traditional nuclear one.[196]

The household maintained a frugal way of life, however the property, which had been built by her mother's brother, Herbert, was freehold and there were relatives, such as Alison's mother and sister Betty, to help contribute to the family expenses. Uncle Stan, aged 94, was seriously ill and needed care, so a live-in help added to the sense of extended family in a home which, when Alison's mother and her three daughters went to live there in 1921, had accommodated ten people.[197]

While Alison theoretically took on a domestic role, she kept up her frenetic habits, attending meetings, lectures, conferences, visiting friends and relatives as well as maintaining the family house at Clearview by going fortnightly to do housework and sleep there occasionally. Alison maintained constant contact with John, attending chapel services at Pulteney Grammar as part of her daily mass routine, other services where John was preaching and also acting as his chauffeur. According to her journals, he also telephoned, called in to No 49, sometimes coming for meals or staying the night, all of which added to their mutual distress.

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[195] See Chapter I for Alison's young life at 49 Alexandra Avenue, Rose Park.
[196] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 60.
[197] Stanley Wynford Cole Jones, 4 December 1891-19 April 1977. Stan left Alison his half of the house. Grace Evelyn Jones, 19 October 1897-30 August 1982, was the youngest of the family of eleven.

5 ALISON AND MARRIAGE

Alison's journal documenting her thoughts and feelings in the three years, 1977-1979, before the events in January 1980 that precipitated the divorce, is a chronicle of suffering. The conviction that she could bring about reconciliation, or that John would take up the role of husband and father in a serious and devoted fashion, even love her, continued to sustain her hope. Her belief in the indissolubility of marriage, her steadfast love for John and her faith in God's mercy all conspired to keep alive her expectation that a resolution could be effected. For every declaration of the reality of John's perverse behaviour, his preference for drink, male company, or other women, such as 'I awoke this morning raging in protest against …marriage', there is a counter claim, such as 'Nor do I want to get *further* from John, or dispense with marriage.'[198]

Belovedness and Blight

On 24 January 1980 Alison recorded 'an insight that I had on the way to Mass', to 'attend to my belovedness.'[199] The insight she saw as a gift. It prompted her to reflect:

> I am the beloved of God the Father/Mother
> The beloved Daughter of Christ.
> I am the friend, the bride, the self of Christ, Christa, beloved by Christ.
> I am the beloved of the Holy Spirit, living in the Spirit, breathing the Spirit since my baptism as a child from birth breathes air.
> I must avail myself of the love that is mine to drive out all the bitterness of rejection and anger that alienates me from John and all my children.[200]

The following day, while at Clearview, Alison 'saw a photo of Barbara Peters in the things [John] had taken out of his pocket. This was after twenty years! ...'

> So I wrote this:
> If you do not love me, or even like me (as it seems), and never intend to live with me again, i.e. taking real trouble to achieve a renewal of some physical and emotional closeness, I am not very taken with the idea of dodging divorce just because it suits you to remain 'respectable' for a few more years.

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[198] AG *PJ* 2, 8 November 1977. Alison's emphasis.
[199] AG *PJ* 3, p. 2a.
[200] Ibid, p. 3.

> If a divorce from me is what you want – I don't and never have – 'What thou doest, do quickly!'
> It is only if a divorce from me is not what you want that tomorrow's 'wants' are worth discussing.[201]

John replied in the affirmative and Alison's reactions ranged from, 'Rejoice with us! I have begun to set John free', to 'I was struck to the heart with the grief of losing him whom I love most on earth', to writing a note, 'Attention! Leave the door open for John.' Alison's actions and language display a grammar of constancy and love but also and the confused nature of her distress.

After thirty-three years of marriage Alison could, and did, expect that the normally prevaricating John would not move on the matter of divorce. Her reference to 'remaining respectable' referred to the church's traditional attitude and she was assuming that he valued his ordination enough to forego it by remarrying. But the Anglican Church in Australia had begun to change its attitude to marriage, divorce and remarriage. The form of life, with its belief in covenant relationship and expectation of lifelong faithfulness, into which Alison was embedded, was no longer the same entity.

The Standing Committee of General Synod had set up a committee to examine the remarriage of divorced persons; its chairman was Keith Rayner, then bishop of Wangaratta.[202] As archbishop of Adelaide from 1975, Rayner then brought a positive agenda towards remarriage to that diocese with the result that that matter was debated and carried at the 1978 synod.[203] Bishop Lionel Renfrey, the Gents' peer and friend, led the opposition.[204] However, 'South Australian Anglicans were generally prepared for a path of conservative

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[201] Ibid, p. 6.
[202] Church of England in Australia, General Synod (1973) *Marriage and Divorce*: *a report of the Commission appointed by the primate,* (Sydney, General Synod Office); Archbishop's Letter, *ACG,* June 1974, p. 5.
[203] Archbishop Rayner's pastoral address at the Adelaide synod was delivered on the subject. The report of the commission on marriage he had set up was received and the remarriage of divorced person was debated at length. Alison proposed a more inclusive statement by excluding the word Christian and stating that all marriages involve God. Her amendment was lost. *Yearbook of the Church of England in Australia in the dioceses of Adelaide, Willochra and The Murray 1978-1979.* (Adelaide; Church Office, 1979), p. 110-116, 141-142.
[204] 'A Movement for the defence of the Catholic and Apostolic Faith in the Church of England in Australia' was initiated by the assistant bishop of Adelaide, the Rt Reverend L. E. W. Renfrey in November 1973.

adaptation.'[205] At the 1977 General Synod certain questions had been referred to the Appellate Tribunal; its report of February 1980 issued in a new era of tolerance to divorce and remarriage.[206] A canon was passed at General Synod in 1981 to permit remarriage in church only with the consent of the diocesan bishop.[207] Although the Adelaide diocesan synod had voted to support relaxation of the church's traditionally strict discipline, it was unlikely that remarriage of clergy would be allowed. Recalling that time today, Bishop Rayner did 'not believe that [he] received any application, either from John Gent or anyone else, for permission to remarry after divorce or for permission to continue to officiate.'[208] The situation for clergy did change later.

While Alison grieved, John was not despairing but elated. He visited friends, wanting them to share his happiness, but this was not always forth-coming.[209] With uncustomary efficiency and speed, he began divorce proceedings and made preparations for leaving Adelaide and moving to New Zealand. By 13 February John and Alison had instructed their lawyers about their separation, and proceedings were commenced in the Family Court.[210] John wrote to the archbishop and the headmaster of Pulteney Grammar School to tender his resignation from the school and the diocese.[211] Barbara Peters visited Adelaide at Easter and John went to New Zealand for the May school holidays. On both occasions they were openly hosted and entertained as a couple. Alison's sense of betrayal in love, friendship and theological principle was extreme, especially as the love affair drew the sympathy of fellow clergy couples, including of the former bishop, T. T. Reed and his wife.[212] Throughout the

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[205] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*, p. 156-7.
[206] Church of England in Australia, General Synod (1981) *Report of the Standing Committee of General Synod, Vol 1 and 2,* General Synod Office, Sydney, Volume 1, p. 63-73, Volume 2, 1981, p. 31-35.
[207] Ibid. Hilliard, "Pluralism and New Alignments in Society and Church 1967 to the Present," p. 129.
[208] Bishop Keith Rayner, email, 24 August 2011.
[209] Pam Lindsay, interview, 21 October 2008.
[210] The Family Law Act 1975 made it possible to divorce after one year's separation.
[211] John Gent to headmaster, Pulteney Grammar School, 22 February 1980 re resignation from his position as chaplain effective 31 August 1980. JG to Archbishop Rayner, 31 March 1980 re resigning his licence as priest in the diocese of Adelaide, effective 31 August 1980.
[212] AG *PJ* 3, p.43. 'I was rather disturbed at Bar's quotation of a paragraph from Audrey's [Reed] letter accepting Bar's view of herself and John as great lovers who have never stopped loving each other and are coming through great tribulations to well-deserved happiness. From a bishop and bishop's wife, I ask you! What have I done to them?' 11 March 1980.

months until John left permanently, and at Alison's instigation, the Gents attended sessions with the Family Court counselling service.[213] Alison's mother, whom she called 'my Mother of Good Counsel' died in May.[214] Alison and John were together for their first (and, at that time, only) granddaughter, Grace's first birthday party. The poignancy of the moment, that John was abandoning the next generation, was acute for Alison. Family photographs were taken, including one with both grandparents ('the last time?' Alison queried).[215] Later in that year she gave 'God fervent thanks for the Australian Family Law Act … it enables us to move away from forces of rejection … which if we stay close to one another may be lethal. I'd rather be divorced than be dead, or being destroyed by cancer, or mad.'[216]

The two forms of life in which she was embedded, the church and the women's movement, stood in contradistinction to each other at this time more forcibly than at any time since Alison had taken on feminism. After years in the women's movement Alison was well informed about society's changed attitudes and the relaxation of the divorce laws. She was one of six older women interviewed for a history of the women's movement.[217] The other women reported divorce, separation or widowhood with comments such as 'free of male influence'[218] and 'when he left I developed much further.'[219] These were her friends, they had formed the Tuesday Afternoon Group, but Alison's contribution to the book differs significantly from the others.[220] She included a family gathering, with husband, in the photos, and reported 'personal conflicts within marriage' while admitting her separation and 'not very frequent get-

[213] AG *PJ* 3, 15 March 1980, p. 49-50. 'Yesterday afternoon at about 2.15 (the counsellor, Keith Stevens, kept us waiting ½ of an hour) John and I began a one and a half hour counselling session with the Family Court counselling service. I had suggested this to John's lawyer through Judy [Alison's lawyer] because in Father John Stephenson's 4 month absence till July it seems better to offer John some form of negotiation rather than nothing, for I refuse to negotiate about property while the divorce is so far off and so un-clear'; 22 March 1980, p. 76-77. 'Shall I go on with my positive move, the offer of terms of reconciliation through Keith Stevens?'; 25 March 1980, p. 84. 'I shall tell [the Family Court Counsellor] … it has been hard, till now impossibly hard, for me to see this, because the greater part of my life's effort has gone into believing in and acting on the sacramental, covenantal permanence of our marriage.'
[214] Ibid, p. 128.
[215] Ibid, p. 148.
[216] Ibid, p. 170.
[217] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 60-83.
[218] Ibid, p. 75.
[219] Ibid, p. 82.
[220] See Chapter 6 for more details on the Tuesday Afternoon Group.

togethers with [her] husband.'[221] Alison stood out against her peers and even those younger radical feminists for whom marriage was unnecessary and retained her belief in the indissolubility of marriage.

Even the conservative MU had reassessed its role in the new society. As early as 1972 a report by a commission on its objects and policy recommended revision in respect of divorced women.[222] The central body in England, still the primary decision maker, influenced women worldwide. A Central Council meeting in 1973, with its president open to change, deliberated on the report and voted 'that there would be one class of membership open to all women who were baptised' and that the clause "lifelong nature of marriage" [be] omitted from the first object.'[223] 'The Australian Commonwealth Council moved swiftly to adopt the whole set of proposals in February' as did the Adelaide diocesan council.[224] Women, like Alison, who had 'failed marriages' or were divorced without their consent (since the no-fault clause in Australia's new divorce laws) were now not to be excluded from membership of the MU.[225]

As the antithesis of her loving and charitable thoughts, Alison went on a rally bearing a placard:

ALL UNDERDOGS
- ESPECIALLY BITCHES –
NEED AN ADVISER

She claimed she was exorcising a term which had been used to demean her for years by wearing of the word 'bitch.'[226] Nevertheless, her views on the indissolubility of her marriage were unshakeable. She rehearsed what she might say in court: 'our marriage is sacramental, not merely legal, and will survive our

[221] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 60.
[222] "New Dimensions," p. 261-2. Chapter 9. Alison marked a copy for use by the Northfield Branch of MU at St Francis of Assisi. A Central Council meeting in 1973 voted 'that there would be one class of membership.' Her letter arguing for acceptance of membership of divorced women predates *New Dimensions.* Appendix B: 6.
[223] Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union*, p. 179-81. The Adelaide diocesan president, Lucy Stirling, attended the meeting and reported the changes to the annual meeting in Adelaide later that year. Dickey, *Not just Tea and Biscuits*, p. 58.
[224] Dickey, *Not just Tea and Biscuits*, p. 58-9.
[225] 'Membership is open to all those who have been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity and intend to support and work for the Aim, Purpose and Objects of the Society.' *The Mothers' Union Service Book 1974*, p. 13. In 1948 membership was only open to married women. *The Mothers' Union Service Book: Revised Edition 1948*, p. 9.
[226] AG *PJ* 3, p. 155.

divorce and John's remarriage, if that takes place.'[227] Her love for John and her longing for him to return that love were also unshakeable. She wrote:

> My heart – my feelings - and my body need John as they need nothing else on earth, and always will. … My separation from him is and will be for the rest of my life a thorn that can pierce me to the very centre of my being whenever it will.[228]

The process towards divorce, which had begun on 25 January 1980, Alison described as beginning 'the Dark night of our marriage.'[229] All through that year she hoped for reconciliation. Her high view of their position in the church is revealed in this 'Statement':

> I want to be forgiven for whatever I have done, or whatever you think I have done, taken back and loved.
>
> I believe that if this can be achieved, it will do us, the Church, and the world at large much good. For you are a priest, an eminent liturgical performer and a Catholic teacher hitherto of great and extensive influence. To be seen to practice Christian love and to show Christ's concern for forgiving and being forgiven will prove you no hypocrite and separate you from the inadequacy in Christian marital theology that is plain in [word illegible].
>
> With your gifts and the clarity of your mind exercised on the Christian sacrament of matrimony in a way that I think you have not achieved so far the fears and your disadvantages which arise (as they have always done) from social and economic insecurity would not be insuperable.[230]

The tide of John's affections was not turned by anything Alison said or did, and on 2 September 1980, he left for New Zealand. The drama of the situation was played out as Alison insisted that she drive him to the airport and that she alone saw him off.[231] Her reactions swung from resentment that she deserved his faithfulness 'after five crises of birth and years of toil at motherhood [that] have left me unloved', to recalling St Teresa's words that 'alone God sufficeth.' [232] The paradigm of love that Donne's poetry had aroused in her youth, she applied at a moment of mutual goodwill with the Tasman Sea between them.

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[227] Ibid, p. 177.
[228] Ibid, p. 108.
[229] Ibid, p. 117. The allusion here is to a spiritual state, the Dark Night of the Soul. John of the Cross, "The Mystical Doctrine of St. John of the Cross."
[230] Ibid, p. 119.
[231] AG to John Gent, 6 March 1980. Appendix B: 7.
[232] AG *PJ* 3, p. 177.

They who one another keep
Alive, ne'er parted be.[233]

1981-1998 Divorce

Alison signed her affidavit acknowledging service of the application for divorce and filed it with the Family Court on 8 April 1981.[234] Her eldest son Tim and his wife Elizabeth accompanied her to court on 19 May 1981 when the decree *nisi* was granted. Alison described going to mass at St Mary's, making her confession, and ringing John to speak to him for the last time as his legal wife but reflected that 'all this is about the surrounds of the divorce and nothing about itself.'[235] On 20 June 1981 the decree *nisi* became absolute. A fortnight later, on 4 July, John remarried.

Alison's initial response to the divorce was to write a special church service. The church's ceremonies marked the greater and lesser moments of humanity's progress from birth to death. For Alison these rites of passage encapsulated all that was real in human life and were an essential expression of her faith and the way in which she understood her relationships. The form of service she wrote 'for one who has been involuntarily divorced' was the vehicle for 'her reaffirmation of her intention to be faithful to her vow in altered circumstances.' On 1 July Archbishop Rayner witnessed her willingness 'to put aside all bitterness and resentment, and to forgive all who have hurt [her] and to live in peace and charity with all' and to affirm her fidelity to her marriage vow.[236] With this act Alison restated her belief in the indissolubility of marriage and accepted both the legal separation, and John's remarriage which was to take place three days later. At Alison's invitation, 'all the family met at 49 [Alexandra Avenue] to have a champagne breakfast while John and Barbara exchanged

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[233] The last two lines of John Donne's 'Sweetest love, I do not go.'

[234] AG *PJ* 3, p. 206-8. She was 'exhausted afterwards, as if I had fought a battle.' Looking back she realised the great deeds of the 8th, delivering the affidavit and making the 'Nationwide' videotape [see Chapter 7] had both happened on the anniversary of the foundation of the CJM.

[235] Ibid, p. 231-2.

[236] 'A Form of Service for One who has been Involuntarily Divorced.' Appendix B: 8.
The service was conducted after 7am Mass in the Lady Chapel at St Peter's Cathedral, 1 July 1981. 'Witnesses: Sister Claire Christine CHN (she brought a bunch of violets), Chris Gent, Father Keith Chittleborough, and nine others.' AG *PJ* 3, p. 244.

their marriage vows at St Luke's in the City, Christchurch.'[237] Alison explained to a recently divorced friend:

> It was the means whereby I kept my marriage vow so far as it concerns my relationship with God and the Church, while at the same time acknowledging the freedom that divorce had given John *not* to keep his marriage-vow towards me. This last is a freedom given by Man, not by God: but it is none the less real. And perhaps it is allowed by God, regretfully because of the hardness of our hearts.[238]

Alison offered pastoral care to those also suffering divorce and separation. Divorced wives of priests were welcomed to Parsonettes and she began a 'Separated and Divorce Anglicans' group.[239] Christian forgiveness and love of neighbour, must, for Alison, also include John and Barbara, no matter how much she was assailed by her 'enemies': resentment, envy, and self-pity.[240] She set herself the task of ringing John on their children's birthday, writing to Barbara (they had been friends and corresponded for many years), and exchanging gifts and cards. Her grief, nevertheless, did result in outbursts goaded by her 'enemies.' When the Bishop of Christchurch granted John a licence to officiate in November 1981, she was full of joy and relief. But painful memories were evoked: of their long engagement awaiting his ordination; of the eleven years and nine months without a licence; of her life journey and relationships damaged in the process.

Throughout the years until John's death in 1998 Alison moved between recovery and grief. She often rejoiced in the freedom divorce has given her:

> no more agonising over my relationship with John; because I did … win Barbara over … to a belief in my good will, not only to her but to her marriage to John. … One must be realistic as well as being a believer in love … I freely admit the relief as well as the grief … of being free from having to relate badly to John whom I still love, but with the hard-won

[237] AG *PJ* 3, p. 261.
[238] AG to Ronda, 8 December 1985, p. 3-6.
[239] *Three Rites of Passage for the Divorced*, compiled by Separated and Divorced Anglicans (S.A.D.A.) (Adelaide, 1985, 10p.) The booklet was sold at the Canterbury Book Depot. The first rite was a reworking of the form of service 'for one who has been involuntarily divorced', called 'A form of service for one who, having been legally divorced, wants to keep her/his marriage vow.' The second: 'prayers at the time of divorce' and third: 'recognition of the death of a marriage and the beginning of a new life.' Each rite is accompanied by an explanation. Appendix B:8.
[240] AG *PJ* 3, p. 212. Photograph 5:20.

> and necessary detachment of a non-wife. Christians don't have, or aren't, one of, two![241]

Poetry continued to be a vehicle for expressions of anguish as in the last two lines of *Famine Relief* :

> But oh, my youth, and ah, my love,
> It tears my heart that you are gone.[242]

Alison painted John as a victim of circumstance in *Poem written on John's remarriage and also licensed priest*:

> So you never believed
> that unless you were dead
> your reliance on the action of God
> alone
> needn't be total;
> or that you were permitted
> to use your own good muscles
> to get up and walk
> out of the graves
> that the tyranny
> of aristocratic (or would-be) pastoral
> martinets
> from time to time
> and with varied degrees of permanence
> had laid you in.[243]

She resorted to humour and pathos in *The Ballad of Clerk John and Alison his wife*.

> He turned around upon his heel
> And faced the beckoning East.
> 'The past is gone, the future's mine –
> You move me not the least.'[244]

Barbara Peters Gent died on 21 August 1989.[245] Chris Gent reported that after her death, when John visited Adelaide, he and Alison talked amiably.[246]

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[241] AG to 'Goldy' Stafford, 15 October 1982.
[242] March-April 1987. Appendix C.
[243] Appendix C.
[244] Appendix C.
[245] http://librarydata.christchurch.org.nz/Cemetries/ Alison and Barbara had continued to correspond after the marriage. Barbara's letters arrived in envelopes bearing her name, Mrs B Gent, a title as full of pathos as the contents. Barbara described their domesticity, John washing the dishes or their outings together. Alison complained that she never enjoyed John participating in domestic life.
[246] Chris Gent, interview, 6 August 2011. Photograph 5: 24

1998-2009 Widowhood

When John Gent died in Christchurch, New Zealand on 31 July 1998, a Requiem High Mass was held at St Luke's in the City, where he had assisted on Sundays.[247] Their sons, Christopher and Peter attended the funeral, while Lavinia supported her mother at home in Adelaide. Alison's poem, *Waking to his death* laments John's death and burial in New Zealand and *Elegy, by Alison, a Relict* questions their love.[248] It contains the lines, 'It was begotten by Despair,/ Upon Impossibility', from a poem by Andrew Marvell.[249] In her elegy she suggested that the 'fruit' of their marriage (which can be taken to mean not only their children but the whole effect of their combined religious lives) is 'strewn' to feed others. Marvell's was one of two poems Alison read at a 'Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of John George Moyns Gent' held at St Mary Magdalene's on 15 August 1998.[250] The other poem she read was John Donne's

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[247] St Luke's was a kilometre from Cathedral Square. It was large stone church, moderate Anglo-Catholic in worship, which came down in the second Christchurch earthquake in 2012. John was recalled for his arresting sermons in those years. David Hilliard, email, 2013. John George Moyns Gent was listed among those whose anniversaries were remembered. St Luke's in the City, newsletter, July 2011.

[248] Appendix C.

[249] *The Definition of Love* Andrew Marvell

> My Love is of a birth as rare
> As 'tis, for object, strange and high;
> It was begotten by Despair,
> Upon Impossibility.
>
> Therefore the love which us doth bind,
> But Fate so enviously debars,
> Is the conjunction of the mind,
> And opposition of the stars.

[250] *Death Be Not Proud* John Donne

> Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
> Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
> For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
> Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
> From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
> Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
> And soonest our best men with thee do go,
> Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
> Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
> And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
> And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
> And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?

Death be not proud, the last lines of which express Alison's resurrection faith that she and John will be together 'eternally':

> One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
> And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

John's death, like the divorce, altered their state of being. Alison was assisted at this time by her parish priest, Father Grant Bullen, to write a 'Thanksgiving for the grace of God in keeping a vow.'[251] Together they held a service in the chapel at St Mary Magdalene's, calling to mind the vow she taken in July 1981:

> On that day she reaffirmed her marriage vow to live in celibacy. Now at this time beyond John's death, Alison gives thanks for God's goodness in keeping this vow and declares that the time of this vow is complete.
>
> Alison placed her wedding ring solemnly back on her left hand, announcing her intention to live the life of a widow like any other.[252]

In the intervening seventeen years, from 1981 to 1998, Alison had fought courageously to be the forgiving person of her Christian ideal. In the service of 1981 she eschewed bitterness and resentment but throughout her journals her thoughts and feelings often reverted to the injustices she suffered, such as John's betrayal of his marriage vows. These moods frequently precipitated what she called 'explosions' and the cycle of contrition, confession and resolutions to reconcile with the person damaged by her sharp tongue would begin again. When John left Australia their youngest child was fifteen and their youngest son twenty. From 1976 Alison had had sole parent responsibility for them. When John left Australia their first grandchild was a year old. He did not return to live in Adelaide after Barbara's death. Although the children responded to their mother's efforts to 'keep the family together'[253], there was a sense in which they thought of their father's moving to New Zealand as 'leaving home.'[254]

During these seventeen years and then through to the end of her life Alison was consistent in her regard for Christian marriage. She had embedded herself in the ethos of Anglo-Catholic belief and practice; it never left her as a

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> One short sleep past, we wake eternally
> And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

Chris Gent remembered that many people found Alison's dramatic reading of the love poetry 'amazing and confronting.' Chris Gent, email, 17 September 2011.

[251] Grant Bullen, conversation, 20 March 2013.

[252] Order of service, July 1998.

[253] Lavinia Gent, conversation, 2006.

[254] Chris Gent, document supplied to the author.

form of life. She continued to use the grammar of indissolubility, faithfulness and care of children which are the keystones of the Anglican marriage service. These were the beliefs which she expected John and she would bring together to this form of life but at each point of grammar she was frustrated and disappointed. The BCP cites marriage as firstly for the procreation of children, which undoubtedly brought them both much joy, but for Alison there was the inevitable toil and pain and overburdening responsibility not shared that resulted in resentment. The grammar of marriage as 'a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication' was within her power to comply. She knew the differences in John's and her capacities for restraint and met his failings with both forgiveness and disappointment. The third of the BCP reasons for marriage, 'the mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have for the other' set a paradigm for marriage that Alison did not experience in any satisfactory way. This grammar resounded in every complaint she uttered against him, was behind every scheme for their mutual society, and the lack of it drove her to the society, help and comfort of the church, the women's movement and a myriad of friends and associates, none of whom could fill the emptiness of unrequited love.[255]

We Wake Eternally

Nearly eight years after John's death, the interviews for this thesis began; that Alison constantly referred to John's achievements and qualities and not her own in the early part of the interview process has been noted.[256] She was eighty-five years old and pleaded his case as passionately as she did her own. When asked why she persisted in her marriage, she replied, 'I utterly loved him.'[257] Her recovery from a near-fatal illness in early 2006 led her to rejoice in a new life in which she had finally got over what her sister Betty called in the

[255] AG telephone conversation, October 2008. 'There is nothing more deadening than marrying a person who doesn't love you.'
[256] See Chapter 2.
[257] AG *Int*, 28 November 2005/1, p. 2. 'I just utterly loved him. And I still do. I don't mind all the things that have gone wrong, [laughs] really.'

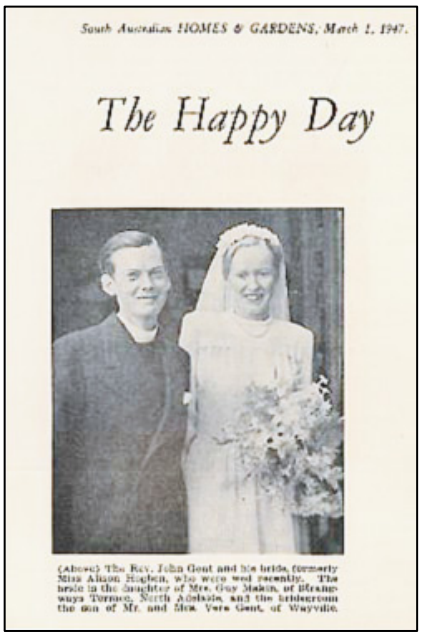
1940s, 'her madness'.[258] As a sign she removed her wedding ring, but in her remaining years the sadness of her marriage came to be symbolised in John being buried with Barbara.[259] Her hope remained in the conjunction of their minds, and in John and Alison 'waking eternally'.

[258] AG *Int*, 14 June 2006, p. 16. 'You know I've had a strange sensation only in the last few weeks that I've got over it whatever it was that was a form of madness that assailed me when I fell in love with John.'
[259] http://librarydata.christchurch.org.nz/Cemetries See Chapter 1 for an account of the interment of her ashes at Yorketown.

5 ALISON AND MARRIAGE



5:1 Alison and John Gent married at St Mary Magdalene's 1 February 1947



South Australian HOMES & GARDENS, March 1, 1947.

The Happy Day

(Above) The Rev. John Gent and his bride, formerly Miss Alison Stephen, who were wed recently. The bride is the daughter of Mrs. Guy Stokes, of Birdwood Terrace, North Adelaide, and the bridegroom the son of Mr. and Mrs. Vere Gent, of Weyville.

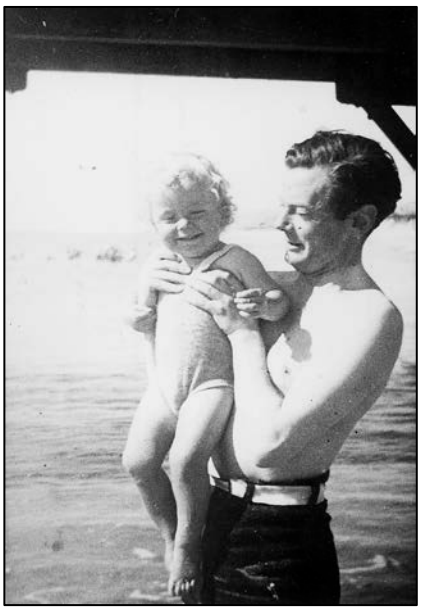
5:2 Their wedding reported in the March edition of *South Australian Homes and Gardens*.



5:3 John and Alison with their firstborn Timothy



5:4 Alison on holiday at the beach with Timothy



5:5 John on holiday at the beach with Timothy



5:6 Alison wrote on the reverse of this snapshot: "seeing this after a long interval in October 1991 (Saturday 27th early, a few days after John's return to NZ – the last, as he is to return to live here) I found myself at c. 40 unrecognisable as myself and felt very strange and sad!"



5:7 In the garden at Mount House with baby Charles.
Timothy, Peter and Chris are in the foreground. 1960



5:8 John is holding Charles, with Alison and Peter



5:9 Alison and John with four boys in about 1962-3.
From L, Peter, Timothy and Chris. Charles on Alison's lap



5: 10 John and Alison with baby Lavinia and Charles dressed as a pirate ready for a party. Alison made the dress-up



5:11 The whole family: Chris is holding Lavinia, Charles and Peter look on, Timothy stands alone. 21 May 1966



5:12 John and Alison, carrying Lavinia, are greeted by a member of the Society of the Sacred Mission. Perhaps a meeting of the Company of Joseph and Mary, St Michael's House, Crafers, 1967

5:13 The extended family meets at Mount House, late 1960s. From left, Guy Makin, Lavinia (Win) Makin, John Gent, Jan (Hogben) Keene, Frank Keene, Rosemary Keene, Alison Gent. Lavinia and Charles have their attention in the foreground





5:14 On the front porch of Mount House. Alison, her mother and Charles and Lavinia. John in clericals has had his licensed reinstated and is Chaplain of Pulteney Grammar School. After 1968



5: 15 John and Alison outside St Mary Magdalene's, May 1974



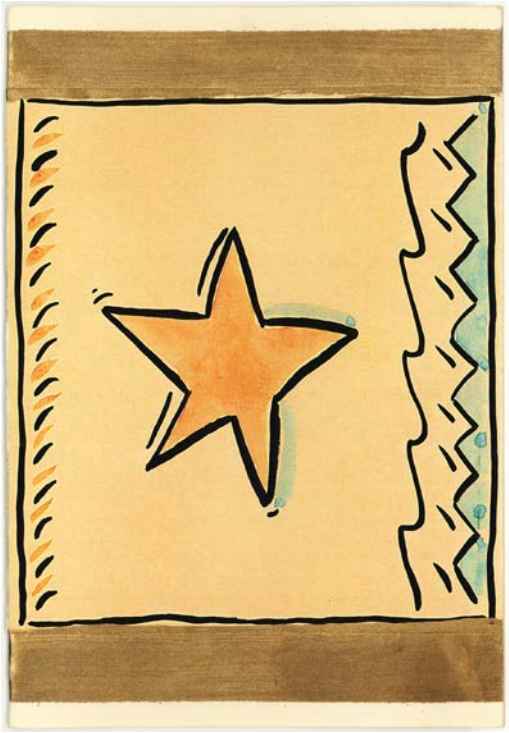
5:16 Alison and John out together but not of one mind or heart



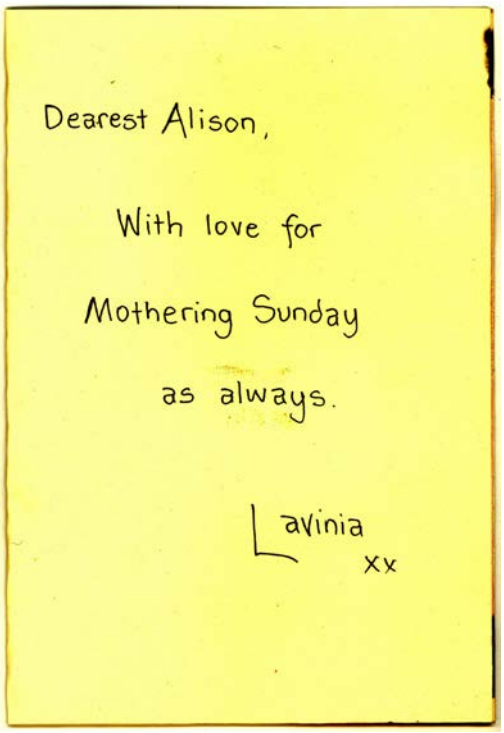
5:17 Alexandra's first birthday was a family occasion just before John's departure for New Zealand. She is held by both her grandparents. Her father, Chris, looks on. 21 August 1980



5:18 Alison and John with Timothy in the front hall of No 49 sometime after their divorce in 1981



5:19 A handmade card: testimony of Lavinia's deep affection for her mother



Its message



5:20 Lavinia on a picnic with John during a visit to John and Barbara in New Zealand September 1985



5:21 John baptised Timothy and Elizabeth's daughters, Grace and Alice, St Mary Magdalene's, 15 November 1987. From L, Elizabeth is partly hidden, Lavinia is holding Alice, Timothy, Grace, Chris holds his daughter, Imogen, his wife, Penny is behind Barbara Gent and Alison Gent who stand side by side for the family occasion



5:22 Alison at the baptism of Peter's son, Alexander, in Canberra. 1991



5:23 Alison presented talks on the grief of divorce to medical students at Flinders Medical Centre University. Here she does the first reading at a service in the chapel there



5:24 Alison and John with Chris, Penny and daughters, Alexandra (back row) and Imogen at St Mary Magdalene's. 2 January 1994



5:25 John in a nursing home in Christchurch, New Zealand. Alison was sent this photograph which read 'John has family snapshots on the wall facing him'



5:26 Alison and granddaughter, Alice, in the Cynthia Poulton Hall after Bp Garry Weatherill's consecration as Bishop of Willochra at St Peter's Cathedral, 2000



5:27 Alison in Holy Innocents' Chapel, St Mary Magdalene's on her 60th wedding anniversary, 1 February 2007. John and Alison gave the cross to the church as a divorced couple. John was a server, in his first pair of long pants, at the opening of the chapel in 1936



5:28 Chris and Lavinia inter some of Alison's ashes in the garden of the old rectory, Yorketown. When John lived here, he and Alison were happily in love. On their wedding anniversary, 1 February 2013 they were reunited

6 ALISON AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT[1]

As a strikingly independent thinker Simone Weil was incapable of toeing any party line. She always had one foot in the political wilderness. She herself said, 'We must always be prepared to change sides like Justice – that fugitive from the winning camp.'[2]

You must be prepared to be socially not so acceptable.[3]

I learnt the knack of living where I didn't belong.[4]

Introduction

The Women's Liberation Movement [WLM] in South Australia began at the University of Adelaide at the end of 1969 when politics students, Anna Yeatman, Anne Summers and Julie Ellis 'decided to form a WL group. The first meeting was called informally by word of mouth and phone calls.'[5] The university in the late 1960s showed evidence, especially in the Arts faculty, of

[1] An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the MOWatch Conference, Kincumber, NSW, 24-27 August 2010 and published in the Proceedings: "Women of Faith: Imaging God in the World", p. 60-64. An expanded version was presented at the First International Conference of Religion and Spirituality, Chicago February 2011. Yvonne Lesley McLean, "Alison Gent: Warrior Woman in the Church and the World," *International Journal of Religion and Spirituality* 1, no. 1 (2011): 107-16.
[2] AG *DJ* 3, p. 3.
[3] AG *Int*, 21 July 2006.
[4] AG *Int*, 25 November 2005-2, p. 5.
[5] Kinder, *Herstory*, p. 32.

the social revolution of the sixties.[6] The vehicle of this protest against Adelaide conservatism was the student paper *On Dit*, which circulated articles and letters against the Vietnam War, expressed radical political opinions and questioned university structures and traditional ways of teaching.[7] There was, however, little indication of the second wave of feminism, which had begun in the United States in 1963 with the publication of Betty Friedman's *The Feminine Mystique* and was already a national force there, both politically and socially.[8] In this respect *On Dit* was testament to the conservative attitudes towards women of Adelaide society in general and to its practice of subverting women's voices. The editorial committee was predominately male.[9] In 1967 Anna Yeatman was the only woman to have a letter to the editor printed.[10] Other examples of denying women's voice include ridicule.[11] The sexual revolution of the sixties was evident exclusively in respect of male proclivities.[12] Women were present merely as sexual objects.[13] Women, usually freshers, were willing to be 'the bird of the week.'[14] By 1969 there was a shift in the tone of the student paper. In March a report on women's groups and demonstrations in the United States

[6] Fiona Gerster and Jan Bassett, *Seizures of Youth: The Sixties and Australia*, (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1991); Donald Horne, *Time of Hope: Australia 1966-72*, (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1980).
[7] *On Dit,* 1967-72. A two-page spread featured graphic photographs of American soldiers' cruelty to prisoners, 29 March 1967, p. 8-9. See Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*. See also pages 61-69 for a critique of the relationship of males, war and sexual freedom.
[8] Kathleen Berkeley, *The Women's Liberation Movement in America*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999). Horne and Gerster and Bassett place the American movement beginning with Kate Millett's publication of *Sexual Politics* in 1968.
[9] Between 1967 and 1972 almost all the student councillors were men. Women standing for election were to be judged (and recognised?) by their baby photos. *On Dit,* 20 June 1968. p. 4.
[10] *On Dit,* 6 July 1967. Yeatman wrote on behalf of a prisoner of conscience for Amnesty International. She also contributed an article on Vietnam and the United Nations on 21 July 1967, p. 7.
[11] *On Dit*, 8 June 1967, p. 16. The sportswoman of the week, Jill Matthews, was described firstly as having 'red-hair and a fiery nature.' What for males was strength, 'sculling fortified wine' was for Jill a 'weakness.' She also had 'a quaint belief in the equality of the sexes' – the first indication in this publication of the women's movement for liberation from sexism. *On Dit*, 29 March 1967, p. 2. 'Beau Brummel' complained to the editor that Adelaide women students were more conservative and unimaginative in their dress than any others in Australia. He added that 'after all 80% are only here to brighten up the old place a bit.'
[12] Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*; Horne, *Time of Hope*.
[13] *On Dit* 1967-72. A column of news items had the title 'Abreast of the times' with suitably lurid photographs; 'Between the sheets' was the title of the sailing column *On Dit*, 22 June 1967, p. 12.
[14] *On Dit*, 29 March 1967, p. 2. 'The bird of week' appeared in provocative pose with caption notes listing her 'experience' and 'availability', and alleged quotations such as: 'I'm too illogical to study philosophy.'

appeared, albeit written by a man.[15] In April Yeatman followed up her letter of the previous year about corruption in the student council with another entitled 'Legalising crime?'[16] By July there were more women on the editorial committee, and in August Yeatman's 'most impressive speech' at an Arts Faculty meeting was printed in full.[17] However by July 1970 a backlash had resulted in an all-male editorial committee and sexist contributions.[18]

Nevertheless, Yeatman and her colleagues now had the impetus to question the relationships between men and women and the university study material coming out of the United States and Great Britain.[19] Commentators remark that the women's movement was led by white, educated and middle-class women.[20] In Adelaide, however, even white, educated and middle-class activist women were ridiculed and denied a voice within the university culture. These very factors proved the catalyst for the women to promote themselves and their cause.[21] More activist students, such as Jill Matthews, joined the leadership and membership widened. Alison recalled receiving a notice in her university mail.[22] From the first informal meetings in homes, after March 1970 the group met weekly on the university campus.

As it gathered momentum, the movement worked for improvement in women's living and working standards and to change society in solidarity with other women. It brought together women of disparate ideologies, education and social backgrounds. It is possible to apply the Wittgensteinian methodological approach to analyse the women's movement and the 'grammar' that developed.

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[15] *On Dit,* 19 March 1969. Warren Osmond, 'Just about Time for a New Feminism?' Kinder described Osmond as 'an aware and sensitive young man [who] wrote a well-reasoned article drawing a parallel between the "Miss America Pageant" and Adelaide University's "Miss Fresher" Competition.' Kinder, *Herstory*, p. 31.
[16] *On Dit*, Yeatman to the editor, 19 July 1968, p. 2; 2 April 1969, p. 19.
[17] *On Dit*, 5 August 1969, p. 3.
[18] 'Liberated men's front. Women are the largest "sick" sub-class in Australian society. They are almost hopelessly on the path to schizophrenia (not necessarily acute) and dehumanisation. For companionship and hence personal development, choose male friends, preferably liberated.' *On Dit*, 16 April 1970, p. 6.
[19] Kinder implied that Osmond's article proved the catalyst. Kinder, *Herstory*, p. 31.
[20] For an introductory background to the rise of second-wave feminism in Australia see Caine, ed. *Australian Feminism*; Norma Grieve and Ailsa Burns, eds, *Australian Women: New Feminist Perspectives* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986); Norma Grieve and Ailsa Burns, eds, *Australian Women: Contemporary Feminist Thought* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994).
[21] Horne, *Time of Hope*, p. 28-34. Many of the women involved in the beginning of WLM went on to have significant academic careers. See below.
[22] AG *Int*, 13 February 2006, p. 5.

The commitment with which the movement was embraced by, and embraced, many of the women, can be said to be 'religious.' In a discussion on religious experience, following Wittgenstein, Lindbeck observed that 'a religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought.'[23] He developed this line of thought to encompass secular activities arguing that these too provided a cultural linguistic framework which could 'shape the entirety of life and thought.' Eileen, when interviewed for a book on the WLM, explained the way the movement had shaped her thought: she had 'learnt to be more tolerant and have a greater understanding of the problems facing women.'[24] She felt 'irresistibly drawn to feminism because it was what [she] had been groping towards.'[25] We shall see below in more detail how Alison responded and appropriated the grammar and activities, such as inclusive language and protests, peculiar to the women's movement's 'form of life'.

Lindbeck's suggestion, that the continuation of influence 'even when [the religion] is no longer specifically adhered to', is another factor in applying the framework to secular experience and activities.[26] Even from the movement's beginning and into its first decade, there were philosophical, institutional and structural changes which have led some women to 'no longer adhere specifically' to its original precepts. Sylvia Kinder, for example, one of the early members of the movement, was still writing on women's issues in the twenty-first century. Her commitment is undiminished even though the focus may have altered. Alison, in her old age, gave her attention to the needs of the aged and groups such as Community Housing for Older Women [CHOW].[27] Lindbeck's two factors will assist in demonstrating the WLM as a form of life.

Alison's role in the WLM was singularly unique in that she claimed a simultaneous connection with both it and the Anglican Church. An analysis of this inter-relationship will be followed by an account of the early development

[23] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 33.
[24] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 75. The women interviewed were identified only by their given names.
[25] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*.
[26] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 33.
[27] Alison is named on the CHOW membership list 1989 and received its minutes until her death. She was also involved in 'Older Women's Speakout' and 'The Older Women's Festival', Co-ordinator to AG, 19 March 1990.

of the WLM in Adelaide. The cultural/linguistic framework of its form of life will be appraised using seven identifying elements. These elements have been selected on a feminist principle that no one element has priority over the other. Consequently the list has no particular order, reflecting the random and chaotic nature of the movement's form of life, its action and language.[28] The material available from Alison's papers, from which were drawn examples and illustrations such as letters and minutes of meetings, has determined another selection principle. The elements to be appraised are feminism, non-hierarchical organization, the support and acceptance of all women, telling women's stories, political activism, inclusive language, and women as people in charge of their own bodies.[29]

Alison's Simultaneous Membership

In 1981, after more than ten years in the women's movement, Alison introduced herself with this brief autobiography:

> I live now less than fifty yards from where I was born in 1920: all my life has been spent in Adelaide, in suburbs of varied social tone. My achievements since graduating in English and French Language and Literature have been persistent, if unpromoted, academic employment combined with a marriage of thirty-four years' duration (five children) and simultaneous membership of the Women's Liberation Movement and the Anglican Church.[30]

It is the 'simultaneous membership' of the WLM and the Anglican Church that was Alison's particular contribution to feminism and Christianity in Adelaide from the early 1970s. Wittgenstein's notion of describing the way humans behave as an interweaving of the multiplicity of actions of a variety of human beings has provided the methodology for illustrating the Anglican Church as a form of life.[31] Alison's total commitment to the church and the women's movement and her engagement in so many activities was 'life as a weave', so in order to achieve some clarity and to prevent what might appear chaos, each

[28] Horne, *Time of Hope*; Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*. The American experience was similarly dispersed. Berkeley, *The Women's Liberation Movement in America*.
[29] For another list see Berkeley, *The Women's Liberation Movement in America*. Chapter 4.
[30] Hand-written on a sheet of paper, dated and signed.
[31] Wittgenstein, *Zettel*; Kerr, *Theology after Wittgenstein*.

form has been treated separately. Alison's life in the WLM provided the inspiration and direction for the major work of her life, the protest movement for the ordination of women, the subject of Chapters 7 and 8.

Alison Gent was forty-nine years old, married to an Anglican clergyman, with five children and a part-time tutor in English at the University of Adelaide when she found a notice in her department mailbox in late 1969. It announced a meeting 'being held for members of the staff who were women to tell people how they thought they fared.' She decided she 'was in that.'[32] Alison at that time was in the position in which many women found themselves; disaffection with the lack of employment opportunities and unhappiness in marriage. Conversely Alison had much to give to a movement committed to the advancement and freedom of women in society. She had excelled in intellectual pursuits which informed her understanding of the human condition such as the metaphysical poets of the in seventeenth century. This understanding was grounded by being reared in a loving Christian home and school, and nurtured in Anglicanism. We have seen in Chapters 4 and 5, that, despite the church's parochialism and patriarchal style leadership and her life as a priest's wife, Alison had a mature and sincere Christianity. Her Anglican mentors had given her a foundation in incarnational theology, a lens through which she interpreted all of life. She brought, therefore, a uniquely eclectic background which in her person also included many of the life experiences of the women who gathered to share their grievances and lobby for change in society's attitude to, and treatment of, women.

Alison saw herself as ecumenical, like a bridge between the patriarchal Anglicanism of her upbringing and the radical, second wave feminism of the 1970s. Ecumenism, defined by Lindbeck as a 'strange combination of constancy and change, unity and diversity', suitably describes Alison in the context of her simultaneous participation in the women's movement and the church. Her entry

[32] AG *Int*, 13 February 2006, p. 5. Alison's being 'in that' was a gradual process to total involvement. *Liberation,* March 1970 is addressed to Alison at the university. Her marking on the list of March meetings shows her interest even if she did not attend meetings then. [The first numbered issue of *Liberation* was 1971] 'Today (at last) I called on Anna Yeatman in the Politics Department; she is to put me on the mailing list, and gave me a newsletter (June-August).' AG, note on a sheet of paper, 2 August 1970. By March 1971 Alison was a committed member. '1st meeting for me of Women's Liberation Mov't. AG.' Family diary, 25 March 1971.

into the women's movement was an act of diversity.[33] She joined in order 'to learn things that the church couldn't teach [her], and to experience help that the church couldn't give.'[34] She was constant in her stand for the value of marriage and in persisting in women's matters. She changed, adapting her ethical position on abortion, for example. Alison's belief in a unified humanity was expressed, in part, by her belief in the equality of male and female, and in her acceptance of all women. She adapted her lifestyle and her grammar; this was to be an on-going life pattern:

> The march used to call out, '*Not the church, not the state, women must decide their fate'* and that one before is a kind of follow up to what I think. But I used to say it differently as I walked down the streets, '*IN the church, IN the state, women must decide their fate.'* So I did not after a while say it in the usual form.[35]

Alison's involvement in the WLM began from the early days of the movement and continued until her death. The movement challenged many of her ideas, beliefs and ways of conducting herself in public life. It was a form of life completely different from those of her family of origin, her church and her university. As did many women seeking liberation, she appropriated it in her own distinctive way. She entered a form of life whose ideals gave her and her sisters a freedom to express themselves. That freedom, signified by grammar such as 'a woman's place is a woman's decision', contributed to its chaotic nature.[36] Alison did not have any single focus that shaped the entirety of her life and thought. It may be argued that women's issues were 'maximally important' (Lindbeck's term), but she saw both the women's movement and the church as 'giving [her] the really necessary things of life.'[37] Alison the feminist was determined to maintain Christian principles, such as the indissolubility of marriage and the equality of women and men as she understood them. This decision brought derision and argument from both the women's movement and the church as she battled to respect a failing marriage and argued for the ordination of women. She reflected, 'I have been challenged in the woman's

[33] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 15.
[34] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 32.
[35] AG *Int*, 13 February 2006. p. 6. The International Women's Day annual march.
[36] Ibid. Alison used the motto from a T-shirt she had bought from the women's movement.
[37] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 33.

movement because I'm still a member of a conservative organisations, and I've been disapproved of by some people in the church because I'm a feminist.'[38]

The Women's Liberation Movement in Adelaide

There is little written evidence of what happened at or who attended the initial gatherings of the movement.[39] Anna Yeatman, Jill Matthews, Anne Summers, Julie Ellis and Betty Fisher are cited as early leaders.[40] After the first informal meetings from December 1969 to March 1970 the group then met weekly on the University of Adelaide campus.[41] Molly Brannigan remembered that 'several women academics called meetings and ran a course, 'Women in Australian Society.'[42] Molly, an English immigrant with little secondary education, who had been active in leftist politics, described the course as 'tame.'[43] She nevertheless joined the movement along with the academics and housewives. In May 1970 the fledgling WLM held its first national conference at the University of Melbourne. Seventy women from around Australia, including Adelaide, attended.

It is also unclear when the newsletter, *Liberation,* was first issued.[44] It was initially published to keep women who were unable to attend meetings up to date with local WLM activities.[45] Alison was one of those whose initial contact

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[38] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 62.
[39] Kinder did not record numbers or dates of the early meetings. Kinder, *Herstory*. Her interviews were conducted in 1979. The tapes are held in the SLSA and marked 'Not for Use.' Anne Summers, *Ducks on the Pond: An Autobiography 1945-1976*, (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1999). Summers recorded her involvement in Chapter 10.
[40] www.slsa.sa.gov.au Founders of Women's Liberation Movement in Adelaide. Photograph taken at the 'Women and Labour Conference', Macquarie University, May 13, 1978. Some of the founders went on to have distinguished academic careers. Anna Yeatman is a professorial research fellow at the Whitlam Institute, University of Western Sydney. Jill Matthews was tutor in History at Flinders University where she worked with Dr David Hilliard. In 2012 she was Professor of History and Head of the School of Social Sciences, Australian National University. Anne Summers gained her PhD for writing a history of women in Australia, *Damned Whores and God's Police*. She is an Officer of the Order of Australia for service to journalism and women's affairs. Jill Ellis wrote 'The Union of Australian Women 1950-1987', unpublished BA (Hons) thesis, History Department, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1980. Betty Fisher was president of the International Women's Day Committee and was involved in other women's and conservation causes. Australian Women's Register, www.womenaustralia.info
[41] Molly Brannigan, interview, 6 July 2010. See also Molly's story in Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 80-3.
[42] Kinder, *Herstory*, p. 40.
[43] Molly Brannigan, interview, 6 July 2010.
[44] *Liberation,* No 3 April 1971. This is the earliest holding at State Library of South Australia. A copy of No 1. [1971] is held by the Liberation Collective www.slsa.sa.gov.au SA Memory.
[45] 'In 2007 *Liberation* continues to be published by a collective of women.' www.slsa.sa.gov.au SA Memory.

was through the newsletter. An unnumbered issue dated March 1970, which coincided with the meetings beginning to be held at the university, is the oldest extant issue in her collection.[46] Alison indicated on her copy of this newsletter that she missed the meeting on 10 March which she had intended to go to and noted the meeting was on 25 March 1970.[47] Even at this early date in the movement's history the publication gives evidence of the vitality and energy of its founders, the broad scope of the problems facing women in that society and how quickly the WLM had forged its purpose. While the newsletter usefully documented the issues and actions of the movement, most of the articles were uncredited and its editors not acknowledged.

It was a high priority for the Adelaide group to hand on information about the women's movement overseas and interstate. A bibliography of liberation literature from the United States was included.[48] The impending visit to Adelaide by an American liberationist was advertised.[49] Recently published books about women were listed and included an annotation of Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch.*[50] It was reported that the leaflet on contraception, which had been produced by the Adelaide group, had received a 'very hostile reception from many mothers of school girls' but distribution was planned for factories, the university and the public through advertisements in the morning newspaper *The Advertiser*.[51] A feature in *Liberation*, which was to become a regular one, was the reclaiming of women's history. A calendar of the 'history of women pioneers, unionists, suffragettes etc' was planned.[52] The column, 'Herstory', highlighted women in medicine and mentioned Adelaide's first woman doctor.[53] Items on women's employment status in the public service and sexual exploitation were followed by a reprinted article from the United States on families.[54] The author critiqued the nuclear family, citing it as 'enslaving' for

[46] *Liberation,* March 1970 is addressed to Mrs A Gent c/o English Department, University of Adelaide.
[47] As noted above other documents record Alison's first meeting as 25 March 1971. It is clear that she was very interested in the venture.
[48] *Liberation,* March 1970, p. 2.
[49] Ibid, p. 1.
[50] Ibid, p. 11. Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1970).
[51] Ibid, p. 1.
[52] Ibid, p. 2.
[53] Ibid, p. 7.
[54] Ibid, p. 3-6.

women, and that it promoted individualism, isolation and economic exploitation. Families have 'chained women to their reproductive function' and fostered gender roles in which women are, for example, 'selfless, ordinary, boring.' Because of this 'the family must disappear.'[55] Marriage as an institution was also under question: in this issue a member contributed a poem titled, 'Must I marry?'[56] The support of gay men and lesbians was prominent early in the movement.[57] Feminists and liberationists used humour to critique sexism with a feature: 'Sexist quotes or How few male mentors we have.'[58] Alison explained in a subsequent issue that a 'sexist quote' by Alexander Pope, 'most women have no character at all', had been taken out of context.[59] Although her language was academic, Alison demonstrated that she understood women's disadvantage in Pope's and her own society. Nevertheless her attempt to argue for reason across the worlds of liberation and English literature risked her credibility with both. In this respect she was herself out of context. Alison had not yet fully absorbed the language of liberation. Her painstaking attempt to identify herself with the movement indicated that it was not possible to extend across two worlds and remain authoritative. Nor could she be assured that others would understand:

> As a student at this university in 1940 or thereabouts, I noticed how rare it was for a woman student to have the same well-defined outline as was then far commoner among men. The same causes were no doubt at work as in Pope's time.[60]

Demonstrations were already part of the movement's landscape. Adelaide's first protest in March 1970 was headlined on the front page of Adelaide's afternoon newspaper, *The News*:

> Report of a protest made against the University of Adelaide's Miss Fresher contest - the first protest action in Adelaide by the Women's Liberation Movement. Anna Yeatman of Women's Liberation (described as, 'a brunette, and a political tutor at Adelaide University') was quoted saying, 'They dress and act to improve the worth of their

[55] Ibid, p. 5.
[56] Ibid, p. 6.
[57] Ibid, p. 8-9.
[58] Ibid, p. 10.
[59] *Liberation,* No 6. August 1971, p. 2. The line is from Pope's *Moral Essays*. Alison's letter is reproduced in Appendix D:1.
[60] Ibid.

> body to a prospective husband.' Miss Fresher 1969, Sue Darwent, replied, 'I feel I was chosen because of my personality, not my appearance.'[61]

A Mother's Day protest against consumerism was proposed and advertised in *Liberation*.[62] Women were encouraged instead to join the anti-Vietnam moratorium by participating in a 'long march from Elder Park [in the centre of Adelaide] to WRE at Salisbury.'[63]

The diversity of interests in the movement's first two years was perpetuated as each subsequent newsletter was produced by a specific interest group. In this way issues vital to the cause of women such as health, education or political reform were surveyed, but the movement was not able to articulate policies as a body and even those with political motivations were divided.[64] As the movement grew and attracted more attention the need to assess the overall intention and philosophy of the movement became a concern. The Yeatman statement (WLM Statement no. 1) was reprinted in *Liberation* No. 4 but opinion remained open as to 'what was fundamentally wrong with women's position or why.'[65]

In 1972 Jill Matthews distilled the movement's grammar with a comprehensive statement 'concerning the nature and the mechanics of the sexual oppression of women.'[66] Oppression she identified as perpetrated by men because 'they are the ones who can initiate, have power, who can see the world created in their own image.'[67] In Matthews' model women are victims, and although class, age and race had also created victims, the next battle for equality was to be fought against a sexist society. Matthews identified power in terms of behaviour and binary opposites - man as dominant, active, leader and woman as submissive, passive, follower. There are three inducements to the

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[61] www.slsa.sa.gov.au SA Memory. David Lewis, 'She protests against "sex contest"', *News,* 12 March 1970, p. 1.
[62] *Liberation,* April No. 3 1971, p. 1-2.
[63] Ibid, p. 3. The Weapons Research Establishment (WRE) was a joint Australian-British venture. According to the WLM it was 'totally integrated into the global strategic network of the US.'
[64] Kinder, *Herstory*. Kinder documented the political tensions.
[65] *Liberation,* October 1971, p. 5. Matthews has since published extensively in women's history and women's issues.
[66] Jill Matthews, "Sex Lib and Women," in *Homosexuality in South Australia*, ed. J. N. Ruwoldt, (Adelaide: Campaign against Moral Persecution, South Australian Branch, 1972), p. 27.
[67] Ibid.

bondage of submission, passivity and servitude: the 'myth of love' (including force); vicarious privilege, social status, and economic support; or in the case of rebellion, punishment by ostracism.[68] Matthews' contemporary feminist rationale demonstrated clearly the social landscape for women in the 1970s and what she calls the 'straitjacket of stereotypical behaviours', at the basis of which women's femininity was defined as weak, emotional, gentle, ladylike (or if not, a woman was aggressive).[69] It is rather, she argued, that 'human qualities [are] found in varying proportions in all human beings.'[70] To change a sexist society, 'we must free our minds, ourselves and our bodies, and we must destroy the institutions of this society that seek to repress, alienate, divide, deny and destroy us.'[71]

Matthews began her article by setting the parameters of the debate. She addressed her work to 'sisters, brothers, liberals, enemies.'[72] We see here liberation grammar, terms such as 'oppression', 'sexism', 'revolution', 'freedom.' She countered her argument with a grammar of aggression, 'destroy', 'victim', 'enemy.' The first International Women's Day march in Adelaide in March 1972 reiterated this grammar. The theme, 'Women need: women demand' encapsulated the oppression/aggression grammar.[73] The need for equality in the workplace and in the reproductive and parenting role was stated clearly:

> Abortion on demand
> Free contraceptives
> Readily available information about our bodies and how they function
> The abolition of sexist advertising and exploitative consumerism
> Equal pay
> Equal job definitions and opportunities
> Free childcare facilities[74]

Here again the grammar of aggression, 'demand', 'abolition', 'exploitative', signified the frustration of these needs not being met and the resulting anger.

By January 1972 Alison was an active contributor to *Liberation*. In a short article, 'Christianity and Women', she questioned just how Christian were

[68] Ibid, p. 28.
[69] Ibid, p. 29.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid, p. 30.
[72] Ibid, p. 27.
[73] *Liberation,* No 10 March 1972, p. 1.
[74] Ibid.

modern society's views on man-woman relationships.[75] In so doing she showed she understood how women had come to be sceptical of Christianity. Alison then suggested there was more to Christianity than literalist assumptions. She also provided the 'sexist quote' for that issue: 'It would be a violation of spiritual principles to ordain women as, analogically, it would be a similar violation to consecrate a meat pie on the altar of God.'[76] These remarks of the Reverend Ian Herring, an Anglo-Catholic rector in the diocese of Ballarat, were to have a wider circulation and some notoriety in later years.[77] Alison was beginning to find her voice in the WLM world. Her contributions to these early newsletters show her desire to counter some of the aggression. She envisioned women being able to develop 'a really well-defined individuality' and have a 'most definite outline.'[78] She wished that for herself, as she absorbed the grammar and ways of being of the movement and tried to balance her newly found grammar with her Christian thinking and knowledge of literature.

The social aspects of women's liberation were seen by some to be as vital a part of the movement as activism:

> Surely WL is about the *sharing* of private experiences and the continual growth of consciousness, personal and shared. YOU are WL. This is not a movement one 'joins.' There are no rigid structures or membership cards. The WLM exists where three or four friends or neighbours decide to meet regularly over coffee and talk about their personal lives. It also exists in the cells of women's jails, on the welfare lines, in the supermarket, the factory, the convent, the farm, the maternity ward, the street corner, the old ladies home, the kitchen, the steno[graphers'] pool, the bed. It exists in your mind, and in the political and personal insights that you can contribute to change and shape and help its growth.[79]

The decision to decentralise was based on trying to 'attract women too scared to come to the university, who would find a night meeting hard to get to.'[80] The communal basis of the women's movement was evident in the caring of women,

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[75] *Liberation,* No 9 January 1972, p. 5. Alison speculated sympathetically on Paul's writing. Paul was viewed as women's archenemy: the proposed women's calendar had a day to celebrate his death.
[76] Ibid, p. 7.
[77] For a more detailed analysis of Herring's quotation and its use in the protest for the ordination of women see Chapter 7.
[78] *Liberation,* No 6 August 1971, p. 2.
[79] *Liberation,* No 10 March 1972, p. 3. Written by Lyndal [surname not given].
[80] Ibid, p. 9. Decentralisation Report.

sharing experience and being informed by having time for introspection and then to have speakers.[81] The movement grew centrally and with a wide range of interest groups: Socialist; Flinders University; Salisbury Teachers' College; Women's Action Coalition; Men's Liberation; Feminist Culture; Women and Social Services Working and regional groups: Northern; Whyalla; Hackham; Christies Beach; Glenelg; Burnside; Salisbury; Elizabeth and Gawler.[82]

Liberation advertised a 'Club Night for Women for meeting and relaxing together'which Alison initiated and was the contact person. The venue was the Gepps Cross Hotel (which happened to be closest to the Gent home and one of those frequented by her husband, John).[83] This communal life was to be inclusive, 'not exclusively for members of WL.' It was also to be an action against sexism, so that women could claim the same opportunities 'which men habitually enjoy in the Public Bar – to meet others of her own sex in a completely open setting.' Alison's concluding statement expressed 'the hope … that this group will be both socially and politically comprehensive.'[84] This was a hope which in reality was too inclusive in its politics and too broad in its social vision to win support at a time of feminist militancy and liberation. The grammar of inclusivity set Alison apart from her sisters. Here Alison looks beyond the binary opposites of liberation grammar in a way more radical than her peers.[85] The title of the 1975 liberation textbook, *The Other Half* spelt out the mindset for feminism in Australia, and editor, Jan Mercer, pinpointed the characteristics of the landscape.[86]

> Australia is a sexist society. Women are exploited for their sex, their breeding power and their labour… their subordination to men is so great that they have no identity in their own right. … Thus the best that most Australian women can hope for is to be regarded as status images like the family car, to be dressed up, painted and displayed. They are property to be used by men to the best advantage.[87]

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[81] Ibid.
[82] *Liberation,* No.14 September 1972, p. 14.
[83] Ibid. AG *NB* 5. A list of attendees, with dates of meetings, included the author.
[84] Ibid. Kinder mentioned the small group meetings in the suburbs; she noted that the one at the Gepps Cross Pub 'didn't appear to have lasted long.' Kinder, *Herstory*, p. 74.
[85] Deborah McCulloch, interview, 7 September 2011. McCulloch was involved in the women's movement, a member of Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) and appointed first women's adviser to Don Dunstan, the Premier of South Australia, in 1976.
[86] Jan Mercer, ed. *The Other Half: Women in Australian Society* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1975).
[87] Ibid, p. 23.

Adelaide women, Anne Summers and Jill Blewett were contributors.[88]

Jenny Barber wrote *Women's Movement: South Australia* in 1981 as an exploration of 'the current diversity of the Women's Liberation Movement', 'the aims of the various women's organisations… and how they were reaching out in the community.'[89] The material was sourced from non-funded and government-funded women's groups, not all of which were 'feminist' but were 'concerned in one way or another with women's rights.'[90] Barber interviewed group representatives informally and from a personal perspective. She identified the following groups as influenced by WLM: the Woman's Christian Temperance Union [a very old campaigning organisation which began in SA in 1886], the League of Women Voters, the Union of Australian Women, the Women's Liberation Centre, Women's Electoral Lobby, the Communist Party's Women's Collective, the Women's Resource Centre, the St Peter's Community Centre, the Women's Community Health Centre, the Rape Crisis Centre, the Women's Advisory Unit, the Women's Information Switchboard, the Women's Art Movement, and the Working Women's Centre. Alison received all their newsletters and papers with the exception of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Communist Party's Women's Collective and continued with most of them until her death. She maintained concern for, and interest in, all aspects of women's endeavour. She wanted to be all encompassing.

Barber interviewed 'several older feminists whose life histories [she] included to reveal a personal aspect of feminism and the effect it has had in changing women's ideas, confidence and lifestyle.'[91] The WLM as a form of life can be clearly identified in Barber's assessment of how women's subjectivities were shaped by the communal phenomenon that was WLM:

> The women's movement has helped me realise that I had to make a stand as a person and not just a mother figure. That I had rights and that my kids had rights and responsibilities and one of those

[88] Ibid, p. 482-3. Anne Summers 'An Object Lesson in Women's History' and 'Where's the Women's Movement Moving To?'; Jill Blewett 'The Abortion Law Reform Association of South Australia 1968-73' and 'WEL and the Women's Liberation Movement.'
[89] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 2.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid. The six narratives illustrate MacIntyre's 'narrative view of self.' See discussion on 'telling stories' below.

> responsibilities was to treat me as a person. I became much more assertive and able to deal with problems that I'd formerly thought too difficult.[92]

It became an alternative form of life into which they could put their energies and skills.

Alison was one of six older women whose personal testimonies Barber recorded.[93] Alison's response was influenced by marital problems, an unsatisfying career and isolation within those forms of life which claimed her loyalty and passion – the church and the university.[94] The negative publicity around the women's movement meant that alignment with it would almost certainly exclude or alienate a participant from nice, respectable society. For Alison this meant alienation from the typical nice, respectable form of Anglican life she was part of. Conversely, working-class Anglicans, with whom she also lived and worshipped, objected to the women's movement for reasons other than respectability.[95] She was, nevertheless, prepared to put herself in danger of alienation from family, friends, church and workplace because she believed the movement offered hope for a better world. When Alison talked about her involvement she described herself being 'up to her neck' in it.[96] We can understand that she used the term with all the allusions to drowning, strangling, hanging and being caught in quicksand. This was the danger and consequences to reputation and future recognition that participation in the controversial group could bring.

Seven Elements Identifying the Women's Movement as a Form of Life

Among the diverse issues facing the women's movement in the early 1970s in Adelaide there were elements which were consonant with women's liberation in the Australian states and in America. In each place, there were,

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[92] Ibid, p. 82. Molly. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 35.
[93] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 60-2.
[94] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 5-8; Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*. Her position as part-time tutor 'was very much sort of casual dead-end stuff.'
[95] Horne, *Time of Hope*. Horne suggested it was trade union politics that made the working class suspicious of the new protest movement. 'For the ordinary wage-earner, unionisation offered a narrow vision of … wages and conditions', p. 94. Alison failed to attract her neighbours from Clearview to the WLM.
[96] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 12.

however, specific cultural emphases, an important consideration when using Lindbeck's cultural/linguistic framework, such as the secularism in Australian society compared with that of the United States. Similarly, the movement in Australia imported the terminology, language (part of what Wittgenstein means by 'grammar') from the United States. The issues of concern arose from such a wide variety of cultural and linguistic problems in employment, health and education, to name just a few, and the women came from similarly wide experience and interests, that the movement was chaotic.

The elements selected for discussion will give a broad view of the movement's activities and principles, that is, its 'doctrines, cosmic stories or myths, and ethical directives.'[97] They will be shown to be 'integrally related to the rituals it practices, the sentiments and experiences it evokes, the actions it recommends and the institutional forms it develops', and demonstrate the WLM as a form of life.[98]

Feminism

Conflicting and diverse aspects of feminism arose in the twentieth century, but the principle of feminism was the world as a better place for women to be. In order to achieve this some believed a revolution was necessary. The three histories of the Adelaide wlm reported the historical and cultural context, events, purpose and actions differently. Sylvia Kinder's Herstory of Adelaide Women's Liberation 1969-1974 (1980) cited the Marxist and socialist origins of feminism in twentieth-century Britain and the United States and gave a similar political focus to the foundational years of the WLM in Adelaide. [99] She was aware, however, that women's liberation 'posed a challenge to the traditional "left" concept of society based on more easily defined class and racist division of our world.'[100] By the end of 1970 contact had been made with groups outside the university and the interest base broadened.[101] As noted above, Jenny

[97] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 33.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Kinder, *Herstory*. Kinder explained the friction between radical feminist and socialist feminist viewpoints. She did not mention the implications the movement might have for religious or churchwomen.
[100] Ibid, p. 7.
[101] Ibid, p. 30-42.

Barber's Women's Movement: South Australia (1981) documented a wide range of women's groups and basics interests. The personal narratives of older women counter the perception that the social upheavals of the sixties only affected, or were driven by, the young.[102] Celia Frank and Kirstin Marks' history of the International Women's Day (IWD) committee also documented the exchange of ideas between the various women's groups in Adelaide in the late 1960s and early 1970s. [103]

The label, 'being a feminist' was used to identify a way of life, or an attitude to human existence:

> All women seeking to change women's traditional roles in society are feminist and I don't agree with an attempt which evaluates some women as more feminist and politically correct than others. If we are really seeking change then accepting differences within the women's movement is essential, otherwise, aren't we perpetuating the patriarchal approach to anyone who doesn't conform?[104]

When Barber spoke of feminism, she used the term as a conversion of life, which required adopting new language and grammar. Consequently the phrase, 'since becoming a feminist', would define a woman's new form of life.[105] The meaning of feminism was 'supported by an entire background of actions and practices.'[106] Alison testified to her own motivation: 'I became a feminist in a public and corporate way because of my desperate need to be freer than I could be living only within my marriage and the Church.'[107] Alison's claims to feminism 'carried their meaning in a transparent way.'[108] Her actions and practices demonstrate the point:

> I've been in plenty of demonstrations … for example, when they were debating the 'rape in marriage' bill.[109]

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[102] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*; Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*.
[103] Celia Frank and Kirstin Marks, *Celebration! : The International Women's Day Committee of South Australia*, (Adelaide: International Women's Day Committee (S.A.), 1995), p. 72-88. 'Anne Summers … had been guest speaker at the 1971 IWD luncheon and Julie Ellis had represented WL on the IWD committee 1972 Child Care Forum. Since these years WL … [has] consistently been represented at the IWD committee luncheons', p. 86.
[104] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 3.
[105] Ibid, p. 2.
[106] Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, p. 61.
[107] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 62.
[108] Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, p. 61.
[109] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 25.

> I helped to start the first women's shelter by going down to a house we decided we'd squat in, in Torrens Road, and just scrubbing the floor, you know, that sort of thing.[110]

A woman identified as Connie reported that she 'changed enormously since becoming a feminist. … After one International Women's Day march I gave a speech about women's liberation … Now I am helping to organise the Unity Conference for March 1980.'[111] Women took on feminism and incorporated it with, or adapted it to, a skill or profession. Barber, for example, wanted to unite her art and feminism so formed the Women's Art Movement.

Feminism was always viewed by Alison through the lens of Christianity. That she absorbed the culture and practice of the women's movement through external experiences is demonstrated by her reaction at the first International Women's Day March in Adelaide on 11 March 1972. She interpreted what she saw as the *undivided church.* Her experience made real at that moment a received idea of the early church as a symbol of the inclusiveness and equality of all humanity.[112] Alison interpreted that secular gathering of women of varying education and social backgrounds, wider than she had experienced before, or seen working together for a cause, as having spiritual significance.[113] This dialectic was Alison's theological and feminist cornerstone.

It was a dialectic also evident in the grammar Alison used when protesting that: CHRISTIAN WOMEN ARE *FOR* WOMEN.[114] These five words on a banner were written and displayed by Alison, Christian and feminist, embedded in both the Anglican Church and the WLM. Her game with the language means we cannot really tell who her message was aimed at. It is like a glass that is half full and half empty or Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit.[115] She was saying, Let it be known, feminists, Christian women are on your side. But she

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[110] Ibid, p. 27. The point cannot be made too strongly how radical and shocking these actions were for a priest's wife and a person of Alison's social standing. For the effect of social change on religious life see McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*.
[111] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 67.
[112] Jesus' prayer in John 17:11 'that they may be one, even as we [the Father and I] are one.' The undivided church refers to the church before the schism between the Oriental and Western churches c. 1000, and the Reformation. Alison belonged to the St Alban and St Sergius Society, an Anglican/Orthodox movement.
[113] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 10.
[114] Appendix D:5. Banner collection, 1971 to 2008.
[115] Wittgenstein, *PI*, p. 194-5.

was also saying, Women who are Christ's, remember you are women, and support all women everywhere. For Wittgenstein the actions of life are the context of language: sense can only be arrived at by description, the use of words associated with activities he called 'language games'.[116] The sense of Alison's banner depended on the context in which it was written which was a Christian feminist one. But: 'the sentence makes sense [depending on] what special circumstances this sentence is actually used.'[117]

Non-Hierarchical Organisation

How to organise the newly formed WLM in Adelaide was not the first priority of the group.[118] The question of structure was deferred in 1971. The movement in Adelaide grew in most part from those women who:

> were active at Adelaide University in action groups, Young Labor, the Moratorium movement [against the Vietnam War]. They felt their personal politics were not recognised or talked about at left meetings.'[119]

There was tension between a perceived need for political organisational structure and the freedom to explore and enact women's future place in the group and in society. The concept of 'the personal is political' is the awareness that what happens to each woman in everyday life is fundamental to their oppression.[120] The praxis associated with this thinking was to grow small groups that enabled women to express the personal. A discussion in Barber's *Women's Movement* is helpful here: the interviewee conceded that 'there's never been a hierarchical structure ' in WLM, but that organisation was needed in certain situation. At the Women's Information Switchboard, for example, problems arose not just because of the need to arrange rosters but also because 'those who are active are heavily involved in their area.' The focus on the personal was seen to be problematic: 'a lot of women call themselves feminists,

[116] Wittgenstein, *PI,* 5-9.
[117] Ibid, 117.
[118] Unlike 'their American sisters [who] had spent many years engaged in discussion.' Kinder, *Herstory*, p. 34.
[119] Kinder, *Herstory*, p. 30.
[120] Tuttle, ed. *Encyclopedia of Feminism*, p. 245-6.

but aren't committed to changing things outside themselves.'[121] More generally the language and actions of radical feminism and socialist feminism were adopted in the movement and identified the form of life that was developing.

The discussion of hierarchical institutions, such as the church, marriage and public and political institutions, such as education and the law, led many women to name the sources of domination and their structures, in order to change the systems under which they were working. Employment was hierarchical: advancement was contingent on, for example, the amount of time spent on the job, so that the higher the position in the hierarchy the more time and availability was expected. Women who chose to marry and be responsible for child rearing were disadvantaged. The conflict between employment and domestic responsibility was real. Part-time work was an option for women who wanted to share domesticity and employment: for poorer women there was often no choice. Part-time work was particularly disadvantageous for professional advancement. Alison joined the part-time tutors' association set up at the University of Adelaide to protest against their disadvantages.[122] In the 1960s and 1970s, on the other hand, men did not have to choose between marriage, family and profession. In fact, their freedom to advance in the workplace was contingent on women (their wives) providing domestic stability and rearing their children. Alison is typical of women in this situation. She spoke of the dilemma she faced before marriage:

> I was aware while I was tutoring [in the1940s] that there was a distinct choice between being an academic and getting married. … I thought that unfair, since men didn't have to make that choice. … I gave up teaching after my third child and gradually became more frustrated. I spent eleven years out of academic life and went back for thirteen years as a part-time tutor, but I never regained the degree of concentration I'd had earlier.[123]

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[121] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 20. By 1991 the principles of non-hierarchical organisation had been defined. WLM, organisational chart, 1991.
[122] Notice of meeting to adopt a constitution, discuss proposals, organise a campaign for a tutors' association, 1972. Committee minutes, 16 April 1973. Alison was the committee member representing the English department, Gretel Dunstan, secretary. Minutes, 2 November 1973. There were 20 members present, 30 members signed up. 'Conditions of sub-lecturing staff' were mentioned in the president's report, 1974.
[123] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 60.

She identified herself as coming from 'male-dominated social organisations', the church and the university, and the 'male chauvinist value system.'[124] Later, as women moved into positions of power and authority, they also were likely to be agents of domination if they were drawn into the hierarchy. Women in politics and business, for example, may find their judgement impaired in respect of their less able and fortunate sisters' employment. On the other hand, some women trained in the law, social work and medicine had the skills to inform and empower others on hierarchical structures. Structures in the home, for example, depended on the woman being submissive and gave men economic, sexual, and physical domination, which often resulted in domestic violence and sexual assault. Alison persistently argued for equality in marriage and for a regard for each person's worth in a relationship, rather than what she saw as false ideals 'some of which are connected with what women are supposed to be like.'[125]

The Support and Acceptance of All Women

The support and acceptance of all women was a platform of the movement, and was argued in theory and attempted in practice.[126] This vanguard of women's liberation was faced with class, political and racial boundaries, and differences of religion, age, marital status and sexual orientation. Each member was challenged by the variation in style of being and acting of the others: militant or coercive, reflective or artistic, leader or follower, capable of planning or disorganised. Whatever the concept, the reality of any group or movement is that personality and politics are disruptive. Splits, factions and groups had formed since the first meetings of WLM in 1969. While attempts were made to resolve differences, the form of life into which Alison had plunged was as complex and subject to personality and power struggles as the church and the university**.**

In February 1981 Barber's book on the WLM met with a barrage of criticism. A meeting at the Women's Information Switchboard was called 'to

[124] The church as a patriarchal form of life is examined in Chapter 7.
[125] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 60. Alison complained about the unjust distribution of everyday tasks with John not taking any responsibility for tasks such as child rearing; that all the males in her family had the view [that housework] was her work, not theirs.
[126] The Yeatman Statement, WLM Document No I, reproduced in *Liberation,* No 4 1971.

discuss possible changes Jenny could make to the book to make it more accurate.'[127] Sections of the book were 'not approved by the Collective: to be revised'; eventually the book was suppressed.[128] Barber had observed in her introduction:

> The diversity within the Women's Liberation Movement has been important for our continual development and growth and in attracting many more women to it than could a singular feminist approach. However, an unfortunate aspect of the diversity has been the development of major splits, which I see largely stemming from intolerance and a lack of trust.[129]

Alison reported this dissension and what she thought was unjust treatment of Jenny Barber. At a later time she glossed over the differences, wanting to retain her vision of the undivided women's movement.

Alison did not sit easily in the group. She was an unusual figure, with a distinctive presence. Those on the political left saw her English accent, private school education, high academic achievement and connections with Adelaide's social elite as class barriers. Because of her churchiness, Alison was an uncomfortable challenge for those who scorned religion but were committed to accept all women. She recalled that: 'It took me years to gain credibility in the women's movement.'[130]

There were other matters which brought Alison into conflict with her liberation sisters. There was a general attitude that men were responsible for women's oppression and definitely had no place in the movement. Nor could a man call himself a feminist. Alison strongly believed that all human beings were created in God's image. She argued that maleness should not be a reason for

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[127] Ali Ben Kahn, (for Jenny Barber), Mary Nettle and Jillinda Thompson (for Women's Liberation: General Meeting) to WLM members, 17 February 1981. 'For the organisation of such a broad movement a coalition of all women's groups is needed. Such a coalition would include not only WL groups from local areas, unis etc., but groups who campaign around specific issues. … No women should be excluded from this coalition on grounds of class, politics or membership of other organisations.' The letter was signed, 'Yours in sisterhood'; 'The Women's Movement – which way?' Socialist Youth Alliance. (Adelaide); 'The only power we can rely on for the liberation of our sisters and of ourselves is that of our own minds and bodies acting together as sisters.' *Liberation,* No 10 March 1972, p. 1.

[128] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*. Alison noted in her book that it was 'suppressed, "not approved" by meeting of the Collective in 1981.' She marked the disputed sections which were 'The Women's Studies Resource Centre' by Sylvia Kinder, p. 31; 'The St Peter's Women's Community Centre' by Val Search, p. 34.

[129] Ibid, p. 3.

[130] AG *TC*, 2007, p. 5.

exclusion any more than femaleness. This, together with her loyalty to her marriage and four sons, put her feminist credentials in doubt. However, her resolve to stand with the contradictions and convictions of both forms of life, the church and the women's movement, was not diminished or discouraged.

The movement's grammar and vocabulary powerfully supported the ideal. The words of a 'most inspiring song', 'reach out a hand and give it to a sister/Together we're strong' were accompanied with actions consolidating the experience of sisterhood, of being united.[131] The words and actions were performed within a community which was identified by the term 'sister.' The term became symbolic of the form of life and used, for example, when signing letters, as 'Yours, in sisterhood.' The sense of community and sisterhood drew many women into the movement. Alison recalled the impact she experienced:

> I expect because isolation had been what I'd been suffering from very much. … You imagine the change, you see, from living in a large household of women to being the only woman in the family, because the first four children we had were boys. I think that was a big ingredient in making me a feminist.[132]

Alison formed close and lasting friendships in the WLM, mainly with the older women on duty during the day at Bloor House, where the telephone network, counselling and referral service was housed.[133] These older women felt marginalised by the education and professional mobility of the younger members. Molly Brannigan believed the alienation came out of an age-experience conflict.[134] Convinced of the value of groups, in 1972 Alison instigated the Tuesday Afternoon Group (TAG) which met weekly for mutual support and friendship.[135] Molly remembered that Alison also organised picnics on public holidays for women and their children who would otherwise be on their own; TAG parties, too, were 'truly wonderful.'[136] Alison created a caring environment for herself and others, rather than abandon the enterprise. She

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[131] First International Women's Day march, 11 March 1972.
[132] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 9.
[133] Bloor House was situated in Bloor Court off Currie Street in Adelaide CBD. Besides telephone services there were books, pamphlets and other materials for disseminating ideas and a place for women to gather. The service later became the Women's Information Service.
[134] Molly Brannigan, interview, 6 July 2010. See also Molly's account of the group's beginning, *Liberation,* No 180 1991, p. 1. Appendix D.
[135] Ibid.
[136] See Photographs 6:6, 6:7, 6:8. A party featured on the front page of *Liberation,* No 180 1991, p. 1. Appendix D.

said, 'Although there are times when I've felt alienated and threatened, I've never yet lost my early glimpse of an all-comprehending sisterhood.'[137] Later meetings were held in various locations. By 2008 Alison and Molly were the remnant still meeting at the Women's Advisory Unit. In 2011 Molly went weekly to the Women's Information Service in Grenfell Street where she was welcomed as a TAG member.[138] TAG is cited on the Australian Women's Register website.

Telling Women's Stories

In order to recover women's heritage and to record the present, the telling of women's stories became an important principle of the feminist agenda. With the rise of the women's movement there was a growing awareness that in most areas of human achievement, in art and music, history and literature, science and sport, few women had gained attention, most had no opportunity to reach their potential and those who had excelled had been neglected or ignored. Lisa Tuttle noted that 'preserving and increasing women's knowledge is a feminist priority.'[139] She quoted Australian feminist writer, Dale Spender: 'Unless we keep reminding each other of our heritage we endanger it, we risk losing it as we contribute to our own amnesia.'[140] Awareness of the loss and the risk of loss is evident in the lament published in *Liberation*:

> Our history has been stolen from us.
> Our heroes died in childbirth, from peritonitis, overwork,
> oppression, from bottled-up rage.
> Our geniuses were never taught to read and write.
> We must invent a past adequate to our ambitions.
> We must create a future adequate to our needs.[141]

The lament proclaimed reasons for the loss of history and expressed the urgent need for the community to redress the situation. *Liberation* was a vehicle for women to write about their lives and personal experiences with a freedom that would not be possible in other publications of the time. With poetry and brief

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[137] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 62.
[138] www.slsa.sa.gov.au SA Memory, photograph and notice board. See Appendix D: 2, 3.
[139] Tuttle, ed. *Encyclopedia of Feminism*, p. 7.
[140] Dale Spender, *For the Record: The Making and Meaning of Feminist Knowledge*, (London: Women's Press, 1985). Quoted in Tuttle, ed. *Encyclopedia of Feminism*, p. 8.
[141] *Liberation*, No. 24 February/March 1974. Front cover, uncredited. Cited as an original scan on http://babylonfalling.tumblr.com. At this time the newsletter was published approximately every six weeks from Bloor House, p. 1.

biographical accounts, women's liberation in Adelaide became part of a worldwide trend in recovering women's stories, past and present.[142] The importance of women telling their stories, or the stories of other women, redeemed the trivialisation of women as eccentrics or mad, the suffragettes being an obvious example.[143]

Political Activism

Demonstrations and marches were an intrinsic to the WLM form of life; it was what the women did in order to be seen and to draw attention to the various matters against which or for which they were protesting. They were dissent against the established order modelled on the civil rights movement in the United States and taken by the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations both in the United States and in Australia. As preparations were being made for Adelaide's third International Women's Day, an older tradition of Women's Day, which began in Russia on 8 March 1908, was recalled and in so doing the movement gave context to its action, not only with current matters of social problems and injustice, but also with the past. Women's solidarity through time was realised and the evolution of a form of life for women came into being.[144]

Demonstrations were something respectable Adelaide people, and most especially women, did not participate in or condone. Participation in marches demanded all Alison's courage: she had been brought up in a sheltered, middle-class environment by aunts born in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, a continuity in evident in the diversity Alison was adding to her life experience as she struck out against convention. She had learnt to defend herself in the company of her god/step-father, Guy Makin, against whose argumentative nature and strong opinions she developed her own. So Alison's warrior spirit was in part learnt at 'Mount House.' Although she had already laid sturdy

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[142] Works recovering Adelaide women's history: Margaret Knauerhase, *Winifred: The Story of Winifred Kiek, the First Woman to be Ordained to the Christian Ministry in Australia 1884 -1975*, (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1978); Susan Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women: A Biography of Catherine Helen Spence*, (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983); Taylor and Stobie, eds, *Greater Than Their Knowing*; Barbara Wall, *Our Own Matilda: Matilda Jane Evans 1827-1886: Pioneer Woman and Novelist*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1994); Jones, *In Her Own Name*.
[143] Kinder, *Herstory*. 'The pain and triumphs of those who fought for women's suffrage had been trivialised, not only in their own time but by continuing generations of historians,' p. 6.
[144] *Liberation,* No 24 February/March 1974.

insulation over her 'sheltered and private' upbringing, her first steps of protest were taken fearfully. Notwithstanding, she did what was required in her newly found form of life, and demonstrated, by marching and carrying banners. She sang the songs that urged, 'Don't be too polite girls, Don't be too polite, Show a bit of fight.' She said, 'That was the basic song, we used to sing it at International Women's Day marches.'[145] Alison aligned herself with the 'not respectable' WLM and commented with a note of satisfied justification that she had 'heard only last month that more respectable women's groups are intending to join in…Reclaim the Night.'[146] These marches were very significant in Alison's experience of women's solidarity, contributing new language and new actions to her liberation armoury.[147] They helped to consolidate the new era of women's activity and have become history: International Women's Day continues in the twenty-first century to be celebrated with a march, a dinner often with an international speaker and other events. Alison claimed to have attended every march. By the time of her last march in 2009 she was no longer a threatening warrior but a revered veteran; she travelled by car, waving her banner and shouting a slogan through a megaphone. She was still exhilarated by the experience. In the 1970s she symbolised the past to her younger WLM colleagues, in 2009 she was a part of the history of the movement.

Alison discerned that the energy of the movement in its early years was what she wished for the church, that it could 'have a bit more of an outreach, a bit more of a mission too.'[148] Her political activism was consonant with Christian missionsuch as working at the women's shelter and Bloor House. She gave talks to the Mothers' Union[MU] about the women's movement, and talks to the women's movement about the church.[149] Alison found that the women's movement was less open to her information that the Anglican women and members of MU. Perhaps the latter were more polite and their WLM sisters less so. John Gent reacted to Alison's political activism only when she began

[145] AG *Int*, 17 August 2006. Alison knew Glen Tomasetti who wrote the song. It was sung at the thirty-fifth anniversary party of *Liberation,* the Women's Liberation Movement Newsletter, held on Saturday 8 July 2006 in North Adelaide. Glenys Ann Tomasetti (1929-2003) Australian Women's Register www.womenaustralia.info/biogs
[146] AG *TC*, 2008.
[147] See Photographs 6: 2-5.
[148] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 10.
[149] The Mothers' Union is a worldwide Anglican women's organisation. See Chapter 5.

protesting and demonstrating for women's ordination. He derided her in public addressing her as 'Pankhurst', thereby undermining her credibility by associating her with the suffragettes.

The WLM, having directed the public's attention to the salient issues with marches and demonstrations, turned their activism towards the legal, justice and parliamentary systems. Matters in which women were disfavoured or opinions biased against them could be challenged in courts and government. The definition of rape, for example, was contingent on evidence of struggle. There was a tendency to blame the victim, to deny that rape in marriage was possible, and to avoid discussing rape in war. As more open debate took place on domestic violence and the responsibility of the male, changes began to be made to the law on the definition of rape. The setting up of the first women's shelter, as women gained the strength to move out of abusive marriages, was initially seen as contentious and abetting the breakdown of the institution of marriage. Eventually the activism helped change the attitude of the police and the general public towards victims of domestic violence. Writers in *Liberation* rejected condemnation of unmarried mothers, and called for support of 'the single woman and her child' and women seeking abortions.[150] Alison argued that the father also had responsibility for any pregnancy.[151]

Changes for women in dangerous or abusive marriages were dramatic when the Federal Labor Government passed the Family Law Act in 1975. The Act redefined divorce not in terms of blame but of the irretrievable breakdown of a marriage. While the status of women had become a matter of concern to government and the states had set up agencies to plan and monitor policy, there was a need to educate women about their rights. The Women's Advisory Unit within the Premier's Department in South Australia produced a booklet explaining the new law (for those legally married) and how the Family Court dealt with divorce, custody of children, maintenance, marital disputes and injunctions.[152] Local contacts for legal service, crisis care, and counselling

[150] *Liberation,* No 21 September-October 1973, p. 19. The Council for the Single Mother and Her Child (S.A.) Inc, History and Present.
[151] See below.
[152] *Women and Family Law: How to Go it Alone*, (Adelaide: Women's Advisory Unit, Premier's Department, 1979).

services were also provided. An indication of the breadth of this societal change is that the booklet was also available at the Mothers' Union bookshop in Adelaide. The conservative Anglican women's organisation had been opposed to divorce, but after 1973 it revised its objects and aims in order to align itself with the new society.[153]

Many issues on the WLM's platform became part of the community welfare agenda as marriage breakdown and single motherhood left many women dependent on the welfare system. Publications such as *Women and Welfare: South Australia* gave women access to information which used a grammar of care and concern rather than condemnation.[154] Each topic in the booklet was introduced with 'Someone might say', so that the reader would recognise what was a typical response to her situation. A commonplace view of domestic violence was: 'Why waste your time? She'll just go back to her husband.' Such assertions were countered by five or six points explaining 'the reality' with which the woman could identify, and so she knew her situation was understood and her case argued. The publication gave a measured and clear-sighted approach justifying the aid given and opening a dialogue about the issues covered: domestic violence, rape, health, sole parents, accommodation, finance, aged women and isolation.

The centenary of women's suffrage in South Australia in 1994 was heralded with many publications about women's achievements. *Women of South Australia: a statistical snapshot* listed the reform activity in the areas agitated for by the WLM over the previous twenty years. Some highlights were:

> Unpaid maternity leave in the South Australian public service in 1978
> An industrial commission for the private sector in 1979
> Equal pay for equal work for teachers in South Australia in 1965
> and in the State public service in 1966, and federally in 1972
> The Council for the Single Mother and her child set up in 1973
> Female teachers no longer forced to resign when they married, 1972
> Abortion law liberalised in 1970 and medical benefits allowed in 1974
> The Hindmarsh Women's Community Health Centre, the first
> community-controlled women's health service established in 1975.[155]

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[153] See Chapter 5.
[154] Jan Connolly, *Women and Welfare: South Australia*, (Adelaide: Women's Advisory Unit, Premier's Department, 1980).
[155] Sophie Rose and Louise Harding, *Women of South Australia: A Statistical Snapshot*, (Adelaide: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994).

Alison was in the forefront of those advocating these innovations. Her own experience of abuse in marriage and her intensive concern for mothers and children informed her actions. She did not shy away from the grass roots discussion of the issue and joined the Rape Crisis Collective.[156] With first hand knowledge from her years of 'womanning' the counselling centre, Alison was in a position to comment on the condition of women in the home and on the streets, which she did by letter writing to local and church papers.[157] Her attempts to bring women's issues to the attention of the church's governing body, the diocesan synod, were not within its understanding or interest.[158] Alison was also keen to raise awareness in the influential but conservative Adelaide Mothers' Union.[159] Her enthusiasm was not welcome then, however in the twenty-first century the worldwide body is focussed on empowering women.[160]

Inclusive Language

The introduction of inclusive language was very significant in shaping the subjectivities of individuals in respect of women's role in society. The nascent women's movement used the grammar of Marxism, socialism and political dissent – the overthrow of the present cultural and political order that would be replaced with equality for all. The word 'collective' was symbolic of the revolutionary and radical nature of the movement. Other words such as 'equality', 'oppression' and 'justice' were adopted from the civil rights campaign and 'patriarchy', 'sexism', 'male chauvinism' and 'consciousness-raising' from

[156] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*, p. 62.
[157] See Chapters 7 and 8.
[158] Her amendment to a motion on the remarriage of divorcees for a more inclusive idea of marriage in respect of non-Christians was lost. See chapter 5. In 1977 Alison's motion to reject the primogeniture of the male in succession to the British monarchy was lost. *YB*, p. 154-155. Thirty-five years later the matter was passed by the British government and accepted without the disparagement and ridicule Alison received.
[159] Appendix B: 5 for an early example.
[160] *Families Worldwide: Mothers' Union Resources for Action and Prayer,* a prayer diary published half yearly with information about MU branches worldwide. The theme for 2012 was 'Empowering Women.'

the women's movement, both currently at their height in the United States.[161] All these words came under the umbrella of liberation. Liberation was a term taken up by many oppressed people, particularly blacks and women. Liberation theology came out of South America and appropriated by Christian feminists. The women's movement in Adelaide found itself aligning with, and relating to, other oppressed and marginalised groups such as gays and lesbians, Australian aborigines, prostitutes, and single mothers. The language, actions and practices of the women's movement demonstrate Wittgenstein's proposition that 'words do not carry their meaning in a transparent way … their meaning is supported by an entire background of actions and practices.'[162] This culture gave Alison the language with which to identify the oppression she was suffering in the church, her marriage and the workplace and the language and skills to argue for women's liberation in the church. Lindbeck commented that 'it is necessary to have the means for expressing an experience in order to have it, and the richer our expressive or linguistic system, the more subtle, varied, and differentiated can be our experience.'[163]

The grammar of liberation and revolution inhabited an arena of life very different from Alison's home and family, from the church and the English department of the university. New language developed: Alison adopted the grammar; she referred to 'womanning the phone' at the counselling centre and signed letters, 'yours in sisterhood.' A fundamental problem was the word 'man', considered by many to be exclusive of women. Alison, however, wanted its use to continue, arguing that it was a generic term and needed only the gender designations, for example, man (female) or man (male). Her idiosyncratic stand

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[161] See Berkeley, *The Women's Liberation Movement in America*; Gerster and Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*; Horne, *Time of Hope*.
[162] Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, p. 61.
[163] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 36. Six women who were in jail because they had murdered their male partners, when interviewed, reported horrendous abuse perpetrated on them by their partners. When asked, Why did you stay there?, Why did you put up with it?, one woman replied that she did not know that what was happening to her was domestic violence; she 'didn't know it had a name'. The author has been unable to source the title of the television documentary, made in Queensland and viewed in 1992. In this respect it is lost women's history. Another example is the experience of the daughters of British artist Eric Gill. He had incestuous relationships with them all their lives. Villagers reported they believed that the girls, even as grown women thought that was just what fathers did. None of these women had the language to name their experience. Some accepted the experience as normal. 'Looking for Mr Gill', BBC, one part of a 5 part series *Storyville*, 2007. Fiona McCarthy, *Eric Gill (*Faber & Faber, 1989*).*

against her peers both in the church and the women's movement was etymologically correct but impracticable.[164] On the other hand Alison was alert to the paradox of the women's movement having a vocabulary of collective support that it was trying to live by, and the church having a language of freedom and equality that in respect to women at least it did *not* live by. This latter was a situation Wittgenstein would describe as 'language gone on holidays.'[165] The debating and reflecting that faced Alison when she was challenged directly or indirectly by the women's movement honed the grammar she needed when discussing the ordination of women. In an interview for the BBC in 1984, Alison used the language of revolution learnt from the rituals and practices of the marches and the rhetoric of the women's movement: liberation, justice, coalition of oppression. The interviewer asked:

> The issue of women priests is often a divisive one. Is it right for women to press the issue in the knowledge that there will be many people who will find it difficult to accept their ministry?

Alison replied:

> Well, you could have said exactly the same thing about the liberation of slaves and I think that the fact that not everyone sees it at once is very much overplayed in the opposition to the ordination of women, for example, the ecumenical argument against the ordination of women seems to me a very poor one, because if it's a matter of justice, as I believe it is, that women should have access to holy orders, to join a coalition of oppression by saying, oh well, we can't have it in the Anglican Church because that would destroy our unity with the Roman Catholic Church or the Orthodox Church, that seems to me a very poor thing to do.

The interviewer concluded by asking Alison: 'And do you think that one day you'll be wearing the robes of an Anglican clergywoman?' She answered: 'I've no idea. [sigh] I've no idea what those robes are, [laughs] or whether I'd wear a collar. I think the main thing is *to fight for the cause.'*[166]

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[164] See Chapters 7 and 8. AG *TC*, 13 March 2007. 'I have spent my whole life with words.'
[165] Wittgenstein, *P.I.*, 38.
[166] Appendix E:4. Author's italics.

Women as People in Charge of Their Own Bodies

The role that women's gender difference played in women's inequality in the workplace, in health and education was the subject of feminist theories and debate.[167] Basic physiological factors with which women were identified (and restricted) – menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and childrearing – were disputed by asking: Were these intrinsically female functions and a necessary part of every woman's life? Bodily freedom was a platform of women's liberation whether it was the freedom to express one's sexuality (heterosexual or lesbian), cheap and available contraception or the right to abortion. There was a growing awareness of women's particular needs: in obstetrics and gynaecology (a medical specialisation that had become almost exclusively male); in psychiatry, where women's emotional capacity was generally considered inferior; and in the offensive, demeaning and traumatising policing of victims of rape, sexual assault and domestic violence. The debates around these issues were promoted by educational material highlighting the movement's demands. Demonstrations and banners introduced language and topics into the public sphere that confronted and shocked, but had a profound effect on the culture of the time, secular and sacred. Alison was a very public Christian holding up a metre-square placard that read:

RAPE, PROSTITUTION
AND PORNOGRAPHY
EMBODY
WOMEN'S OPRRESSION
BY VIOLENCE AND
ECONOMIC POWER

That women are people in charge of their own bodies was a principle which identified the women's movement as a form of life and the right to abortion was one of its platforms for political and social change. Alison's account of 'womanning' the counselling centre reveals her personal conflict:

[167] Helen Radoslovich, *A Piece of Cake: A Celebration and Herstory of Metropolitan Women's Health Centres in South Australia*, (Elizabeth, S.A.: Combined Women's Health Centre of South Australia, 1994).

> Then there was all the work of answering the phone for certain periods each week and writing up a journal about it, and interviewing people who came in. Some of those experiences were something pretty new to me. For one thing I had to face the abortion issue. So far I suppose I'd just inherited the church's attitude to it, and I had to question that because we had to counsel women who came in asking about that.

When asked how she had reconciled the two views, Alison replied:

> Well I'm afraid I didn't reconcile them. I saw the point of a woman having the right to choose. I remember feeling quite overwhelmed the first day I counselled somebody who decided, yes, she would have an abortion. I think I went back and said to my parish priest that I felt a bit like Herod – the slaughter of the innocents, you know. But I didn't really go back on that, though I did once organise a small demonstration supporting a woman who had been told by, I think psychiatric authorities, that they would refuse to treat her if she didn't have an abortion. So we supported her right to choose again, in the other direction.[168]

From the late 1970s debate on abortion raged in the Adelaide daily newspapers, *The Advertiser* and *The News.* Alison responded to letters by Roman Catholic Archbishop Gleeson and Anglican Bishop Renfrey, with this letter to the editor of *The Advertiser* on 1 January 1978:

> Dear Sir,
>
> It is, I think, a pity that Church leaders who make public statements on abortion do not recognise more clearly that it is a feminist issue. Christ, whose attitudes to women in the Gospels are strongly feminist, may well be far less ready to condemn modern women for having abortions than some Christians who are so very sure that in doing this they are acting in His name.
>
> At the least, Catholic archbishops and bishops, whether Roman or Anglican, need to use a little more logic. If they are prepared to praise one woman, the Blessed Virgin Mary, for a free, positive decision about what was to take place in her own body, they surely ought to accept the right of less highly favoured women to make decisions – even if negative – about what takes place in theirs. Also, total opposition to abortion must accept an inevitable tie with total pacificism, since the underlying moral principle is that no one may take up arms or cause them to be taken up, in defence of their own territory.
>
> What <u>is</u> abortion? Whatever else it is or is not, it is a drastic end to one set of possibilities in a given man-woman relationship. In the process of achieving such an ending, woman is, after the foetus, the greatest sufferer. Because of the physical immunity which men (male) by nature enjoy in such matters, let them keep somewhat more silent!

[168] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 10.

> It saddens me that church leaders so often take the 'soft option': why thunder to or at women against abortion rather than preach to their own sex against irresponsible sexual activity by men (male)? For example, rape?

Alison's views on the lack of male responsibility are further expressed in this placard:

NO FORCED MOTHERHOOD
WHERE'S FORCED
FATHERHOOD?
WHERE'S JUSTICE?

Her warrior courage is evident in her very public opposition to the Anglican (and also Roman Catholic) Church's teaching against abortion.[169]

In September 1978 Alison was involved in a protest against the visit of moral rights campaigner Mary Whitehouse from the United Kingdom. Whitehouse came at the invitation of the conservative religious organisation, the Festival of Light. Alison, with two other women, displayed placards: on the left, 'Take care your light is not darkness', in the centre, Alison, 'True love of God and man – Christian or other – does not demand repression of Christians or others' and on the right, 'Even Colonel Light was partly dark.'[170]Leaflets were distributed which read:

> Those who organise and support this demonstration as Christians wish to make it clear that while they respect Mary Whitehouse individually as an able woman in public life and accept her statement that she is a Christian, they wish to resist any suggestion that the attitudes of such organisations as the Festival of light, the Right to Life, or Moral Rearmament represent THE Christian viewpoint.[171]

The letter and protest material illustrate Alison's command of the theological, personal and feminist issues. She made use of, and alluded to, the language of revolution, such as 'justice', 'repression', 'feminist issue', and the Christian religion, 'love of God', 'light', 'darkness', 'highly favoured', while engaging in feminist political ritual.[172] Alison demonstrated Lindbeck's proposition that a

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[169] Specifically here the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.
[170] Alison's directions and details for the protest. The pun refers to the Eurasian origins and the name of the surveyor and planner of South Australia's capital city, Adelaide, Colonel William Light.
[171] 'Women: the Church's Hidden Talent', leaflet. Appendix E: 8.
[172] 'Highly favoured' is an allusion to the Archangel's address to Mary. Luke 1:28. AV.

religion's 'doctrines, cosmic stories or myths, and ethical directives are integrally related to the rituals it practices, the sentiments and experiences it evokes, the actions it recommends and the institutional forms it develops.'[173]

Respectable or not, the language and sentiment of liberation continued to be used. Mavis Rose, a history academic and member of the Movement for the Ordination of Women [MOW] in Queensland, dedicated *Freedom from Sanctified Sexism: Women Transforming the Church*, to 'supporters of the freedom struggle.'[174] Writing twenty-seven years after the beginning of the women's movement in Adelaide, Rose reflected Alison's theological and feminist beliefs:

> Patriarchy and colonialism are both insidious, complex power structures, usually rationalised in terms which suggest that their motives are Godly, self-sacrificial and beneficial. Anglican women in Australia are still grappling with the debilitating effects of an enduring ecclesiastical mythology which assumes that women are weaker, of lower intelligence, emotionally unstable and biologically impure, requiring the overlordship of superior, more competent, stronger human beings – Anglican males. Such indoctrination represents a form of androcentric 'social Darwinism': it is not Christlike.[175]

Rose wrote in Alison's book, 'with deep appreciation for your pioneer work in the Australian Anglican women's movement and your continuing spiritual fire.'[176]

Alison's incarnational concern for disadvantaged women and children had practical outcomes. In March 1982 the Southern Areas Mothering Unit, based at 72 Cheltenham Street Malvern, was set up to provide temporary housing and childcare assistance for young, unmarried mothers. Alison was invited to join the management committee. The minutes record Alison's attendance at every meeting from 1984, when she became chairperson, until she resigned in 1988 to take on full-time theological study.[177] This regular

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[173] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 34.
[174] Mavis Rose, *Freedom from Sanctified Sexism: Women Transforming the Church*, (MacGregor, Qld: Allira, 1996). Mavis Rose, b.1927, did a PhD on women in the Australian Anglican Church. She was a coordinator of Brisbane MOW and attended many MOW functions interstate as well as sitting in the gallery at synods, both local and national. For several years she was a member of the General Synod History Seminar Group, wrote papers on Anglican women, and the history of Brisbane MOW and gender balanced belief, although she has not published lately. She met Alison Gent at her first national committee meeting held in Adelaide [1986] and liked her very much. Mavis Rose, email, 22 May 2013.
[175] Ibid, p. 227.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Southern Areas Mothering Unit, minutes. See also chapter 1.

attendance is significant in assessing her interest, concern and capabilities. The position required her to liaise with government bodies, interview candidates for the centre's co-ordinator's position, and re-write the unit's constitution. It also required her to oversee the refurbishment of a new centre and accommodation for the reopening of the centre by the then Premier, John Bannon, with the Minister for Community Welfare attending in October 1985.[178] Alison hosted the occasion and read a short history of the Unit she had written. The unit advertised that it 'provides accommodation and support services for young single mothers and their children. Practical help and information is available to assist you to become a more confident and independent parent.'[179]

After Alison died in November 2009 I was able to access some of her papers. There I found the minutes of the Southern Areas Mothering Unit neatly filed in journal boxes; they told much about her role in the organization. She was passionate about this project: of all her committees minutes, these were the only ones to be in order. The cause moved her Christian and feminist heart: she achieved much in the area of organisation and responsibility. In many aspects of daily living and in public and professional work, Alison was disorganised. She was notoriously late, ill-prepared for, and unfocussed at, meetings. These characteristics were the butt of derision and criticism. In this field of endeavour, however, she did regain some of the focus and concentration which was the hallmark of her early academic career.[180]

Conclusion

When understood in Wittgensteinian terms, the forms of life and language games which Alison inhabited and applied help to make sense of what might otherwise seem a contradictory and chaotic life. She was church out there on the edge at the women's shelter and holding up a placard in a march, she was women's liberation at MU meetings and at the altar rail. Alison held in tension arenas of interest, passion, conflict, intellectual pursuit, and religious devotion.

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[178] Ibid.
[179] Southern Areas Mothering Unit, leaflets.
[180] 'Studying theology'. Alison spoke of her 'very shaky confidence', her 'academic concentration' being destroyed by marriage and child bearing and her lack of confidence in being among those more assured of being accepted for ordination.

She was not always successful and often imperfect. The fragility of her human nature, the vagaries of eccentricity and the burden of conflict meant she was often angry and unreasonable.[181] She did manage, however, to unify, that is hold together in her person and life, a number of forms of life. The protest for the ordination of women will be demonstrated as a form of life in the next two chapters. The movement is one example (and the most important) of Alison's integration of her feminist activism with her Christian faith and church activities. Her model of integration and tolerance of difference is in contradistinction to the intolerance and separatism of fundamentalism.

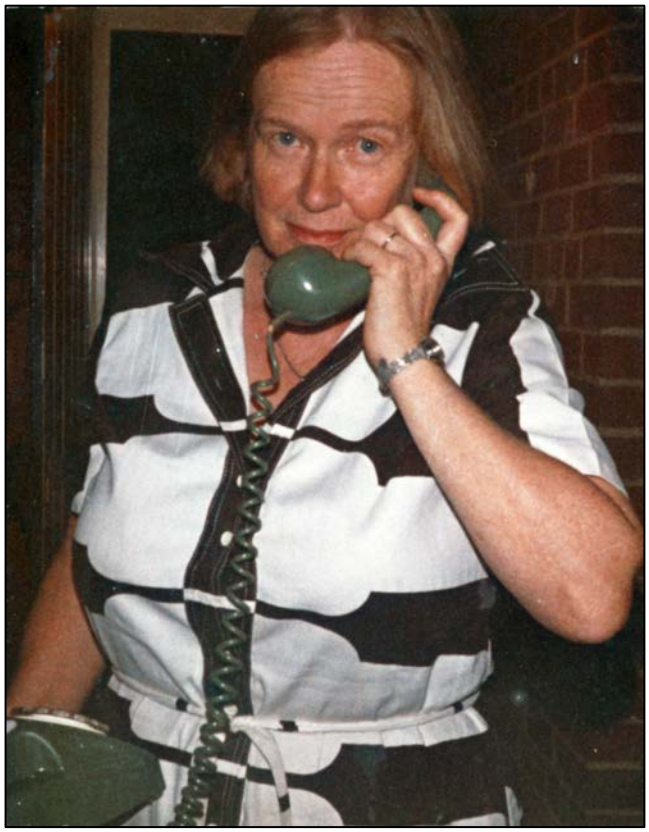
Religiously speaking, her motive and her goal was unity with her fellow creatures and with God. Alison claimed she had, like the Anglican Church, 'internal ecumenism'.[182] Her reference point here was the poet John Donne. As she wrote:

> The new and distinctive tone in Donne's poetry … is the product of a fresh blend of elements and from these elements the old … is never absent.[183]
>
> He did not write in isolation, outside the living tradition. Rather he combined several distinct parts of that tradition in his poetry, and his claim to originality and merit as a poet must be based on the successful fusing of these, rather than on the rather improbable achievement (which many modern critics seem to impute to him) of producing, ready clothed in words, from the depths of his individual temperament, unprecedented accounts of experiences unknown to other men.[184]

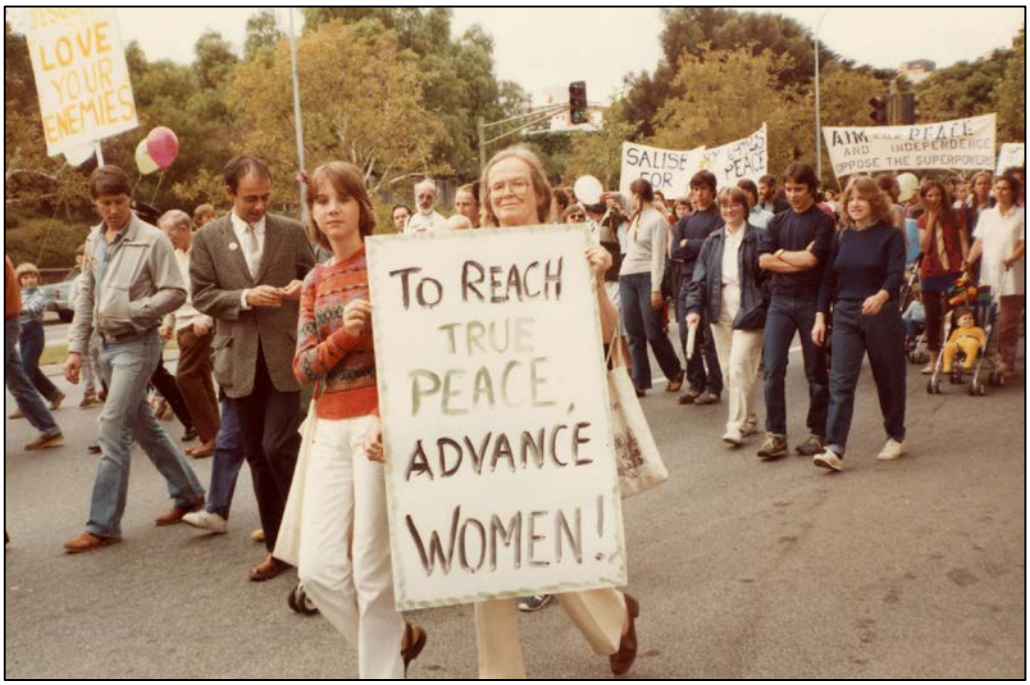
Alison believed this 'internal ecumenism' to be possible although living it out took all her warrior woman courage.

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[181] After I read an earlier version of this chapter at a post-graduate seminar, Lavinia said, in her mother's voice, 'What, me unreasonable, never!' Alison referred to her outbursts of temper as explosions. Author's recollections.
[182] The phrase *via media* was used to describe Anglicanism's way of balancing conflicting views of faith and order. See Sykes and Booty, eds, *The Study of Anglicanism*.
[183] AG *LMP* 2, p. 2.
[184] Ibid, p. 8.



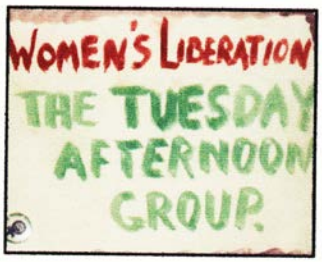
6:1 Alison begins a new life –
businesslike on the telephone



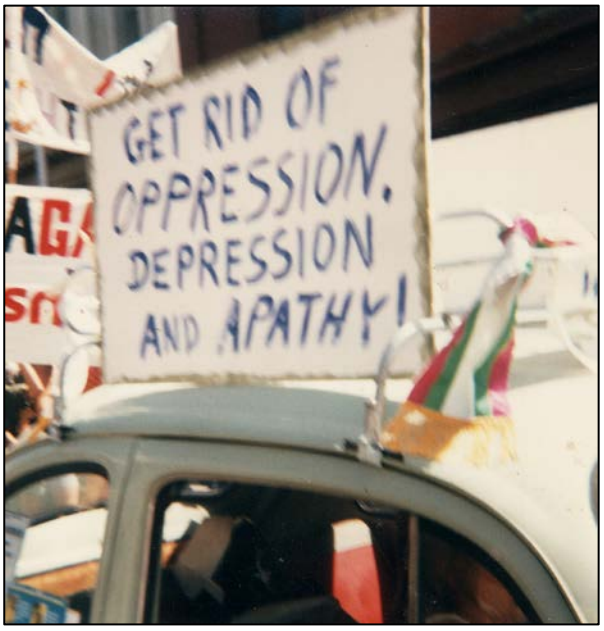
6: 2 Alison at a peace march



6:3 Alison driving the Volkswagen, Gretel, in a demonstration



6: 4 A version of the (almost illegible) banner on top of the VW



6: 5 The Volkswagen carries another banner on top



6:6 A Tuesday Afternoon Group party, 1980s



6: 7 Alison and a banner



6:8 A TAG party L to R. Alison, Bess Morton, Joan McIvor, Connie Pearce, Joan Whitlock, Molly Brannigan supine on the grass, Barbara Polkinghorne, Dimpsy Slater, Eulalie Tapp (obscured) and Kate Clark. Alison wrote, 'The site is memorable to me as being just behind where Deb Cook (McCulloch) stood the edge of East Terrace directing, at or near its end, my first International Women's Day March.'



6:9 Alison makes a proclamation about the priesting of women
in the Diocese of Perth.
'10 women ordained today.' The gathering
after the International Women's Day March, 7 March 1992

7 ALISON AND THE PROTEST FOR WOMEN'S ORDINATION PART 1

'Loosen your ties,
Anglicans'
bids a sage woman journalist.
I say, 'Anglicans, don't:
gird up your loins instead.
Be the inclusive church
your tradition dictates.'[1]

Seeking freedom and justice for women is the newest growing point of Christ's gospel in the world.[2]

Do we accept or not that women are made, no less than men, in the image of God, and are no less capable of bearing the likeness of Christ? Our answer to this question does matter, for it will govern our 'Christian' behaviour towards no less than half the human race, indeed, to all of it, including ourselves[3]

Introduction

Alison Gent was influential in the protest movement for the ordination of women in the Anglican Church in Adelaide both as a churchwoman *and* a radical feminist. She was radicalised and empowered by her involvement in the women's movement. Her advocacy for women's ordination led her inexorably into conflict with the church.

[1] AG, written at Tuesday Afternoon Group, 7 January 2003.
[2] AG to *ACG*, December 1989.
[3] Ibid.

7 ALISON AND THE PROTEST FOR WOMEN'S ORDINATION PART 1

The Anglican Church in Adelaide was presented and described as a 'form of life' in Chapter 4. The protest movement for the ordination of women in the Anglican Church in Adelaide will be introduced as a sub-group of that cultural-linguistic community. As such, it shared much of the heritage of that community. The movement that wanted women's full participation in the church used the grammar and actions of the social and political protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s, in particular of the women's movement described in Chapter 6. The language and actions of second-wave feminism and the civil rights and anti-war movements provided a social and cultural context for the protest movement. Feminist study of theology, scripture and ecclesiology, and Christian feminist movements, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom, also furnished impetus.

The formal debates on women's ordination pertinent to the present study began with the Lambeth Conference in 1968, and in the Australian Church, with the General Synods of 1969 and 1973. The subject was considered and discussed and in Australia referred to the Doctrine Commission which reported at the 1977 General Synod. These debates and discussions are integral to this narrative and will be documented in more detail in respect of the development of the protest movement in Adelaide.[4] The politico-legal structure of the Anglican Church of Australia protected it from capricious change. In order to effect change, political and legal expertise (a knowledge of the grammar and language of the church and its tactics and politics) were required. These skills became an important part of the protest form of life. The particularities of Anglicanism in Adelaide contributed to the movement's distinctive form there. While the church in Adelaide reflected the patriarchy of the church generally, conservatism in church and society resisted many of the changes brought about by the societal and religious upheavals of the 1960s.[5] Most Anglicans, both lay and ordained, looked to the traditionalist Church of England as a model rather than the progressive Episcopal Church of

[4] David Hilliard, "The Organised Opposition: 'How Can a Woman ... ?'," in *Preachers, Prophets and Heretics: Anglican Women's Ministry*, ed. Elaine Lindsay and Janet Scarfe, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2012); Rose, *Freedom from Sanctified Sexism*.
[5] McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*.

the United States (ECUSA). Along with Canada and New Zealand, ECUSA had ordained women by the end of the 1970s.

Anglicanism in Adelaide had a dominant tradition that was moderate Anglo-Catholic in the 1950s and 1960s. There was, however, by the 1970s, a growing opposition to women's ordination from the more extreme wings of the church in Adelaide, both Anglo-Catholic and evangelical. By the 1980s it was organised and vocal. Media interest was high and there was a high degree of vitriol and antagonism towards the different interpretations of the traditional language and practices that were emerging from within what had been considered a unified community.

As we shall see, the movement in Adelaide had its genesis in the early 1970s. By 1980 it was identifiable as a form of life and was evolving its own 'language games', 'grammar' and actions. Differences, tensions and conflicts emerged between the broader protest communities and, at times, within the Adelaide sub-group itself. The movement's evolution can be divided into four historical sections. For the purpose of the thesis, the first two sections will be examined in this chapter (Part 1); the latter two sections in Chapter 8 (Part 2).

The first section of this chapter will describe the patriarchal nature of the Anglican Church against which the protest movement set itself, by examining the exclusion and sexism exhibited in the cultural-linguistic community, women's limited role in ministry and the system of selection of men for ordained ministry. The second section will chronicle the first wave of the protest movement, the language adopted and the actions taken to establish it as a form of life. The following chapter, in the third section, will detail the changes and conflicts by contrasting the language and actions of the movement's principal players. The fourth section will record the reaction of the protest movement to the acceptance of women to selection, and then ordination, as deacons, then priests and finally, bishops.

The Patriarchal Church and the Absence of Women

The Anglican Church, reformed in the sixteenth century, retained the apostolic ministry of the threefold order of bishop, priest and deacon, but women's participation was given no consideration when the formularies for the

practice of ministry were devised.[6] In the centuries after the Reformation, the conflicts over authority, order, discipline, inspiration and revelation in relation to leadership would fragment the church. As the male leadership in 'non-conformist' churches in Great Britain, its colonies and the mission field accepted as valid individual experience and interpretation, so women's spiritual gifts of preaching, prophecy or spiritual direction were at times given credence.[7] Often women's ministry was endorsed when a new movement began. The Methodists, for example, had women preachers (but not ministers). 'In 1739 [John] Wesley began to appoint women as leaders of "classes" in Bristol.' By 1787 he wrote that he 'had no objection to [Sarah Mallet] being a preacher in our connexion, so long as she preaches the Methodist doctrines and attends to our discipline.'[8] The Holiness Movement, in which 'spiritual heroine' Phoebe Palmer preached sanctification, grew out of early Methodism in Britain and the United States.[9] When Congregationalism began at the Reformation, believing that all members are 'priests unto Christ', both men and women preached and administered the sacraments.[10] In churches and movements such as these, the work of the Spirit was seen as a more powerful decider of God's will and the person's call to ministry than traditional order and the norms of the past. They were, however, subject to the pressures of culture (gender relationships and organisational structures) and of biblical interpretations. Each group inevitably evolved its own traditions. These dilemmas mirrored those of the traditional churches.

In Adelaide the Anglican Church as a patriarchal form of life had its basis in a theology focussed on God as father, on the maleness of Christ's humanity, the interpretation of various passages of scripture concerning the inferiority of women and an ecclesiology that vested power and authority in the ordained clergy. Theology, biblical interpretation and ecclesiology were interrelated and, meshed together, formed a web of influence affecting anyone with a connection

[6] Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 3.
[7] Nancy Hardesty, Lucille Sider Dayton, and Donald W. Dayton, "Women in the Holiness Movement: Feminism in the Evangelical Tradition," in *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 228-9.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid, p. 232-233. A similar revival occurred in the 1970s in Australia with the Pentecostal Movement.
[10] Cross and Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Revised)*. It was not until 1917 that the first woman minister was ordained in England.

to the church. These basic premises promoted and upheld patriarchy in the every day actions and structures of the life of the community of faith. The church's patriarchy, defined by its language games and actions, answered Wittgenstein's question: 'What is supposed to shew what they [words of this language] signify, if not the kind of use they have?'[11]

The beauty of the language of the Book of Common Prayer [BCP] formed the sensibilities of generations of Anglicans from its inception in the sixteenth century.[12] The quality of the cadences and the reminders of Christian virtues of righteousness, humility and repentance could not nullify the gender specific naming of the Godhead and consistent references to power and domination. This use came to be understood as exclusive and aggressive; the terms seem to 'shew what they signify' in the identification of the all-male clergy with the majesty and power attributed to God and Jesus Christ. In the sixteenth century terms such as 'man', 'brethren' and 'sons' had a generic meaning. However the English language became more prescriptive over the centuries. Gender differentiation was legislated in Victorian times. Phrases such as 'dearly beloved brethren' which begins the exhortation at Morning and Evening Prayer, and 'Make us sons of God and heirs of eternal life' from the collect for the sixth Sunday after Epiphany, suggest God's exclusive favour of the male gender. Constant use of these terms in daily prayers reinforced the entrenched dominance of men as the ruling gender in the church.

The naming of God as Father was consistently used in the Prayer Book. Wittgenstein is clear about the significance of naming: 'naming is something like attaching a label to a thing.'[13] The qualities of the 'label' can be seen in the mode of address to God the Father. His power and glory is reiterated: 'O Lord, our heavenly Father, Almighty and everlasting God'[14], and 'King of glory'[15], and most emphatically (and ironically) in A Prayer for the Queen's Majesty: 'O Lord, our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of

[11] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 10.
[12] Discussed in Chapter 4. McLean, "The Book of Common Prayer".
[13] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 26.
[14] *BCP*, Collect for Grace in Morning Prayer.
[15] *BCP*, Collect for the Sunday after the Ascension.

princes.'[16] The first person of the Godhead is named Father in the Trinitarian doxology repeated after every psalm and canticle in the daily office:

> Glory be to the Father, and to the Son; and to the Holy Ghost;
> As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end.
> Amen.[17]

A clergyman saying the Prayer Book offices twice daily would recite these phrases a minimum of eight times a day. The doxology emphasised the relationship between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but only in male gender specific terms. While the mercy and loving care of the Godhead is frequently mentioned, the attributes suggestive of male domination are foremost.

The naming of clergy can be associated with the 'label' of male domination. 'Strong' Anglo-Catholic clergy used the title, 'Father', in preference to the more common, 'Mr' or 'Rector.' 'Father' came into wider use from the late 1960s; some younger clergy liked using the title but older clergy rejected it. Bishop Reed, for example, only used the title 'Father' for members of religious orders, and always referred to clergy as 'Mr.' **[18]** The clergyman's right to, and exercise of, authority was rarely questioned.[19] He was addressed by title and surname by even the most influential layman. The connection to God the Father's unassailable authority and power was seductive and potentially damaging to the perceptions of clergymen.

The identification of the clergy with exclusivity and domination 'shewed' in their actions and culture. The 'labels' with which they named each other ensured, not just a sense of comradeship, but a connection with the filial relationship of the Trinity. Priests addressed each other informally as 'brother' or 'Father'; ecclesiastical titles such as archdeacon were used in the most casual conversations.[20] Bishop Reed addressed his *Ad clerum* to 'my dear brothers' and

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[16] Ibid. Said twice daily at Morning and Evening Prayer.
[17] The doxology was also used at the end of every hymn in Sunday worship so that it was repeated at least eight times during a Sunday service.
[18] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*, p. 118. David Hilliard, email, 29 April 2013.
[19] Kevin Giles noted in his study of subordination of the Son in modern evangelical theology that the argument is made that the Trinity 'should be understood as a hierarchy in which the Father rules over the Son and the Spirit, and on the basis of this belief the case is made that men should rule over women.' Kevin Giles, *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), p. 13.
[20] A gift from one priest to another was inscribed to 'Brother, priest, friend.'

he in turn always expected to be addressed 'My Lord.'[21] Distinctive clothing confirmed identity and status.[22] The authority of the clergy was carried into the meeting room and in general social or parish interaction where they were 'labelled' by parishioners with formal titles such as Rector, Mr Smith, or Fr Brown.[23] These language games reinforced the male-only preserve of the clergy at gatherings such as synod, clergy retreat or deanery. The strong reaction to satire in the Movement for the Ordination of Women [MOW] publications demonstrates the strength of feeling attached to titles, to being 'labelled.'[24] The following limerick was referred to as 'offensive.'[25]

> There once was a bishop whose brief
> was to say to his flock through clenched teeth,
> 'I really would rather be called "Bishop" or "Father",
> so for heaven's sake, don't call me "Keith".'[26]

The 'style and level' of the publications that proposed women's ordination were labelled 'dyslogistic.'[27]

Churches were traditionally named for saints whose lives, depicted in stained glass and celebrated at patronal festivals, were intended to teach Christian values to the faithful. From the 1880s many Adelaide churches were dedicated to Anglo-Saxon and Celtic saints.

> During the 1880s fifteen churches were opened in or near Adelaide… It was [Bishop] Kennion's idea that these suburban missions should be given the names of Anglo-Saxon or Celtic saints, to illustrate the early English origins of the Church of England: for example, St Aidan's, Payneham (1884); St Cuthbert's, Prospect (1884); St Oswald's,

[21] When Archbishop Rayner came to Adelaide in 1975 he did not encourage 'My Lord.' David Hilliard, email, 29 April 2013.
[22] A photograph of Bishop Reed and the Primate after the former's consecration captured the style and formality that surrounded the office of bishop. Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*, p. 129.
[23] These labels were still used in 1998. The caption under a photograph of a church service gave the priest a title, Father, while referring to others only by name. Respect for the priest's authority was evidenced by the language games of the form of life. Harris, *A History of the Anglican Parish Church of St. Clement*, p. 80.
[24] Michael Gilchrist, *The Destabilisation of the Anglican Church: Women Priests and the Feminist Campaign to Replace Christianity*, (Melbourne: AD2000 Publications, 1991), p. 92-3. Gilchrist was a Roman Catholic ally of the cause against women's ordination.
[25] Ibid, p. 97.
[26] Ibid, p. 92.
[27] Ibid.

Parkside (1885); St Ninian's, Islington (1885); St David's, Burnside (1887).[28]

The naming of male saints attached a 'label' centred on a male model of service and leadership which encouraged gender identification and misconstrued a heritage that included the feminine.[29] A comparison with the Church of England where the Blessed Virgin Mary was the most popular subject of dedication confirms the excessively patriarchal nature of the church in Adelaide.[30] While there were churches dedicated to women saints, and to Mary in particular, in South Australian country towns, in Adelaide the perception is that Christianity is founded on the faith and service of men.[31] St Mary's, South Road, in the suburb of St Marys, is the only prominent church in Adelaide dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM).[32] St Mary Magdalene's, noted for its high-church practices and inner-city mission, will be described more fully below.

Anglican liturgies 'shewed' what the language games signified. In Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach the 'external features of a religion', the sights, sounds and actions that comprised the liturgies, shaped and moulded the subjectivities of generations of Anglicans in Adelaide.[33] The men, robed and vested, together with the liturgical actions which only they performed, had a visual and aural impact confirming their mediation of the divine. The external experience of gender exclusivity signified the extension of God's ruling might to the clergy and shaped the inner experience of all present. In general terms

[28] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*, p. 55. Chad, Wilfrid, and Columba were other Celtic dedications in Adelaide.
[29] The patriarchal label was emphasised by the omission of Celtic women saints from the prominent churches in Adelaide. Churches dedicated to the distinguished Hilda (Eudunda, Cowell) and Etheldreda (Mypolonga) were established in country towns. The landscape of the British Isles is scattered with churches dedicated to the Anglo-Saxon Abbesses of the seventh and eighth centuries, to St Bride and many other women saints.
[30] Francis Bond, *Dedications and Patron Saints of English Churches: Ecclesiastical Symbolism, Saints and Their Emblems*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 29. St Mary leads the list of dedication to biblical saints, 2,335. Cf. St Peter 1,140.
[31] The most prominent is St Mary's Burra. Dedications include the Nativity of BVM at Edithburgh and Echunga, the Conception of the BVM, Moorook and the Visitation, Beulah Park and Penola. Alan Cadwallader observed that 'dedication of churches to saints is dependent on those who have the authority and the means to promote that dedication… it is highly unlikely that women as a group generally influenced a church's dedication, even if they wanted to.' Alan Cadwallader, "Australian Anglican Church Dedications and the Calendar of Saints," *Australian Journal of Liturgy* 5, no. 1 (1995).
[32] Middle-of-the-road Anglicans shunned Marian devotion as too Roman Catholic.
[33] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 34.

Anglican clergy, evangelical or low-church, high-church or Anglo-Catholic, drew on their theological understanding to give import to their language and actions. The evangelical clergyman assumed his authority from the maleness of God as Father and, taking scripture as the predominant revelation, delivered this authority in preaching. The Anglo-Catholic clergyman assumed his authority from the maleness of Jesus Christ which was centred in the priest's role in the Eucharist where he stood in the place of Christ, *in loco Christi*. Both these roles, the preacher and the sacrificial priest, shewed the clergyman as set apart, as bearer of the divine word and the divine action, signifying that the word and the action was to be embodied only in a human male.[34]

'Anglicanism gives forceful expression to the ancient adage, *Lex orandi legem statuat credendi,* the law of prayer establishes the law of faith.'[35] The description concurs with Lindbeck's argument, following Wittgenstein, that it is from communal experience that inner experiences are derived.[36] In worship the patriarchy sanctioned by God and his priests, was also extended to laymen licensed as lay readers to lead non-sacramental worship, such as Morning and Evening Prayer, in the absence of a priest. Lay readers, servers and the all-male choir robed in cassock and surplice in the sanctuary and choir, the places in the church building symbolically nearest to God, were shown, visually and aurally, to be a male preserve.[37] In most of those Adelaide churches which had adopted Anglo-Catholic practices women were not allowed in the sanctuary during services.[38] One parish priest allowed his toddler son to follow him, on the sanctuary side of the altar rails, as he administered the sacrament to his wife kneeling at the other side of the altar rail, with the toddler's twin sister forbidden to enter the sacred space.[39] The separation by gender signified

[34] These factions fought against the ordination of women expressly because, they claimed, the roles of preacher and celebrant were biblically and traditionally performed only by men.
[35] Louis Weil, "The Gospel in Anglicanism," in *The Study of Anglicanism*, ed. Stephen Sykes and John Booty, (London: SPCK, 1988), p. 55. See also Chapter 4.
[36] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine,* p. 33.
[37] The Anglican choral tradition of men and boys only was typical of cathedrals and larger churches. The effect added to the predominance of the male voice in the sung liturgy.
[38] Typical Anglican church architecture from Archbishop Laud in the early seventeenth century divided the raised sanctuary from the nave with altar rails and steps. The structure separated and elevated the sacred space.
[39] Author's personal observation. The sanctuary was revered as a holy space even in middle of the road Anglicanism. Exceptions were made for women to prepare flowers, attend to altar linen and vessels, the brass candle sticks, and to clean the general area.

dualism and the corruption of a creation theology of equality. Serving at the altar was also restricted to men and boys. In the late 1970s a priest, asking for servers for an early morning service, refused an offer from a teenage girl. He trivialised, and sexualised, his refusal with the excuse that boy and girl servers together might make little 'serviettes.'[40] The grammar of exclusivity and power indicates the demeaning character of appropriated power, far removed from the Christian commitment to shew the power of love and compassion.

Until the 1970s there was not a forum in which the role of the women in the church was debated; the issue was variously avoided, ignored, argued away or ridiculed. The anonymous *Adelaide Church Guardian* [ACG] columnist, 'Custos', expressed some local pride in Adelaide being the first diocese to have a woman delegate to General Synod in 1962 and commented in a slightly patronising tone that 'Miss I. J. Jeffreys proved a valuable member.'[41] He observed that 'there seems to be no weakening in the staunchness with which the Anglican Church holds the belief that women may not be considered as candidates for the Sacred Ministry.[42] He reinforced his patriarchal grammar by quoting the Archbishop of Canterbury:

> I do not believe in priestesses. I see the priest as a father, representing in human terms something of the fatherhood of God. We worship a God, not a goddess, and although our Lord showed a great respect for womanhood – witness His care for His mother and for Mary Magdalene – He chose men to be His Apostles.[43]

These beliefs rendered the idea of ordained women so impossible in their worldview that a skewed anthropology resulted:

> Dr Johnson once made a characteristic declaration on the subject when asked what he thought of women as preachers. 'Sir,' he said, 'Sir, a woman preaching is like a dog walking on its hind legs. It is not well done, and you are surprised to see it done at all.'[44]

The rules of grammar that set the male on the pedestal of divine authority can be seen to spawn attitudes and language unworthy of the divine calling.

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[40] Author's personal observation.
[41] *ACG*, October 1965, p. 8. 'Custos' was believed to be Father Gerald Reglar. He was a noted Anglo-Catholic, a member of General Synod, a scholar and close friend of the Gents. Reglar was an ardent opponent of the ordination of women.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid, *Custos* quoted from the Church of England newspaper, *Church Times.*
[44] Ibid.

7 ALISON AND THE PROTEST FOR WOMEN'S ORDINATION PART 1

In the 1960s membership of the Mothers' Union [MU] in Adelaide peaked at around 3500.[45] Its energy and prayerfulness produced mixed reactions from the clergy, one of which was the desire to control it. The bishop's wife was customarily local president, but:

> while Audrey Reed was president, her husband [Bishop T. T. Reed] ensured he gained a direct role in the life of the Mothers' Union in the diocese. In 1960 he appeared at the annual meeting of the council in his role as patron and, on his wife's motion, took the chair. He did this at each subsequent annual meeting until his retirement.[46]

Derision towards, and dismissal of, the MU was commonplace among parish priests in Adelaide, many of whom gave members little encouragement.[47] All aspects of women's work in parish life, from sewing altar linen, to being better wives and mothers, to prayer and bible study, were under the authority of the parish priest.

In 1894 South Australia was the first Australian state to grant women universal suffrage. At the same time South Australian women were the first in the world to be granted the right to stand for parliament. In 1897 South Australian Catherine Helen Spence, a Unitarian and leading suffragette, tested the boundaries of the nation's parliamentary system by becoming Australia's first woman political candidate.[48] But in South Australia in the mid-twentieth century the position of women in the church was held to be, at its best, domestic and supportive of the male enterprise.[49]

Churchwomen with increased awareness of inclusive language, and younger women growing up in a less patriarchal society, became conscious that

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[45] Dickey, *Not just Tea and Biscuits*, p. 72.
[46] Ibid, p. 50.
[47] Author's observation. As the church in the mid-twentieth century took on more secular, business-oriented values, Ladies' Guilds, which usefully served as fund-raising organisations, were better regarded. In some parishes, e.g. St Columba's, Hawthorn, MU's presence was valued and members continue to contribute to parish life in the twenty-first century.
[48] Spence stood for election at a Federal Convention held in Adelaide in 1897 before federation in 1901. Jones, *In Her Own Name*. Chapters 4, 5 and 6.
[49] For women's place in the Anglican Church in Australia before 1992 see: Margaret Ann Franklin, ed. *The Force of the Feminine* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986); Kevin Giles, *Women and Their Ministry: A Case for Equal Ministries in the Church Today*, (Melbourne: Dove, 1977); Mark Hutchinson and Edmund Campion, eds., *Long Patient Struggle: Studies in the Role of Women in Australian Christianity,* (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994); Janet Nelson and Linda Walter, *Women of Spirit: Woman's Place in Church and Society*, (Canberra: St Mark's, 1989); O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers*.

this patriarchal world rendered them strangers.[50] The reaction of the Adelaide clergy to the critique of the exclusive use of male metaphor and images for the Person of the Godhead signified the clergymen's deep and abiding sense of identification with God as male and powerful. The language used to justify and teach patriarchy could not withstand the evaluation.[51] Within this patriarchal form of life there were clergymen noted for their piety, sacrificial living and the eschewing of power and position.[52] There were also traditions and biblical passages that, under a feminist exegesis, testified to Wittgenstein's assertion that 'an ostensive definition can be variously interpreted in *every* case.'[53] The rise of the protest movement for the ordination of women demonstrated that the church's traditions and foundational texts could be variously interpreted.

Women in Ministry in the Mid-Twentieth Century

Women wanting to live a fuller life in the church were generally limited to celibate careers in teaching (in a church school preferably), nursing or missionary service, or life in a religious community.[54] There were two communities in Adelaide in the 1970s. The Community of the Sisters of the Church [CSC] came to Adelaide at the invitation of Bishop Kennion in 1892 and founded St Peter's Collegiate Girls' School in North Adelaide.[55] The sisters' other works of charity and education had ceased by the 1920s, but 'their Tractarian

[50] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 32. 'Someone coming into a strange country … will often have to *guess* the meaning of these definitions.' A resource for women and worship, published by the World Council of Churches, took its title *No Longer Strangers* from Ephesians 2:19. 'So when you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God…'

[51] The arguments against inclusive language, feminist theology and the ordination of women will be explored below.

[52] Father Malcolm Lindsay was noted for his piety and for his devotion to parish ministry. He was appalled when approached about being nominated for a bishopric. 'He never thought of himself as having that sort of power.' In later life, to demonstrate his belief that all were Christians, he gave up referring to his fellow clergy by title, using their Christian names instead. Pam Lindsay, interview, 25 February 2012.

[53] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 28.

[54] Anglican religious communities were revived in the nineteenth century by the Oxford Movement and were an option for high-church women. Yvonne Lesley McLean, "Why Women Joined Religious Orders in England in the 1830s," (Essay for degree of Bachelor of Arts: Melbourne: Melbourne College of Divinity, 1991).

[55] Janet Phillips, *Not Saints, but Girls: The First Hundred Years of St Peter's Collegiate Girls' School*, (Adelaide: St Peter's Collegiate Girls' School Inc, 1994); Campbell, *Religious Communities of the Anglican Communion*; ibid.

piety continued to permeate the school.'[56] They greatly influenced their charges in churchmanship and devotion, however few of their girls accepted the religious life as a model of Christian service.[57] The Community of the Holy Name [CHN], an order begun in Melbourne in the 1880s to do inner city social work, was invited in 1945 by Bishop Robin to staff a diocesan mission for distressed girls and women in North Adelaide.[58] The monastic life of prayer, education and outreach to the poor was an option the very devout young Alison Gent pondered.[59]

The Order of Deaconess, a form of religious sisterhood, was the preferred option for evangelical Anglican women.[60] Sydney's Deaconess House educated and trained women who formed a visible ministry tradition in Sydney and Melbourne that continued through to the twentieth century.[61] There were also high-church women trained as deaconesses in England who came to Australia. Peter Sherlock commented that: 'deaconesses were not the preserve of

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[56] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*, p. 72-3.

[57] A notable exception is Sister Scholastica (Violet Ferris), daughter of a rector of St Mary Magdalene's. 'Schol' celebrated her hundredth birthday in 2012 and the seventieth year of her profession. Into the twenty-first century, Sister Elisa Helen CSC, an Old Scholar, serves as a parish priest in Victoria. Five Old Scholars are priests in the Diocese of Adelaide, including the author.

[58] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*; Lynne Strachan, *Out of the Silence: A Study of a Religious Community for Women, the Community of the Holy Name*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988). In 1967 the hostel ministry was relinquished 'in order to take over the Retreat House, which already existed at Belair in the Adelaide Hills', p. 172. After leaving Retreat House in April 1989 the sisters continued a ministry from their house at Seacliff until withdrawing from the diocese of Adelaide in December 1995. The sisters returned to the Mother House in Melbourne, Sister Patience joined the Community of Christ the King in Wangaratta in 1990. Joan Durdin, conversation, 2012. Father Philip Carter, conversation, November 2012. Email, Sister Elizabeth Gwen CHN, 6 July 2012. Campbell, *Religious Communities of the Anglican Communion*. CHN, p. 29-33; Community of Christ the King, p. 24-26. Campbell does not mention CHN's work or presence in Adelaide.

[59] AG *Int*, 4 June 2007, p. 1.

[60] Deaconesses of the nineteenth century were inheritors of the medieval Beguine tradition. They worked in parishes, lived together in ordinary houses, wore distinctive but ordinary dress, and remained unmarried but did not take religious vows. Bethany Anne Hancock, "A Suitable Opportunity for Consecrated Service: The History of the Order of Deaconesses within the Methodist Church of Australasia, South Australia Conference 1928-1977" (Bachelor of Theology (Hons), Flinders University, 1993); West, *Daughters of Freedom*, p. 179-183; O'Brien, *God's Willing Workers*. Chapter 4. Both West and O'Brien are limited by their East coast bias. Peter Sherlock, "Australian Beginnings: The First Anglican Deaconess," in *Preachers, Prophets and Heretics: Anglican Women's Ministry*, ed. Elaine Lindsay and Janet Scarfe, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2012). Sherlock points out that the presence of deaconesses as 'authorised professional ministers' played a critical role, both symbolically and practically, in the evolution of the church's attitude towards women, p. 56.

[61] Campbell, *Religious Communities of the Anglican Communion*, p. 181-88.

evangelical Anglicans.'[62] When Melbourne's first deaconesses were admitted to the order by Bishop Moorhouse in February 1884, Adelaide's synod promptly debated their merits with Bishop Kennion's support but with no action taken.[63] Unlike Melbourne and Sydney, Adelaide had no consistent presence of this ministry: the first were two deaconesses appointed in 1896-7 to evangelical parishes.[64] There were no more appointments to other parishes until the acceptance of the ministry of deaconesses after the Lambeth conference in 1920.[65] The report, 'Ministry of Women in the Church', stated that their 'functions, … were 'to teach the young, to nurse the sick, to minister in spiritual things to women, and, if permitted by the bishop, to read the offices in the church.'[66] Subsequently 'Deaconess Mildred Magarey was the first to be employed in the parish [of St Mary Magdalene] and presumably found much to do in St Peter's College Mission.'[67] There was an almost continuous ministry of deaconesses at St Mary Magdalene's from 1922 until 1954.[68] 'By the mid-1930s

[62] Sherlock, "Australian Beginnings," p. 71. 'The key players in the [Melbourne] ordination … were all sympathetic to the broadchurch movement, and many of them were increasingly adopting the ideas and practices of nascent Anglo-Catholicism.'
[63] Ibid, p. 63-4. Bishop Kennion was more interested in religious orders of sisters as described above.
[64] Hilliard, *Godliness and Good Order*, p. 73. Some women who came to Adelaide were trained in England.
[65] The 1920 Lambeth Conference 'passed a resolution that defined the status of the Order of Deaconess and recommended a form of ordination service.' Gill, *Women and the Church of England from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, p. 218-9. In 1922 the Bishop of Gippsland 'used the traditional service for "the ordering of deacons'', and since then, in this country Australian diocese deaconesses were recognised as clergy, and were "often left in sole charge of parishes."' Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 51. For another account see Campbell, *Religious Communities of the Anglican Communion*, p. 184-5.
[66] Devenport, *St Mary Magdalene's Church, Adelaide*, p. 19.
[67] Ibid. 'The employment of a deaconess in the parish was made possible through income received from the Mission.' In 1936 Magarey, writing from the diocese of Bunbury, Western Australia, described her high-church expectations: 'I … took the religious part of the Armistice Day celebrations, being the only minister living in this township. My rector lives 20 miles away and comes here for one celebration and one evensong a month, and I am to take evensong on the Sundays he doesn't come … I live alone in a four-roomed wooden cottage; it is a lonely existence, but I am sure it is the work God has been preparing me to do which is a helpful thought but I do miss my weekly communions (to say nothing of my weekday celebrations), and it seems very little spiritual sustenance for this work and for this godless township. We are not even getting a service here on Christmas Day.' Conference of Deaconesses *News Sheet* No 46, January 1936, p. 2-3.
[68] Ibid. Mildred Magarey 1922-29; Sophy Mann 1929-1934 and Mabel Walker from 1937-1946, on leave to 1954. 'Whatever the reason [Devenport suggested the extra funds coming to the parish for its jubilee year] Deaconess Walker rendered long and faithful service at St Mary Magdalene's', p. 20. She was among those deaconesses working overseas and cited as being ordained in Adelaide on 13 November 1931 (but without information on her place of training). Conference of Deaconesses *News Sheet* No 46, January 1936, p. 6.

St Mary Magdalene's was the venue for the Corporate Communion for deaconesses in the diocese.'[69]

> There was no deaconess in 1935-36 but deaconess Mabel Walker began work in the parish in 1937. … She was among a dozen people elected to an informal 'parish council' as late as 1953, the majority of whom were women. She went to St James, Mile End in 1954. Deaconess Walker's contribution to the ministry of the parish was obviously essential as the following year, 1955, the first assistant curate in the parish, the Rev'd Doug Shields, was appointed. An icon in her memory was put in the Holy Innocents Chapel in 1984.[70]

The deaconesses' terms of employment, half the stipend of a rector, and an assumption they would remain single, meant they provided cheap, reliable and stable ministry, albeit with the proviso that they were funded beyond the normal parish budget.[71] A similar situation faced the women working the evangelical parish of St Bartholomew's, Norwood.[72] There was no indication in the church paper of St Theodore's, Toorak Gardens that Deaconess Mary Cooke was part of the ministry structure. Her position as the Australian Board of Missions' secretary suggests she took on this work, usually done by a layperson, in retirement.[73] Bishop Nutter Thomas, bishop of Adelaide 1906-1940, was supportive; during his episcopate Mann, Magarey, Stevens and Walker were ordained.[74] By 1961 Mabel Walker, by then headmistress of St Gabriel's School, was the only deaconess serving in the diocese.[75]

Despite the low numbers, the ministry of those women serving in evangelical and high-church parishes in Adelaide contributed positively to the

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[69] Peter Burdon, email, 30 May 2013.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Devenport, *St Mary Magdalene's Church, Adelaide*. 'The employment of a deaconess in the parish was made possible through income received from the Mission', p. 19.
[72] Cullen, ed. *A Witness to Faith and Mission*, p. 48. Deaconess Hilda Burden commenced work in the parish in 1924. She had a Licentiate in Theology. Deaconess John Stevens 'served the parish with devotion', 1927-1935, 1936-39, p. 49. She was ordained 13 November 1931. In 1934-5 her address was the rectory, Norwood. *YB 1934/5*, p. 78. From 1940-1953 she served at St Andrew's Walkerville, and died 17 January 1954. *YB 1953/4*, p. 96. 'Characters like John Stevens by their single-mindedness gate-crash into the honour roll of the Most High.' Rev. Norman Crawford, obituary, *ACG,* February 1954, p. 10.
[73] St Theodore's, Rose Park, *Church Notes*, 1926-1935. Deaconess Cooke's name was misspelt (Coote) in *Church Notes*. Ordained in Lahore in 1901, she was deaconess in Cambridge Mission, Delhi, 1901-24. In 1934 her address was Watson Avenue, Toorak Gardens and she was 'at St Theodore's from 1927'. *YB 1934/35*, p. 78. In 1943-44 she was no longer listed.
[74] *YB 1946/47,* p. 36.
[75] *Women Workers' Conference,* 1962, Notes. Deaconess Mabel Walker served in Adelaide for forty years. In 1962 she was headmistress of St Gabriel's School, Underdale. Bishop Lionel Renfrey wrote her obituary. *ACG,* December 1982, p. 11.

'evolution of the church's attitude towards women.'[76] They did so under difficult conditions. It can be assumed that their positions were accepted, or tolerated, as they provided much needed help for little monetary outlay. Ironically, most of the parishes which had enjoyed the ministry of deaconesses, were strongly opposed to the ordination of women when it was debated in the 1980s. Alison did not mention these ministries at St Theodore's and St Mary Magdalene's during interviews. Her own ambivalence around the celibate vocation, when she was a young and single and when married, may have been a contributing factor.[77]

The publication of St Mary Magdalene's centenary history in the year women were first admitted to the diaconate in Australia lends a particular irony. St Mary's was a parish that stood firmly against any liturgical participation of women from the 1970s until the Reverend Ruth Mathieson was appointed assistant curate in 2000-1, and where Alison, agitator for women's ordination, was a faithful parishioner. Its rector, Stephen Nicholls, left the Anglican Church on account of women's ordination shortly after women were accepted to the diaconate in 1987, and the author of the parish history has remained a staunch opponent of women's ministry.

Another high-church alternative for training and education in ministry was St Christopher's College, set up in Melbourne by the General Board of Religious Education in 1945. Six Adelaide women were trained as 'Parish Workers' – their official title.[78] Joan Claring–Bould, Adelaide's first woman deacon, regards Yvonne Myers, the parish worker at St Columba's, Hawthorn, as her model of a woman minister.[79] In 1961 and 1962 the Women Workers' conferences presented options for 'full time service': the term 'ministry' was not used. Two presenters in 1962 were trained at St Christopher's. All the

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[76] Sherlock, "Australian Beginnings." Sherlock's article is necessarily biased towards the eastern states but nevertheless contributes to the narrative. For the South Australian context of deaconesses in the Methodist Church see Hancock, "A Suitable Opportunity for Consecrated Service".

[77] See Chapter 5 for Alison's dilemma about marrying and for her writing on the Company of Joseph and Mary and religious vocation, married and celibate.

[78] Jill Burn, ed. *A Gateway for Australian Women in the Anglican Church of Australia: A History of St Christopher's College by the Ex-Students' Association* (Melbourne: Anglican Church of Australia General Board of Religious Education Division, 1998). Appendix A. 120 students are listed as attending over twenty years.

[79] Joan Claring-Bould, interview, 9 October 2011, p.1.

presenters were single (one a widow), and their 'service' ranged from social work, nursing, school teaching and parish work to life in a religious community. The bishop's secretary warned that secretaries 'all had to do their share of the work – especially if the priest was unmarried', that the position was not as lucrative as a secular job, but 'it is better to be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.'[80] Clearly a woman aspiring to exercise a ministry in the church could not expect parish leadership or ordination.[81] Parish worker, Pam Jaques (Lindsay) loved her parish duties and the rector valued her creative input. She described as 'crushing' being in diocesan clergy circles where the expectation that women should only 'wash and iron' was made clear.[82]

St Christopher's closed in 1965.[83] It was to be fifteen years before Adelaide's theological colleges opened their doors to women.[84] The reasons ex-St Christopher's students gave for the closure graphically illustrate the situation for women working in the church: 'clergy wives resented their husbands working closely with young women', 'men objected to their self-confident attitude', 'competent women made men feel inadequate' and they were seen as 'managing women' and created apprehension because 'the woman who aspired to a managerial role must have these qualities in order to succeed.'[85] The employment situations were not attractive as there was inadequate pay and housing, no superannuation and no possibility of promotion.[86]

As observed in Chapter 5, it was a commonly held view that in marrying a clergyman a woman could work out her vocation of doing God's will. This was

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[80] *Women Workers' Conference*, 1962, notes, p. 5. Psalm 84:10. The speaker was Miss Mabel Trenorden.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Pam Lindsay, interview, 25 February 2012.
[83] The free tertiary education offered by the Whitlam government in the early 1970s offered women the opportunity to train in areas of service such as social work and teaching that were to give them entrée to ordination training in later decades. Colleges of Advanced Education offered Religious Education courses.
[84] At the same time secular universities offered religious studies. It was another ten years (1992) before the Australian Taxation Office considered theological students as legitimate students. The implications for this were that they could then be recognised as a tax deduction against a spouse's income, and have a student card among other concessions.
[85] Burn, ed. *A Gateway for Australian Women*, p. 66-7.
[86] Ibid. Chapter 5, p. 47 – 71. Similar comments were made consistently in the debates over the ordination of women.

a view that Alison held for herself.[87] The acceptance of this role meant that many strong and talented women, who entered rectory life to live out a vocation that was often unacknowledged, found they were ridiculed or blamed for their husband's shortcomings. One archbishop commented that 'many a rectorine has ruined a parish.'[88]

The Discernment Process for Ordination and Theological Education[89]

In the normal (for a man) course of events, the person interested in, or feeling called to, priestly ministry would seek an interview with the bishop who determined the appropriate course of action. Examining chaplains and archdeacons assisted the bishop in the discernment process. A preparatory body was the Postulants' Guild.[90] A promotional notice printed regularly ni the ACG used terms such as 'bind together', 'fellowship' and 'call' which signified the solidarity and gender exclusion consistent with orders and what was God-given and 'sacred.' The 'external features of a religion' – the guild's structure and activities – shaped and moulded the members' subjectivities.[91] Boys and young men were promoted into a sacred and all-male vocation by the guild's exclusive privileges not normally available outside theological school such as studying Greek and scripture. Printed on the page next to the Postulants' Guild notice was the external evidence of the end goal – an imposing photograph of a man dressed in a Roman Catholic-styled cassock. His attitude of assured command

[87] AG *PRH,* p. 50. 'Marrying was a goal … I wanted to use my talents for public life in the church and for domestic life.'
[88] Author's observations. The parish priest had the title, rector (= ruler), in Adelaide; cf. vicar in Melbourne.
[89] The following give useful background: Denis Kirkaldy, *Theological Education in the Anglican Church of Australia*, General Synod Paper No. 2 1992 (Sydney: Christian Education Publications, 1992); L.E.W. Renfrey, *A Short History of St. Barnabas' Theological College Adelaide South Australia 1880-1965*, (Adelaide: The Author, 1965).
[90] *ACG*, March 1965, p. 23. 'The Guild exists to bind together in fellowship boys who are considering the call of God to the Sacred Ministry. The Guild is a fellowship of seekers and learners. The Guild is divided into two groups. The Junior section consists of boys who are still at school and the Reverend W. W. Devonshire is the Warden. … In addition to general talks about the Sacred Ministry, there will be elementary studies in the Old and New Testament and elementary Greek study. The Senior section caters for those who have left school and is in the care of the Reverend A. G. Daw. A wide variety of subjects are covered by talks and discussions. New members would be welcome in each group.'
[91] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 34.

'shewed' what the language in the notice signified – a calling and career to aspire to.[92]

The archdeacon, having interviewed and discerned a man's suitability for training, would arrange for admission to a theological college where the candidate would further test his vocation for one to three years with study (depending on his age) and a life of prayer in its semi-monastic structure. An examining chaplain marked his progress and following ordination two two-year curacies under senior clergy ideally completed the training. The style of training, monastic and mobile, was predicated on the candidates being young and single. Few older men were ordained.

University entrance standard was the usual basic requirement, a university degree a desirable qualification, for entry to most theological colleges.[93] There were exceptions: rural bishops often waived this requirement and entry to St Michael's House was not limited to any educational standard.[94] The Licentiate in Theology (ThL) was the theological qualification usually required for ordination, a course conducted under the auspices of the Australian College of Theology (ACT) based in Sydney. In Adelaide St Barnabas' College was the centre for theological study and priestly formation until it closed in 1950.[95] Bishop Bryan Robin instituted an alternative system in Adelaide in 1947. He invited the Society of the Sacred Mission (SSM) to establish a house and theological college in the diocese.[96] The religious order worked with the premise of forming men for ministry by living a monastic life over five years, while studying a course in theology. Until St Barnabas' reopened at a new site in Belair in 1965, most Adelaide men trained at St Michael's or went to interstate

[92] *ACG,* March 1965, p. 23. The advertisement for clerical clothing took up half the page.
[93] Church of England in Australia, General Synod (1966) *Theological Education: a report of the Committee appointed by the General Synod,* General Synod Office, Sydney. From a survey of theological training in 1967: 'though matriculation is set as a standard of entry for most colleges', 35% of students were unmatriculated, p. 10. John Gent was not typical in having a university degree before going to St Barnabas'. Allan Daw, Reginald Pettet and Errold Pfitzner gained ThL at St Barnabas' with Gent before ordination. Frank Mayger from St Michael's was ordained in 1947 not having completed the academic qualifications. *YB 1979/80,* p. 21, 29, 43.
[94] See below.
[95] Renfrey, *A Short History of St. Barnabas'*.
[96] An Anglican monastic order founded in London in 1891 and later moved to Kelham. 'Bishop Robin had decided views on the intellectual rigour needed in the training of clergy and the value of religious orders in the life of the church.' Campbell, *Religious Communities of the Anglican Communion*, p. 175-7.

colleges.[97] Both Adelaide colleges conducted ThL lectures and examinations for the ACT.

It was understood that testing the vocation was a necessary and important spiritual component of the process but that there would be no guarantee of ordination at the conclusion of training. Prayer cards stated the time and place of the ordination with the letters 'D. V.'[God willing]. God's will in the matter was never to be taken for granted. The notion of testing vocation was to be at the centre of the initial movement of protest.

From the late 1960s the traditional ordination process was disturbed by an ever-increasing influx of married (male) candidates so that, by default, women were more present in the all-male arena of the theological colleges in Adelaide. This change was grudgingly and gradually accepted.[98]

The Protest Movement as a Form of Life Within the Anglican Church

The aim of the protest movement was to achieve the entry of women into the threefold order of bishop, priest and deacon in the diocese of Adelaide. What led members of the movement, people like Alison, to this position? And to what actions did it lead them?[99] They began to explore different ways of talking about and understanding the role of women in the Anglican Church. In Wittgensteinian terms they were developing alternative interpretations of the language games of the more general form of life.[100] The focus of much of their interest and activity concerned the appropriate way of talking about the ministry of service of a deacon, the eucharistic presidency of the priest and the

[97] St John's, Morpeth, NSW, was a popular alternative. Father Andrew Cheesman, who trained Cuddesdon College, near Oxford, was an exception.
[98] Elaine and John Edwards had been married for three years when John began his training in 1965. Elaine was only permitted entrance to St Barnabas' College for three chapel services a year. Elaine Edwards, conversation, 1 January 2012. St Michael's House began to admit married men in 1976. The men could live outside the college but were required on campus ten hours a day. Wives and children joined the community for chapel and dinner once a week. Author's personal experience.
[99] See Harriet Harris and Jane Shaw, eds, *The Call for Women Bishops* (London: SPCK, 2004). The collection of essays provides an excellent summary (albeit in conventional terms) of the historical and current debate on the nature of orders. For more background on Anglican orders see Sykes and Booty, eds, *The Study of Anglicanism*.
[100] Although one could view these as new language games, this would emphasise discontinuity with the existing language and practice of the church. While some feminists did take such a radical step, Alison and most of the members of the Australian movement saw themselves as faithful members of the church, reinterpreting its beliefs and practices, rather than replacing them.

authority of the bishop.[101] In forming this grammar the movement's members were influenced by the broader community's understanding of men and women, including the findings of the natural and social sciences. The latter, for example, provided them with contemporary vocabularies, such as the difference between 'sex' and 'gender.'[102] They were influenced by modern theological and scriptural discussion on foundational beliefs such as the Body of Christ that stressed the inclusion of women, leading to fresh understanding and agitation for change in traditional practices. Of particular concern was scholarship in the theology of ordination and the threefold order of deacon, priest and bishop.

In this way the protest movement became an agent of change within the Anglican Church in Adelaide, helping to amend its grammatical and linguistic rules so that into the twenty-first century women function as priest and deacon. In associating with the broader justice and women's movements, the protest movement itself, for a time at least, became a form of life. Alison Gent was at the forefront of this movement which in biblical and historical terms may be identified as a prophetic voice in the community. Her activities during this period demonstrated the fundamental precepts on which the protest movement began its challenge to the church's patriarchal structures.

The description of the movement's progress will follow an historical chronology. The 1970s was an awakening period as men and women became aware of the patriarchal nature of the church and informed about ways in which to protest against women's exclusion from its ministry. In 1980, when the first discussion group met, it adopted language and actions from the protest movements of women's liberation and anti-Vietnam War activism. It was also influenced by the protest movements in the Anglican Church in the United Kingdom and the United States. The 1980s was a time of heightened political action in the national and local church, the formation of pressure groups, media attention on the issue, and the admission of women to theological education and the diaconate. An account of the Adelaide pressure group, WHO? (Women in

[101] This is hardly surprising as it is one of the hallmarks of Anglicanism: a view shared by both the protest movement and its opponents.
[102] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology*, (London: SCM, 1983); Elizabeth Windschuttle, ed. *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978* (Melbourne: Fontana/Collins, 1980).

Holy Orders) will trace the group's actions and language as it developed as a form of life until the visit of the moderator of the Movement for the Ordination of Women in the United Kingdom in May 1984.

The 1970s

Can a Woman Test Her Calling to Ordination?

The protest movement for the ordination of women was not a living form of life in 1970 in Adelaide; there were, however, embryonic developments elsewhere in Australia.[103] Worldwide there had been, the in the previous decades, few Anglican women in leadership: the most prominent was writer and spiritual director, Evelyn Underhill who had died in 1941.[104] Without the leisure and financial and emotional support to pursue a writing and spiritual direction career that Underhill enjoyed, few women could emulate such a model. Many Anglican women found encouragement and developed expertise in institutions and groups outside the church which informed and emboldened their protest.

In 1970 one of the events that precipitated Alison into feminism and the recognition of her vocation was the refusal of her application for a lectureship in the English department of the University of Adelaide.[105] Alison's interest in agitation for change is evident in a definition of feminism she recorded: 'Woman set free to be her full, best self, and recognised as fully human.'[106] Alison began to apply this notion of freedom and self-fulfilment to her own impulses, when she attended her first Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) meeting on 25 March 1971.[107] This journey into radical feminism confronted her with a

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[103] Sydney's 'Anglican Women Concerned.' Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 85.
[104] Underhill's work was known to the Gents. Alison gave Underhill's book to John as a wedding anniversary gift in 1961: a pointed hint after adultery, or genuine desire for him to find a godly way through? Evelyn Underhill, *The Mount of Purification: With Meditations and Prayers 1949 and Collected Poems 1946*, (London: Longmans, 1960).
[105] AG *NB* 2. Registrar Edgeloe to AG, 7 January 1971. 'Your application of 7 August has not been successful.' In Appendix B. Alison's academic qualification and professional experience listed is from her 1973 re-application and suggest she was adequately qualified and her expectations justified. Her referees were Professor Horne, Kevin Magarey (senior lecturer) and Professor Herbert Piper. Piper had been a student at the University of Adelaide, a Rhodes scholar and was professor at Macquarie University. His undated letter implies he was also a referee in 1970. He wrote, 'I've sent off my reference (it was taken up this time), so I'll keep my fingers crossed for you.'
[106] AG *NB* 2. Plans for an anti-Vietnam War demonstration, late 1970.
[107] *Liberation* March 1970, p. 1. 'Notices of Meetings' marked in pen. Also family diary 1971. See Chapter 6 for discrepancies in the date of Alison's first attendance.

discourse on women's self-determination. The following prayer is an example of Alison's paradoxical nature. While written in the traditional language of suffering and service, the prayer expresses an openness to change consistent with Alison's incarnational theology and her 'official' entry into the women's movement nine days before:

> Teach me, O God, to live in a way that is pleasing to you; for I desire, in that measure in which Christ lives in me, to be glorified as He was glorified, in glorifying thy name, through whatever work or suffering is your will for me.[108]

The soul searching over her 'failed' career, difficult marriage and uncertain vocation culminated in a brief announcement: 'I was sure, at Mass (of St Etheldreda) of my vocation as priest.'[109] In the Anglican cultural-linguistic framework, Alison's words, expressing certainty of a vocation to the priesthood, bore the burden of rebellion as well as the burden of self-assertion. This private event, recorded in her journal and signifying a monumental shift in her self-understanding, added to the ground swell of churchwomen worldwide questioning scriptural and sacramental authority. It was public, in that it changed her relationship to the church; Alison's subsequent very public agitation disturbed the very 'ground of being' of Adelaide's patriarchal Anglican Church.[110] As has been noted, it can also be said, in more traditional terms, that Alison exhibited the traits of the prophetic tradition. Walter Brueggemann defined prophetic gifts:

> The prophets understood the possibility of change as linked to the emotional extremities of life. They understood the strange incongruence between public conviction and personal yearning. Most of all, they understood the distinctive power of language, the capacity to speak in ways that evoke newness 'fresh from the word.' … I am growingly aware that this book is different because of the emerging

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[108] AG *NB* 2, 3 April 1971.
[109] Ibid, June 1971. Alison would have been conscious that 23 June was a significant day. Here she is recovering women's (church) history. Etheldreda was a seventh century Anglo-Saxon princess who built and ruled over a double (men and women) abbey. She was one of many such abbesses of whom St Hilda is the most well known. These women exemplified independence, authority and leadership. Phyllis McGinley, *Saint-watching*, (London: Collins, 1970), p. 95-9.
[110] The phrase subverts patriarchy's belief in the maleness of God and the godliness of the human male. The term, 'ground of being', was used by existentialist philosopher and theologian, Paul Tillich [1886-1965], for God. 'Let us speak of ontology [the word of being] as the basic work of those who aspire to wisdom.' John Macquarrie, ed. *Contemporary Religious Thinkers: From Idealist Metaphysicians to Existential Theologians* (London: SCM, 1968), p. 282-3.

> feminine consciousness as it impacts our best theological thinking. … I do not think that women ministers and theologians are the first to have discerned the realities of grief and amazement in our lives, but they have helped us to see them as important dimensions of prophetic reality.[111]

In the context of the form of life that was the Anglican Church in which Alison lived the nascent protest movement was coming to life in her person. The incongruity of remaining constant to basic Christian precepts did not escape her; however she did not shirk from attempting to move into her husband's patriarchal world in which he was theologically and liturgically dominant.[112] Lindbeck observed that ecumenism is a 'strange combination of constancy and change, unity and diversity.'[113] Alison's actions with regard to her vocation demonstrate her internal ecumenism. While the sense of vocation was not unique to Alison, the combination and style of language and actions with which she pursued the ordination of women, both for her personal calling and on behalf of women in the church generally, had distinctive prophetic qualities.

A woman who professed a call to ordination knew such action would incite the derision and scorn of church leaders.[114] Alison's academic training meant that she was especially alert to the language employed in relation to women and ordination.[115] She particularly noted the comments of the Reverend Ian Herring, a parish clergyman in Ballarat diocese, that 'it would be a violation of spiritual principles to ordain women as, analogically, it would be a similar violation to consecrate a meat pie on the altar of God.'[116] In referring to this judgement as analogical, Herring acknowledges that his judgement is not univocal: while he believes that ordaining a woman would be similar to consecrating a meat pie, it

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[111] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 9-10. Quoted in *Ebb and Flow,* MOW *occasional paper.* No. 9, p. 5.
[112] Rev. Peter Patterson, interview, 16 November 2011.
[113] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 11.
[114] Porter, *Women in the Church*. Porter documents reactions to lay women and deaconesses attempting to participate in church leadership roles, such as synod and parish council.
[115] Note written on a scrap of paper. *Bulletin,* 8 January 1972 'All their own work' made reference to Herring's article.
[116] 'That women should not be ordained to the priesthood.' *Australian Church Quarterly* December 1971. 28–35, p. 32. *The Fully Ordained Meat Pie* is the title of a 1987 ABC programme on women lobbying for ordination. Patricia Brennan, the first national president of the Movement for the Ordination of Women, featured on this widely publicised and acclaimed programme. Alison said that she passed on Herring's comments to Brennan and believed the programme had ridiculed Herring and contributed to his early death in 1993 aged 53. AG *Int*, 14 June 2006, p. 1.

would also be different in some respects. Wittgenstein's view that using language is like playing a game can be helpful here. He suggests that the meaning of the words or terms used is entirely dependent on the context in which they are used. The use of many 'language games' and 'forms of life' provides a 'background of actions and practices' that support their meaning.[117] Viewed in this way, what might seem an outlandish comparison by Herring is an attempt to explain what ordination means; that is, how it is employed in the Anglican community. In his experience, the term 'ordination' is, and only can be, used in relation to male, baptised persons.[118] For Herring it makes no more sense to use 'ordination' about a woman that it does to use the term 'consecration' about a meat pie. As no one would dispute the latter, so no one should dispute the former. Herring is suggesting that this is just what Alison and other advocates of women's ordination were doing; and in so doing they failed to see the meaning (that is, the use) of 'ordination' in the community.

In fact, that is not what they were doing. Rather, they were questioning and testing the meaning of 'ordination' in their community. Specifically they questioned whether Herring was right in saying that 'ordination' can only be used in relation to male, baptised persons. They argued that this meaning, usage and practice presupposed an inequality among baptised persons.[119] Since, in their experience, the community actually believes in the equality of all baptised persons, the meaning of 'ordination' does not obviously exclude women. Among other things, this meant that for Alison the ordination of women was not a rejection of traditional belief and practice as, say, consecrating a meat pie would obviously be. Nor was she proposing a new belief and practice. Rather she, and her supporters, were proposing a new understanding of what 'ordination' means for the community. The difference between Herring and Alison was not necessarily that they employed different language games. It was rather that Alison and her fellow feminists had a different understanding of particular

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[117] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 7. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language*, p. 61.
[118] Herring's ostensive theology of ordination was learnt from textbooks such as that by C. B. Moss who gives clear statements on the role and nature of the Anglican priest, and that 'the 'subject' of ordination is a male baptised person.' Moss, *The Christian Faith*, p. 387. Chapters on ordination, p. 381-411.
[119] It may also presuppose an inherent inequality between men and women in which the protest movement and a growing number of people generally no longer believed.

language games; specifically, of the language games concerned with ordination in the Anglican community. Like Wittgenstein, they recognised that language games are always dependent on the way their communities understand, interpret and apply them.

This view of language, and of belief and practice, is more widely shared today, though there are clearly still disagreements about particular issues, including the ordination of women. In the 1970s, however, the more fixed view of Herring and others was widely held and publicised. Herring's article was originally published in the *Australian Church Quarterly,* an Anglo-Catholic theological journal available at St Barnabas' College library and so likely to be read by its students. In the same issue the editor noted 'that the Bishop of Hong Kong has ordained a priestess for ministerial work in his diocese.'[120] In the 1970s titles for women in secular positions normally held by men, such as 'chairman', 'governor' and 'actor', became a matter of intense debate which then had implications in the church. The term 'priestess' had connotations of witchcraft that were not acceptable to mainstream churches. Its use here demonstrated the prevalence of exclusive language which influenced the attitudes of that generation of priests. The journal editor would not use 'priest' as a gender-free term and his failure to name the woman ordained rendered her anonymous. The protest against anonymity became an important rule in the movement's grammar.[121] The scrap of paper on which Alison noted Herring's article also noted the requirement to have 'a bishop's endorsement' to study for ThL.[122] The juxtaposition of the negation of women as created beings equal to men and the power of church leaders to nullify the vocation of women to an equal authority represented for her an iron curtain or a Berlin wall, but not however a glass ceiling. Alison was concerned with equality and unity of gender; separation and inequality on the grounds of gender was for her sexism and a sin. A glass ceiling is a secular term and implies ambition which she would eschew and which she was wary of in relation to ordination.

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[120] *Australian Church Quarterly* December 1971, p. 4.
[121] Joyce Bennett was the second woman ordained in Hong Kong. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, (London: SCM, 1983). Fiorenza's 'hermeneutics of suspicion' was pivotal in drawing attention to sexist language and gender exclusion.
[122] Note written on a scrap of paper.

7 ALISON AND THE PROTEST FOR WOMEN'S ORDINATION PART 1

While other women applied themselves to theological education, pastoral ministry or gaining office in Anglican groups such as the MU, in her distinctive prophetic style, Alison challenged the church structures by using ordination rules of grammar that were traditionally used only for men. Alison reported: 'I began to go to the bishop or whoever it was who was administrator *every year* from I think it was 1974 and ask what I could do about having a desire to be ordained.'[123] Alison began to play a language game that was incomprehensible to the church leaders in Adelaide at that time. She persisted with the grammar of asking to 'to test her vocation' because she believed that the basic precept of church authority in respect of discernment of vocations was valid. Her language game played out the challenge that testing vocation should not just apply to men. Rather than concentrate on pastoral ministry or theological education, she wanted to unsettle the church by exposing its fundamental untruth. She described this action as 'going to a blank wall.'[124] Women, like Alison, who challenged church culture generated responses which described them as 'self-seeking, strident, manipulative, insensitive, aggressive, uncaring, unnatural, bullying, seeking only personal aggrandisement … unwomanly … man-hating … motivated by secular ambitions and considerations.'[125] The very strong language was abusive and derogatory: each term named a vice no Christian man or woman would want to practise.

Ordination for women became a reality, if irregular, in the Episcopal Church of the United States (ECUSA) when eleven women were ordained in Philadelphia on 20 July 1974. The front cover of *Ms,* a feminist magazine published in the United States, featured the event with a photograph of a young woman dressed in alb, amice and chasuble and headlined, 'Who's afraid of women priests? … and why they won't admit it.'[126] An article reporting the 'aftermath of the Episcopal ordinations' included the story of a seventy-nine

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[123] AG *Int*, 28 November 2005-1, p. 4.
[124] Ibid.
[125] The Reverend Barbara Pace listed the ways women who declared their vocation were described. Barbara Field, ed. *Fit for This Office: Women and Ordination* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1989), p. 79. Barbara Pace was one the first women ordained in Melbourne and a senior hospital chaplain and supervisor. Photograph 8:4 shows her, together with Alison, at a conference.
[126] *Ms, December* 1974. This was the first issue in Alison's collection (1974-1985). 1974 was the third year of publication. The events around the ordination of women in the Episcopal Church were in the forefront of feminism in the United States.

year old woman ordained after waiting fifty years.[127] This was of interest and gave hope to older women in Australia, such as Alison who was then sixty-four.[128] Of local import was Adelaide-born Alison Cheek, one of the 'Philadelphia Eleven', as they became known.[129] *Ms* brought church politics, theology and feminism together and provided Australian women with news of the church overseas from a women's point of view. Women's ordination would continue to attract media attention in both Australia and the United States for the next four decades.[130]

While the wall of church politics and prejudice was high and strong in Australia, the political and social climate changed irrevocably for women with the election in 1972 of a Labor Government with Gough Whitlam as Prime Minister. The status of women was given high priority in his government along with a large injection of funds for projects to improve many aspects of women's lives particularly education. Women of all ages and social status had the opportunity to take up tertiary study. While theology was not considered a legitimate academic discipline that could attract financial subsidy until 1992, women were able to study parallel disciplines at secular institutions; subjects such as Greek gave access to scripture, Latin to the Church Fathers, and history to the early, medieval and Reformation church. Australian universities, secular by statute, gradually opened their doors to theological education.

In 1982 Flinders University established a cooperative agreement with the Adelaide College of Divinity, a consortium formed in 1979 by the Uniting, Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. Women and men could then study on equal terms. Anglican women availed themselves of these opportunities in the hope of breaking down the walls to ordination by being theologically educated. However Alison had found herself earlier alienated by what she said was her 'well-developed sensitivity to sexism.'[131] Then her later attempts (discussed in Chapter 8) were undermined by 'the enterprise of marrying an Anglican priest

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[127] Ibid, p. 41-51.
[128] In 1978 Ted Whitworth was ordained, with minimal formation, aged sixty-six.
[129] Alison Cheek visited Australia regularly as chief supporter to the protest movement.
[130] Anne Summers, historian, was a founding member of the Women's Liberation Movement in Adelaide in the 1970s. She later became editor of *Ms.* AG *Int*, 6 November 2006, p. 8.
[131] Alison attempted and passed a ThL subject in 1977.
Hand-written draft for 'Studying theology', *Partners in Ministry: a Newsletter of St Barnabas' Theological College.* 1991:2. This observation was omitted from the published version.

and bearing and bringing up five children proved to have been extremely destructive of [her] academic concentration.'[132]

International Women's Year in 1975 received Federal Government funding. One event was the National Church Women's Conference held in Sydney - the Elanora Conference.[133] International scholar, Rosemary Radford Ruether was the keynote speaker.[134] Christian feminists and women eager to hear fresh ideas were drawn together. Among the participants were women who would become leaders in the future. Dorothy McRae-McMahon went on to ministry in the Uniting Church and authorship of liturgical works. Colleen O'Reilly (Stewart) initiated the Sydney-based Anglican Women Concerned and was later ordained in Melbourne. Bonita Mabo represented indigenous women, and Sister Kath Burke RSM was one of several Roman Catholic religious there. Alison was one of eight women from South Australia; she went with the financial support of 'Christians Concerned', an ecumenical feminist group begun in Adelaide in the early 1970s.[135]

At the closing liturgy an Invocation of women in the Bible, church, history, art and science as well as Australian women in politics, sport and social justice included, with acclaim, the first ordained woman in Australia, Congregationalist Winifred Kiek.[136] The use of the term 'ordination' in reference to non-conformist ministry was challenging to an Anglo-Catholic understanding of ordination as sacramental, to Protestants who eschewed the term as catholic, and to Roman Catholics who claimed the term exclusively.[137] For many like Alison the primacy of sisterhood prevailed over rejecting the ministry of a sister. Women of all denominations were drawn beyond their various cultural

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[132] 'Studying theology'.
[133] The conference, 'Where are We with Liberation?', was sponsored by The Australian Council of Churches which had also set up a Commission on the Status of Women. Conference Papers, programme, and list of participants in possession of the author.
[134] Ruether, *New Woman, New Earth*; Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*.
[135] AG, 'Sisters are awake … Sisters, awake!' (Alison's report on the Elanora Conference). The effect of the religious crisis of the 1960s can be seen in this interdenominational gathering. The strong presence of Roman Catholic women is evidence of McLeod's assessment that the Second Vatican council was of 'pivotal significance in the political and religious radicalisation and polarisation during that decade.' McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, p. 29-30.
[136] In 1923 Kiek was the first woman to gain a Bachelor of Divinity from Melbourne University. She was ordained in 1927 as a Congregational minister. She had an Honours Degree in Old Testament, and gained her MA in Adelaide in 1929. Knauerhase, *Winifred*.
[137] Protestant churches, however mainstream theologically, had rejected the threefold order of ministry and sacramental ordination at the Reformation.

norms to test the meaning of ordination. Subsequently, shifts in the language around ordination appeared as the debate became more public and ecumenical. Terms such as 'priest', 'priesthood' and 'ordination' were adopted by Protestant denominations and used for non-conformist ministers, women as well as men. The boundaries of gender and denominational culture were being broken down in relation to women's ordination in terms of the protest movement at least.

Naming was a significant language game of the protest movement. By naming and remembering women who had been rendered invisible by their cultural-linguistic communities, the effects of anonymity began to be countered.[138] Feminist biblical hermeneutics, as well as Fiorenza's 'hermeneutics of suspicion', reinterpreted texts in which women's role had been neglected or ignored.[139] The grammar, which depended on the particular idea of men dominating the Christian tradition, was abandoned and a new grammar threw light on women's leadership in the New Testament. Mary Magdalene's ancient title, the apostle to the apostles, was recalled and Phoebe attributed the title and ministry of deacon (Romans 16:1).[140] The new grammar of naming and helped define the form of life of the nascent protest movement. The titles of bishop, priest and deacon became more easily associated with women in imagination if not yet in fact.

While Alison and others did not lose the focus of testing vocation as the most radical need for change, the shifts in denominational language around ordination and the opening up of theological or parallel education was seen by Adelaide Anglo-Catholic clergy and laypeople as breaking down catholic principles.

How the Ordination of Women was Debated

[138] Ruether and McLaughlin, eds, *Women of Spirit*. Chapter 6 documents the life of 'Jane Lead: the feminist mind and art of a seventeenth century Protestant mystic', p. 183-204. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *The Women around Jesus: Reflections on Authentic Personhood*, (London: SCM, 1980). Separate chapters name Martha, Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene, and Joanna. Dale Spender, *Women of Ideas and What Men Have Done to Them*, (London: Pandora, 1982). This is a secular publication.

[139] Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*.

[140] *Diakonos* was translated 'deaconess' in standard editions of the Bible such as the Revised Standard Version and the Jerusalem Bible. Ruether and McLaughlin, eds., *Women of Spirit*, p. 35-6. Brendan Byrne, *Paul and the Christian Woman*, (Homebush, NSW: St Paul Publications, 1988), p. 69-70.

7 ALISON AND THE PROTEST FOR WOMEN'S ORDINATION PART 1

The struggle for the ordination of women is documented in several publications.[141] It was waged on a variety of fronts, political, spiritual, biblical, theological and feminist: the language used to address God in the liturgy was pivotal to the debate. At the heart of the argument was the nature of God as Creator and Love, and how human qualities reflect that nature of Love and creative power. Contingent on this was the role and function of the church and its ministers, the reliability of scripture and contemporary exegesis and the relationship of theology and society. In the Anglican Church, so enraptured and enthralled by liturgy, agonising questions arose about the use and meaning of terms and how humans spoke about God and addressed 'Him' in prayer. Such suggested changes were not merely a problem of linguistis but were fraught with the pain of broken patterns of speech that threatened to tear the bonds of love between the human and the divine.

Some churchwomen, Alison included, began to apply the new grammar of the struggle for justice and the rights of the feminine to the patriarchal church. Alison's mode of protest was to alert churchwomen to the 'truth of women's oppression.'[142] In Australia the protest movement was overtly political and legal and this became part of its form of life as women were forced to adapt their skills and energies to this framework. The use of inclusive and non-hierarchical language at conferences and local gatherings fostered a wider acceptance. Publications from overseas along with locally generated work such as intercessions and hymns were used until the mid-1980s when Australian material began to be published.[143]

The General Synod Doctrine Commission reported unanimously in 1973 that there was 'no theological objection to the ordination of women as deacons' but there was dissent over women's ordination to the priesthood and episcopate. In 1977 a major report of the Doctrine Commission, *The Ministry of*

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[141] See Porter, *Women in the Church*; Rose, *Freedom from Sanctified Sexism*; Muriel Porter, "The End of the 'Great Debate': The 1992 General Synod Decision on Women Priests," in *Long, Patient Struggle: Studies in the Role of Women in Australian Christianity*, ed. Mark Hutchinson and Edmund Campion, (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994).
[142] Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*, p. 12.
[143] Books of prayers and liturgies from overseas included: Morley, *All Desires Known*; Miriam Therese Winter, *Woman Prayer, Woman Song: Resources for Ritual*, (Melbourne: Collins-Dove, 1987); Janet Morley and Hannah Ward, eds, *Celebrating Women* (London: Movement for the Ordination of Women, 1986). See Chapter 8 for Australian material.

Women, was before General Synod. In the ensuing debate Adelaide representatives and their effective arguments were highlights.[144] Irene Jeffreys, a prominent Adelaide evangelical and an accepted figure in the male forum since 1962, 'proclaimed, "I believe that only when men and women stand together in the sanctuary will the fullness of God's incredible act of redemption be fully manifested".'[145] Archbishop Keith Rayner, only two years into his role as archbishop in Adelaide, earned author Muriel Porter's praise for having 'demolished' the theological objections against women's ordination to the priesthood.[146] The vote in principle was passed with a substantial majority in both the house of clergy and the house of laity. The language was beginning to change to a more positive view of women in holy orders. Adelaide women could be encouraged by the vote and their archbishop's strong support of the cause.

Women who wanted to be informed and energised could form interest groups: 'Christians Concerned' was one.[147] After the Elanora conference, Heather Crosby, Estelle Gobbett and Sister Roberta Hakendorf, IBVM joined.[148] Participants shared their aspirations and discussed their understanding of the church, its role in discerning vocations and its value as an institution. Many members later moved to the women's spirituality centre, 'Sophia', established by Roman Catholic Dominican sisters in 1991, or left the church altogether.[149] The group was considered influential, if radical and threatening.[150] Alison was regular and constant in her attendance almost until her death; exhibiting continuity and her determination not to give up on people, groups or activism for peace and justice.

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[144] Porter, *Women in the Church*.
[145] Ibid, p. 85-86.
[146] Ibid, p. 86.
[147] AG, eulogy for Joan van der Sman, 1997. Alison and Joan van der Sman met here when they were invited to speak. Now 'Christian Feminists', it still meets in the twenty-first century.
[148] Uniting Church, Anglican and Roman Catholic respectively.
[149] Heather Crosby and Estelle Gobbett, interviews, 2011.
[150] Margret Mills, *Woman, Why are You Weeping?: Women in the Catholic Church in South Australia: Theology and Liturgy*, (Melbourne: News Weekly Books, 1997). The book sparked controversy because of the author's personal agenda and her unauthorised use of interview material. The work is an example of the reaction of the conservative standpoint. Cf. Gilchrist below.

7 ALISON AND THE PROTEST FOR WOMEN'S ORDINATION PART 1

Study groups generated political action particularly when works of radical writers such as Mary Daly were the topic for discussion.[151] In 1979, at Pilgrim Church, the Reverend Dorothy Wacker, led an ecumenical study.[152] The book, Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father,* stirred some of its readers to question Christianity.[153] Alison responded: 'Mary Daly is (at a distance) the recipient of my vivid admiration; my feeling and my thinking found, and find, in her a depth of fellowship that I have found in no other feminist writer. She stirs me deeply and excites me too.'[154] However Alison warned that the leap Daly invited 'is at the same time a leap into feminist consciousness, and a leap out of anything that is recognizable as the Christian faith.'[155] Alison honoured both the validity of Daly's right to protest against the church and her own Christian right to view Christ as 'fully human', her phrase and used in the revised Nicene Creed prepared by the English Language Liturgical Commission (ELLC), 1988.[156]

At the end of 1979 Alison went from one extreme expression of Christian experience to another, from 'beyond God the Father' to a demonstration of Marian devotion, as if wanting an indication of women's place in the church from the highest placed woman of the church. Alison travelled overseas from 23 September to 16 October 1979.[157] While there, she went on pilgrimage to Ireland on the occasion of the centenary of the Vision of Our Lady of Knock.[158] She recorded:

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[151] Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968). This was taken out of print by the publishers in 1971. Influenced by Vatican II, Daly argued for women's ordination, but by 1974 had moved to post-Christian position. Her article, 'God is a verb', contains excerpts from her new book, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation. Ms,* December 1974, p.58-62, 96-98. Alison was already familiar with Daly from this magazine.

[152] 'Dorothy Wacker left Applecross WA Uniting Church to accept a placement at Pilgrim Church in 1977. She was neither assistant minister nor minister in charge but part of a collegiate ministry with Rev Grant Dunning until 1979 when she left Pilgrim and subsequently resigned as a minister of the Uniting Church and changed her name to Thea Rainbow.' Margaret Chittleborough, email, 10 June 2013. Warren Mossman, email, 14 August 2013. Pilgrim was formerly Stow Congregational Church.

[153] Daly, *Beyond God the Father*.

[154] AG to Dorothy Wacker, 30 May 1979.

[155] Ibid.

[156] The Anglican Church of Australia, *A Prayer Book for Australia*, p. 123, 844. See Appendix E:1 for Archbishop Keith Rayner's use of the phrase.

[157] AG *NB* 6. Alison travelled to Paris and Stratford with her friend, Goldy and visited friends in London. There she booked her passage to Ireland. It is unclear whether this was her main reason for going overseas.

[158] The shrine of Our Lady of Knock commemorated a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary with St John and St Joseph by 'poor and humble witnesses' of the town of Knock, Ireland, on 21 August

> On 2 October, feast of the Holy Guardian Angels, my waking thoughts were … The Pope, John Paul 11, has been to Ireland to celebrate the Fatherhood of God and Woman tame. I go to celebrate the Motherhood of God and Woman wild – or rather, free.[159]

She found there a depiction of the vision which showed Mary as a 'figure of considerable authority, [standing] in an attitude of liturgical prayer … between her husband St Joseph and St John the Evangelist.'[160] Alison also noted that Mary was 'not holding the Holy Child so the attention [of Ss Joseph and John was] not visibly focussed on motherhood.'[161] These factors, Alison suggested, 'hold as much significance to the teaching of the Church as the Vision at Lourdes was found to hold in relation to the Immaculate Conception.'[162] The visit became, either at the time or in hindsight, a momentous occasion and strengthened her thinking and resolve about women's ordination.[163]

1980 to 1984

'Women and Holy Orders?'

When, in 1980, the Appellate Tribunal affirmed that the ordination of women was consistent with the constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia, it opened the way for vigorous debate in General Synod the following year.[164] However consistent the Appellate Tribunal might find the issue, its emotive factor was very strong in Adelaide. Two factions established pressure groups that year in order to test the rules of their cultural-linguistic community pertaining to the grammar of ordination. Both factions adhered to some of the

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1879. Alison's Marian devotion included her membership of the (Anglican) Society of Mary and worship with Roman Catholic religious communities. A pilgrimage to a shrine outside her own church and outside the current thinking of her Roman Catholic feminist friends, made a statement about her internal ecumenism.

[159] AG *NB* 6.

[160] Illustration in a commemorative booklet for the "Centennial of the Apparition of Our Lady of Knock, County Mayo, Ireland, 1879-1979"; Catherine Rynne, *Knock 1879 - 1979* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1979); Tom Neary, "Our Lady of Knock," (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1979). AG to *Southern Cross,* 19 January 1980.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Ibid.

[163] AG *Int*, 16 December 2005, p. 2. 'I really wanted to look at …the concretisation … of the vision.' AG and Elisabeth Dunnicliffe, conversation, 3 October 2007, p. 17. 'I think that the vision of our Lady of Knock is about nothing but the ordination of woman, Mary.'

[164] 'The tribunal is the Anglican Church's national legal body to which questions concerning the validity of any of its constitutional actions can be referred. It consists of three bishops and four legal experts appointed by the General Synod.' Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 93.

same rules and habits of expression, albeit with different meanings – the term ordination applied to women, or that women would take on the liturgical functions and dress of a high-church priest, would preach or hear confessions, for example. In this respect they were all like Wittgenstein's fly, trapped in a bottle; the bottle here being the constraints of certain Anglican language games and forms of life.[165] The pain for all contenders, the disruption and/or disinterest of their spiritual home, was evident, whether it was expressed in terms of anger, derision, humour or sorrow.

In 1979-80 Father John Fleming set up, and was president of, the Union of Anglican Catholic Priests (UACP) and later the Union of Anglican Catholic Laity (UACL). These groups ostensibly promoted renewal of Catholic Anglicanism but many members were followers of Fleming and his ideas on the ordination of women.[166] As sub-groups of the Anglican Church their grammar denied the validity of women's ordination. They urged conformity to other cultural linguistic groups with similar views such as the Roman Catholic Church. The consolidation of the movement was attempted with the 'Catholic Renewal Conference' held in Adelaide in September 1980. The sub-title 'a fresh presentation of the living treasures of traditional Anglicanism' denoted the tenor of the speeches. The bishop of Truro, Graham Leonard, was the keynote speaker. His three addresses were focussed on the topics that the proponents of change in the church were debating. These were: the centrality of the priesthood in the church, moral principles such as divorce and remarriage, and the nature of human beings' relationship with the Creator. He commented that 'it is the priest, in his person, who is the sacramental embodiment and proclamation to us of the Headship of Christ.'[167] For Leonard a major factor in sexual morality was the 'distinction between the sexes' which 'must not be blurred', and are 'part of our created existence.'[168] Leonard's discussion on the ordination of women was part of his address on Catholic Evangelism and was

[165] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 309.
[166] Union of Anglican Catholic Priests, South Australia, Incorporated. *Constitution and By-Laws*. 1979. Union of Anglican Catholic Laity, South Australia, Incorporated. *Constitution and By-Laws*. 1981.
[167] 'Catholic Renewal Conference', 23-27 September 1980. Transcript of Addresses, etc. 'The Apostolic Ministry – Fancy, Fact or Ecumenical Stumbling Block?', p. 6.
[168] Ibid, p. 22. 'By that I mean the element of striving to achieve which is essentially masculine, and the element of the response, of abandonment, of giving, which is the feminine.'

predicated on the maleness of Christ and the first apostles. He reiterated his belief that gender differentiation was vital to salvation. 'We are not saved from our masculinity and femininity, but *in* them.'[169] Archbishop Rayner was invited to sum up and make observations.[170] What might have been an arena of dispute was one of measured argument by both bishops. There were differences operating even in the sub-group.

The setting up in Adelaide of a discussion group with positive views on the ordination of women effectively brought the protest movement into being as a recognisable form of life.[171] This sub-group was also conscious of the wider church hoping 'to … reach out for links with the Anglican Society for Promoting the Ordination of Women.'[172] It was, however, less aggressively pro-active than the opposition.[173] It aimed rather to be 'a collected voice when needed' so the metaphor was the community voice of women and men of all stations rather than the instructive and prescriptive voice of the church's hierarchy.[174]

On the Feast of Joan of Arc, 30 May 1980, the first meeting of the group 'WHO?' was held at Alison's house in Rose Park. Joan of Arc was a woman of the pre-Reformation Church; her day stood for concern for women in the church. Joan van der Sman and Alison belonged to *St Joan's International Alliance of Catholics* and they shared its activism for equality between men and women, its *Weltanschauung*.[175] Joan of Arc had stood up against the power of the church. She was accused of not submitting to its authority, but one of the most serious

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[169] Ibid, p. 49.
[170] Rayner cited three issues on the ordination of women: What is the essence of the Incarnation?, the priest as representative of Christ, and the question of who is called by God. Transcript, p. 56-58.
[171] Small group action was happening in other Australian dioceses. Porter, *Women in the Church*. For groups in Melbourne see p.103, and in Sydney p. 85, 95, 96, 104.
[172] AG *PJ* 3, 19 March 1980, p. 64. In conversation with the Dean, David Richardson, Alison, referring to the Movement for the Ordination of Women founded in UK in 1979, misquoted. She alluded to the 1930s group, the Anglican Group for the Ordination of Women to the Historic Ministry of the Church. Cited in Gill, *Women and the Church of England from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, p. 20. For the founding of the Anglican Group, p. 238 and MOW UK, p. 254.
[173] UACL Objects: to uphold the Catholic Tradition and Practice, to foster proper understanding of Catholic Tradition and Practice, and to take such other proper action as may be useful in promoting the principles and practice of the Union. Union of Anglican Catholic Laity, South Australia, Incorporated. *Constitution and By-Laws*. 1981.
[174] Joan van der Sman, statement for history of WHO?, 1989. Joan had softened the purpose in her history. Alison's 'discussion and action' is closer to the form of life which resulted.
[175] The Alliance 'was founded in 1911, for the equality between men and women in political, social and ecclesiastical life.' *The Catholic Citizen: Journal of St Joan's International Alliance,* 1993:1.

charges against her was that she had put on men's clothes. For those for whom women to wear clerical collars and eucharistic vestments was a long-distance aim, Joan of Arc's feast day was a fitting occasion to begin a public and community movement for women in the church.

Joan van der Sman was aRoamn Catholic so her presence at the first meeting established WHO? as ecumenical.[176] Three men, two married and one single, signified its gender equality. All three men were ordained Anglicans. Father Bruce Naylor had had a distinguished career in church music and was at that time an assistant curate in a suburban parish. There were few priests who were openly in favour of the ordination of women in Adelaide in 1980: those who were actively 'pro-women' in the early days of the protest movement may be said to have put their position in the church on the line.[177] The view that the priest functioned within the context of the maleness of Christ was challenged by language that broadened the meaning to include the feminine. Any priest who questioned that meaning could be seen to be unworthy of the authority of ordination.[178]

There were two married couples present; the Reverend David McLean and his wife, Lesley (the author of this thesis), and the Reverend Robert and Mrs Lyn Dehle. These couples represented other conundrums that faced those agitating for the ordination of women. Both men had been trained at St Michael's House by the Society of the Sacred Mission, which taught that ordination preceded marriage in spiritual vocational importance. The relationship and priorities of marriage, monasticism and ordination were part of the new dialogue around vocation. Also relevant with both these couple was that the clergyman's wife may have a vocation. Alison had brought this problem to bear when she asked to test her vocation. The couples believed that marriage and priesthood should not only be seen as equal vocations but that both members of a clergy couple could work effectively in ministry. Such ideas went

[176] AG, handwritten note, 24 January 1985, on the attendance at first meeting of WHO? and a handwritten note on Doris Howles' speech, 5 November 1992. See also Photograph 7:6.
[177] Rev. Bruce Naylor, conversation, 14 January 2007.
[178] 'The ordained priest in Christ's Church, when administering the sacraments is, "Alter Christus", who was a male in his incarnate life. Therefore a woman can only impersonate him, but cannot be Christ himself through human form.' Women Priests? Forum. *ACG.* July 1981, p. 9.

far beyond the model of ministry with which the church functioned at that time.[179]

W.H.O.? was an acronym for Women and Holy Orders; the words signified the daring and the challenge that went with imagining women celebrating Holy Communion, preaching, conducting a funeral, administering the church's sacraments with holy hands, a parish's mother in God. The question mark suggested hesitation, perceived improbability, and a whiff of hopefulness. WHO? was introduced to the readers of the ACG with the following advertisement:

> WHO?
> A small ecumenical group for discussion and action in the matter of Women and Holy Orders met for the first time on May 30th. The next meeting will be on July 4th at 63 Marion St, Unley, at 8pm.[180]

The phrase 'discussion and action' is consistent with Lindbeck's description of becoming religious, which 'is to interiorize a set of skills by practice and training.'[181] Alison had interiorised both the faith practices of the church and the women's movement. The group she envisaged would circulate, absorb or reject ideas, would organise marches and write to synod representatives. For Lindbeck, it is through 'the objectivities … language, doctrines, liturgies and modes of action … that passions are shaped.'[182] Discussion and action did heighten passions for change and the WHO? group's membership grew from five to seventeen by 1981.

The language and purpose generated often conflicted with Alison's theological and feminist ideals. Alder Hall, active in the church and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), was typical of the strong-minded women who wanted inclusive language in worship.[183] Although Alison had been

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[179] In the 1990s the diocese of Melbourne explored the various permutations of ministry when seventeen clergy couples met for discussion.
[180] *ACG*, July 1980, p. 4. The new feature, 'Notice Board' had a deadline and only accepted copy typewritten. The editor appeared reluctant to accommodate the ever-tardy Alison. The October 1980 meeting was held at Caroline Pearce's home attesting to her early interest. That notice was not published. The WHO? notice printed in May 1981 advertised the 24 April meeting.
[181] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 35.
[182] Ibid, p. 39.
[183] Lyn Dehle (Secretary WHO?). Copies of the letter were to be handed to Adelaide Synod representatives preparing to vote on the decisions of the 1981 General Synod. Alder's talk on inclusive language was advertised in the letter.

exploring the notion of God as Mother, she found herself at odds with the group over the use of 'man.' She argued its generic understanding, but was out of step: the move to inclusive language and the end of the collective 'man' occurred all over the English-speaking world. The noun fell out of common usage under pressure from the feminist lobby which appropriated various alteratives: Alison herself referred to 'womanning' the women's liberation centre.[184]

Education helped change the grammatical and linguistic rules, so access to books and articles, particularly those with an Australian context, was important.[185] Sydney academic Barbara Thiering introduced feminist hermeneutics, awareness of the status of women in the church and arguments on the ordination of women.[186] The Reverend Kevin Giles addressed the difficult passages on women and ministry in Corinthians and the Pastoral Epistles.[187] Overseas publications were circulated. Alison added her theological view to her copy of *Yes to women priests*: 'and to men priests. What we are after is a recognition that it is as a man, male or female, that a priest is accepted to represent Christ.'[188] Two women deacons from ECUSA answered biblical and theological questions.[189]

The purpose of WHO? was to protest locally but the movement for equality was ecumenical and worldwide. Alder Hall, Alison, Irene Jeffreys and Caroline Pearce brought skills and information from business and the professions as well as the church.[190] The introduction of secular expertise to the

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[184] Barber, *Women's Movement: South Australia*; Chryssides, *Alison Gent, Interview*.
[185] 'The meetings were rather informal and particularly aimed at informing and educating ourselves about the issues around the position of women in the church(es). We gathered material, passed it around, learned more from each other, got in turn more frustrated and hopeful.' Joan van der Sman, statement for history of WHO?, 1989.
[186] Barbara Thiering, *Created Second?: Aspects of Women's Liberation in Australia*, (Sydney: Family Life Movement of Australia, 1973). Thiering argued biblical teaching on the equality of male and female, concluding that 'the Christian Church ought to be leading the way in the liberation of women', p. 78.
[187] Giles, *Women and Their Ministry*. Kevin Giles, a New Testament scholar and evangelical Anglican, was rector of St Matthew's Kensington, Adelaide. He was an ardent supporter of WHO? and MOW.
[188] Hugh Montefiore, ed, *Yes to Women Priests* (London: McCrimmon, 1978). Purchased by Alison at St Helen's Church, Abingdon, England. 25 September 1979. The work presented the English church's pro-women arguments. Alison's comments are handwritten on the half-title page.
[189] Emily Hewitt and Suzanne Hiatt, eds, *Women Priests: Yes or No?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973). Alison's copy was for circulation in the group.
[190] An example was Constance F Parvey, ed, *Ordination of Women in Ecumenical Perspective: Workbook for the Church's Future*, Faith and Order Paper 105 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980).

ordination debate created tension with Alison who had a more intuitive, but no less intellectual, understanding. We can understand that a person with 'interiorised skills manifests an ability to discriminate "intuitively" (nondiscursively) between authentic and inauthentic, and between effective and ineffective, objectifications of the religion.'[191] Here again we can see that Alison was working from a different grammar.

Interiorised skills do not necessarily extend to abilities in team play or political acumen. The 'modes of action', the liturgies of the women's movement such as demonstrations, had shaped Alison's passion: she employed them in the new form of life.[192] Placards and banners were used to demonstrate at ordination services, synods and other gatherings. Alison was outclassed by others in artistic banner-making.[193] Nevertheless the originality of the texts and the concise delivery of theological points made them important contributions to the grammar of the protest movement.[194]

The text cited below has a poetic economy of words and meaning. While honouring God's supremacy over the church, Alison has critiqued the dichotomy between personal call and the church's role in discerning that call. The brief text makes clear the church's failure to allow women access to the same procedures for the discernment of vocation as men.[195]

GOD CALLS
WHOM GOD WILLS:
The Church must
VALUE AND TEST

[191] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 36.
[192] Ibid, p. 35.
[193] Alder Hall made two sets of cloth banners depicting important woman in the Judeo-Christian tradition and their language game is naming. They were used for liturgies and conferences, including the twentieth anniversary of women ordained to the priesthood in 2012 in Canberra. Alison's collection, by contrast, was amateur and often undated and unsigned. A selection of Alison's banners was presented to the Museum of Australian Democracy in November 2012 by the author.
[194] A photographic representation of the banner collection on the ordination of women is at Appendix D: 5.
[195] *BCP*, Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. Alison here alludes to the opening phrase of the Prayer for the Clergy and People: 'Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels.'

ALL VOCATIONS

The second text states categorically that women are an essential part of whatever constitutes the church. If the church is understood according to the Lambeth Quadrilateral then women can claim scripture, the Apostles' Creed, the two dominical sacraments and the historic episcopate as pertaining equally to them as to men.[196] It can also refer to women's social, economic and educational standing.

WE WOMEN
ARE CHURCH
AT ALL
LEVELS

While the anti-women's ordination lobby believed that the ordination of women would divide the church, the caption below states that the church is already divided because its priesthood is divided on gender lines.

THE FAILURE
TO ORDAIN
BAPTISED WOMEN
HAS DIVIDED
THE CHURCH
FOR CENTURIES

The text below champions the full humanity of woman by alluding to the biblical truth that women are created in God's image and therefore should have self-respect. It called for unity among women of all denominations:

CHURCH WOMEN
UNITE IN
SELF-RESPECT:

[196] Sykes and Booty, eds, *The Study of Anglicanism*. Part IV, 'Anglican Standards', Chapter 8, 'Canon Law', W. J. Hankey, p. 209f. Other articles in Part IV also refer to the Lambeth Quadrilateral.

WE ARE
FULLY HUMAN

Alison argued passionately that ordination for women was a matter of justice, but that any action in the church should always be tempered by love.[197] One banner reads, 'If Justice fails, where is love?'; and another:

LET THE WHOLE CHURCH
BE MORE
JUST AND LOVING
TOWARDS
WOMEN

The basic premise of love was, paradoxically, at the root of conflicts within the protest movement, as political actions, taken on behalf of justice, overrode or negated love.

The 1981 General Synod, 'at which the first attempts would be made to legislate for women priests', aroused interest not only in the church but also with the general public.[198] As a prelude, 'Nationwide', a weekly news and comment programme on ABC television, ran a segment on the issue.[199] Three of the four people interviewed were from Adelaide, the metropolitan diocese (apart from Sydney) most likely to reject women priests.[200] Alison Gent was the only woman and only layperson; the other protagonists were the Archbishop of Adelaide, Dr Keith Rayner and Father John Fleming. Dr John Gaden from Trinity College Theological School, Melbourne, was the fourth interviewee.

Alison spoke briefly on justice, with assurance and without rancour:

> I think it's very bad for the church to be seen to be uninterested in any aspect of justice or righteousness as it is sometimes expressed and I

[197] There is a growing trend in the church in the twenty-first century towards business management and financial rationale in determining human rights and church policy over valuing prayer and godliness guided by love. Rowan Williams, 'Human Rights and Religious Faith.' www.abc.net.au, 28 February 2012. Sarah Bachelard, "Rights as Industry," *Res Publica* 11, no. 1 (2002).
[198] Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 92-3.
[199] The full text is at Appendix E:1.
[200] A canon to alter the constitution needed to be passed by all five metropolitan dioceses.

> think that letting women come to their full expression of their capacity in spiritual matters and in exercising authority is an important part of justice.[201]

Alison had been prominent in the Adelaide press and public speaking, representing the women's cause. Fleming led in presenting the case against the ordination of women. His influence in the public arena and church circles was intensified by his media presence, his skill as a debater and the vigour of his convictions.[202]

The debates called on theological and biblical knowledge and understanding. The democratic nature of the Anglican Church required lay people in the parishes, who would be voting for representatives on diocesan synods, and the lay representatives themselves, to be informed about the issues.[203] The Anglican Board of Christian Education (ABCE) in Adelaide rose to the occasion and in the years 1981-1984 published a series of 'Let's look at' booklets (25c. each) which were 'so popular that they sold interstate. Adelaide was the only diocese producing [material] that lay people could read.'[204] *Ministry of Women in the New Testament* addressed the role women played in forming the Jesus movement and the much-cited reference of Jesus selecting only male apostles. The format comprehensively covered the position of women in first century. There were discussion questions such as, 'are women persons in their own right in our parish?' Many parishioners were fearful of conflict; the session on the 'conflict of obedience' quoted the 1968 Lambeth Conference

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[201] Nigel Starke's requested Alison for an interview; she was on camera two hours later. AG *PJ* 3, p. 208. Also Photograph 7:3

[202] John Fleming, *Father John's response*, (Adelaide: Christian Television Association, 1977). Fleming provided 'Christian pointers in great issues' [The Foreword], p. 3. His brief biography states that he has been 'a regular broadcaster with Radio 5AD since 1970… heard as a religious announcer, D.J. and political and social affairs commentator as well as on 'Talk-back.' … has written two columns a week for *The Advertiser* [and] been involved in the production of C.T.A. [Christian Television Association] 'Telespots', p. 4. Fleming's entry in clergy register cites 'Gen. and Religious Announcer Radio 5AD, 1970-76; Relig. Column, *The Advertiser*, 1973-76, and from 1978; Chairman, Dept of Media from 1979; Gen. and Religious Announcer, Radio 5DN 1979-1981.' *YB* 1981/1982 (Adelaide; Church Office, 1982), p. 32. For further information on Father Fleming's career see Chapter 8.

[203] Dianne Bradley, interview, 10 December 2008, p. 1. As a General Synod proxy (and later representative), Dianne visited some WHO? meetings, and studied ThA because she 'wanted to be found not to be ignorant on theological issues.'

[204] Dorothy Thorpe, director of the Anglican Board of Christian Education from 1981, telephone interview, 2011.

report: 'The New Testament does not encourage Christians to think that nothing should be done for the first time.'[205]

The Ordination of Women stated its bias of support and addressed theological, ecumenical and pastoral arguments clearly and in simple, intelligent language.[206] A discussion point confronted both justice and ecumenism: 'The Church of England did not wait for the Church of Rome in condemning slavery. Should Anglicans wait in the matter of the ordination of women?'[207]

General Synod passed the first stage of the complicated process to change the church's constitution but each diocese needed to bring the matter before its own synod to be debated and voted on. Adelaide's synod was set for September, the Bill was on the agenda and tension was high. The *ACG* held a forum on 'Women Priests.' The editor compiled 'a brief presentation of the arguments for and against' from the submissions.[208] Further material and letters followed. A letter from WHO?, distributed to synod representatives, called on them to 'bear in mind that there *are* Anglicans in Adelaide who support women's ordination and that there *is* a group which seeks to meet the needs of these people.'[209] The Adelaide synod vetoed the canon thus defeating the process locally and nationally, devastating many women and their supporters.[210]

After this loss, WHO? realised its purpose as 'a collected voice when needed' with Archbishop Rayner's visit to the group in 1982. He requested 'that women who believe God is calling them to Holy Orders should set down what they see is the aim and function of a … Postulants' Group.' Alison's personal written response set out her ideas on a postulants' group giving voice to women's spiritual capacity and preparing them to test their calling.[211] She spoke

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[205] *Ministry of Women in the New Testament.* Anglican Board of Christian Education. Adelaide, c.1982, p. 13.
[206] *The Ordination of Women.* Anglican Board of Christian Education. Adelaide, c. 1983. Dorothy Thorpe 'asked Kevin Giles to prepare points for the argument and John Fleming those against. Robert Forsyth, minister at Holy Trinity, North Terrace, called it "this malicious little pamphlet".' Dorothy Thorpe, telephone interview, 2011.
[207] Ibid, p. 14.
[208] *ACG,* July 1981, p. 8-10.
[209] WHO? to synod representatives, 1981.
[210] Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 96-7.
[211] AG to Archbishop Rayner, 13 September 1982. Appendix E: 3. Alison's belief that a person who believes they have a vocation needs the recognition of the church is supported in a report of the General Synod Commission on Doctrine. 'To be admitted to one of the three orders is to

of her 'dawning hope' that the women called to ordination would become 'a universal Sisterhood', an experience which would be 'part of our training for the priesthood.'[212] Her action and grammar resonate with Lindbeck's understanding of prophetic figures who 'apprehend, often with dramatic vividness, how the inherited patterns of belief, practice and ritual need to be (and can be) reminted.'[213] Alison's visionary notion of linking training for the priesthood with feminist ideals was full of Christian fervour and idealism but in practical terms, was naïve and unworldly and sure to produce 'negative effects.'[214] By contrast she could write clearly and imaginatively for the protest movement and 'discover the concepts that remove the anomalies.'[215]

The anomalies she could not remove were those attached to the matters she so deeply loved and longed for. She could not write a dispassionate strategy for the archbishop nor was she able to produce the objective application needed to gain theological qualifications as other women were doing at that time. St Barnabas' College, a member of the Adelaide College of Divinity, admitted Joan Claring-Bould as its first full-time woman student in 1981. Mandy Coote was the first woman to complete a Diploma of Ministry at Flinders University. Susan Straub studied theology through the Society of the Sacred Mission Theological College. They worked within the model which predicated acceptance for ordination on theological qualifications.[216] Significantly most women who pursued theological education and ministry in Adelaide were not consistently active in the protest movement. Rather they concentrated on advancing their vocations through active ministry and education.[217] Alison did not take full advantage of these educational opportunites, nor did she seek to exercise a

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take on a new identity as one of a group of persons accountable to and with God-given authority for carrying out defined aspects of ministry among the people of God and in the world. This responsibility entails recognition by the church of the person's call to and readiness for that office.' John Grindrod, *Towards a Theology of Ordination: A Report of the General Synod Commission on Doctrine*, (Sydney: The Standing Committee of the General Synod of the Church of England in Australia, 1981), p. 25.

[212] Ibid.

[213] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, p. 39.

[214] Ibid.

[215] Ibid.

[216] Kirkaldy, *Theological Education in the Anglican Church of Australia*.

[217] Joan Claring-Bould, Susan Straub, Flo Monaghan, Sister Juliana SI, interviews, 2011. These women described the personal cost, psychological, financial, and in personal relationships, that their move towards ordination entailed.

ministry in a supportive parish or hospital. She divided her energy, doing occasional subjects but remaining fixed on being allowed to test her vocation. By challenging the church's model, she was working out of the women's movement grammar that advocated the disruption of a patriarchal hierarchy. Archbishop Rayner did respond to Alison's prophetic activities and the growing number of women in theological education and/or ministry by appointing a chaplain for 'a group for women who may wish to explore further the vocation to which God may call them.'[218] Alison attended the group although at first she was resistant to the separation from the men's group.[219] In the company of other aspiring women, she found pastoral care, relief from isolation and impetus to pursue her personal vocation.[220]

As tensions between the strong personalities in WHO? escalated, Alison reacted defensively to her increasing isolation. She remonstrated after a disagreement that her impulse was Christian love and that she 'like St Paul, speaks as a fool.'[221]

> I endure
> (I speak as a fool or an idiot)
> cheerfully enough
> …
> I endure…
> But I know
> A lot
> Of remarkably good and talented women
> Who can't –
> and don't.[222]

Despite the internal conflicts, WHO? was able to define itself confidently: 'our status here in the Anglican Church is known, and accepted but it is unofficial'; 'our actions have been meetings, speaking, writing letters to various editors (mostly Anglican Church papers) and putting forward notices to Synod.'[223] However 'foolish', Alison had prophetically inspired their 'collected voice.'

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[218] Archbishop Rayner to AG, 12 October 1982.
[219] AG to Archbishop Rayner, 18 June 1984. Alison expressed 'profound thankfulness' to the archbishop for his concern. Appendix E:7.
[220] Ibid.
[221] AG to WHO? See Appendix E:9.
[222] AG *PJ* 3 10 February 1982, p. 330-332. The poem reflects on her vocation and position in the church. See Appendix C.
[223] WHO?, minutes, 10 August 1983.

The Protest in Transition

In November 1983 the protest movement in Adelaide began to move into a more political phase, with the information that like-minded people in Sydney were 'thinking seriously about forming an organization much like MOW [Movement for the Ordination of Women] in Britain.'[224] The group which had concentrated on supporting 'members with love as well as [having] a speaking group and action group', began to keep minutes and to write a constitution.[225] Many women professed the certainty of their call. For some personal revelation was their theological heritage, for others it was an assertion against the negation by church authorities. Alison's defence of the church's teaching found her again marginalised. However she had a vehicle to state the case publically. With Joan van der Sman, the person closest to her in ability and aspiration, she featured in an article captioned 'Women "unable to test calling."'[226] Joan and Alison phrased their argument in the language of injustice and inequality: 'universal primacy (Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox unification) is not an issue to promote if injustice and inequality is built into its constitution.'[227] They defended their orthodoxy: 'some look on us as stirrers but we are not destructive or disloyal; just dedicated to our cause.'[228]

Sharing grammar and actions and knowing heroes in the faith as sources of encouragement and inspiration motivated Alison's pilgrimage to Westminster Abbey for the fortieth anniversary of the ordination of Li Tim Oi, the first woman ordained in Anglican Church in Hong Kong in 1944, on 25 January 1984.[229] The occasion, attended by a thousand people, was organised by the Movement for the Ordination of Women in the United Kingdom. Joyce Bennett, ordained in Hong Kong in 1971, preached. Alison met both women. The

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[224] Joan Irvine to Alder Hall, 27 June 1983.
[225] WHO?, minutes, 21 November 1983.
[226] *News* 24 January 1984, p. 42. See Photograph 7:4.
[227] AG *TC*, 31 August 2007. '[We] were sisters under the skin.'
[228] *News* 24 January 1984, p. 42.
[229] Florence Tim Oi Li, *Much Beloved Daughter: The Chinese Woman Who Became the First Woman Anglican Priest*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985); David M. Paton, *R. O.: The Life and Times of Bishop Ronald Hall of Hong Kong*, (Hong Kong: Diocese of Hong Kong and Macao, 1985).

joyous and important occasion helped excite interest in the issue that was being fiercely debated in the Church of England.[230]

While in the United Kingdom Alison spoke about the situation in Adelaide at a study group in an Oxford parish and was interviewed by BBC Oxford. When asked about the divisiveness threatened by women pressing the issue, Alison replied:

> If it's a matter of justice, as I believe it is, that women should have access to holy orders, to join a coalition of oppression by saying, 'oh well we can't have it in the Anglican Church because that would destroy our unity with the Roman Catholic Church or the Orthodox Church', that seems to me a very poor thing to do.[231]

The reiteration of the matter of justice in media debates was women's liberation grammar but was also entirely consistent with Alison's understanding of the gospel. On returning to Adelaide, eager to share her experiences, Alison found WHO? focussed on plans to extend the visit to Adelaide of Monica Furlong, the moderator of MOW UK. Monica's visit in May 1984 proved the catalyst for affiliation with a national pressure group: it was to be 'an initiative of unity – with the richness of an Australia-wide representation.'[232] Further developments will be taken up in the next chapter.

[230] Li, *Much Beloved Daughter*, p. 111-18.
[231] AG, interview by an unnamed interviewer; BBC, Oxford, 1984. Appendix E: 4.
[232] Joan Irvine to Alder Hall, 19 February 1984. Sydney MOW contributed a richness of humour that continues in their newsletters. Illustration on the cover of newsletter, February 1984. Joan's letter was written on the back of a photocopy.



7:1 Adelaide diocesan Servers' Guild of St Laurence at the Church of St Jude, Port Elliot. John Gent is standing 3rd from L. The priests teach the laymen. Late 1940s



7:2 The Faculty of St Barnabas' College. The Warden, the Reverend James Wilmot Griffiths is 4th from L in front row. John Gent is next to him on R. Late 1940s



7: 3 Alison's family photographed her on national television debating the ordination of women. 1981



7: 4 Alison and Joan van der Sman. Photograph taken for a column in *The News* January 1984. "Women 'unable to test their calling'".



7:5 Alison in what she saw as her only official ministry in the church: in the choir at St Mary Magdalene's. She is R near the door, her son Chris is back row L.
9 September 1995



7:6 The four remaining members of Women In Holy Orders? celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the first meeting, 30 May 2005. From L. Dr Lyn Boyd, Alison, Rev. Lesley McLean and Rev. Bruce Naylor

8 ALISON AND THE PROTEST FOR WOMEN'S ORDINATION PART 2

> Pioneers are not popular. Knowing them requires too much of people who are generally faint-hearted.[1]
>
> I see women's transforming admission to the full range of the Christian clerical hierarchy as vital to the cause of freeing all women from the 'global caste system' of their spiritual oppression.[2]
>
> What I want is more women who are Christ.[3]

Introduction

In Chapter 7 it was established that the patriarchal structure and practice of the Anglican Church was a form of life in which women were 'subjected to a permanent status of inferiority.'[4] The second part of the examination of the protest movement for the ordination of women as a 'form of life' begins with the third period covering the 1984 visit of the moderator of MOW UK, Monica Furlong, to Adelaide, the attendant changes of 'grammar'

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[1] AG telephone conversation, 1 January 2007.
[2] AG 'The Ministry of Women: A Matter of Justice?' A talk for Christian Action for Peace, 1 June 1985.
[3] AG, the last line of her poem 'In the Evening'. Appendix C.
[4] Letty M. Russell, *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective: A Theology*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974). 'Domination of women by men is an ancient and persistent form of the subjection of one human being to a permanent status of inferiority because of sex', p. 29. Rose, *Freedom from Sanctified Sexism*, p. 227. Rose's comments on the effect of patriarchy and the church are quoted in Chapter 6.

which led to the end of WHO? and the establishment of the Movement for the Ordination of Women, South Australia (MOWSA). The fourth period covers the reaction of the protest movement to the acceptance of women to selection and ordination as deacons, then as priests and finally, bishops.

The ordination of women was a national church issue in 1984 as it was on the agenda to be debated at General Synod the following year. Early in 1984 WHO? began to discuss a wider-reaching focus: affiliation with MOW in New South Wales and an invitation to Monica Furlong to extend her visit to the eastern states of Australia to include Adelaide.[5] Most members welcomed the prospect of interstate and international connections so enthusiasm was keen. As one of the committee organising Monica's visit, Alison put her energy into the preparations, were to exceed WHO?'s protest parameters. Leaders of protest groups came from interstate, raising the profile of protest and bringing a different grammar. A power-play ensued between Alison and other women who now aspired to leadership of the protest movement since it was moving into national prominence and offering a higher profile.[6] The protest movement was a small part of Anglicanism, nonetheless those trapped in this particular bottle faced the distress of trying to engage with others who shared the same ultimate aim of gender equality in the church but whose background and practices gave the protest language different meanings.[7]

Alison believed that her vision was true to Christian teaching. She was, however, aware of her lack of expertise in, for example, dealing with the church's political system.[8] On the other hand, letter writing was a skill that she felt confident using as a public protest. The *Adelaide Church Guardian* and the national Anglican newspaper, *Church Scene,* were forums for opinion and debate in the months leading up to General Synod in 1985. Alison's exchanges in the press demonstrated her theological astuteness and the grammar she employed.

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[5] WHO?, minutes, 23 February 1984; WHO?, minutes, 7 March 1984. A special meeting at which these two matters were affirmed.
[6] Interview, 1 December 2011.
[7] For Wittgenstein's analogy of being 'trapped in a bottle' see Chapter 7..
[8] AG *PJ* 2, 29 September 1977. Alison felt a laughing stock and lacking in expertise when attempting to put motions to Synod. Hers was 'the most ill-conceived motion that has ever been put before this Synod.' Ibid, 5 October 1977. 'Synod is an imitation of a secular Parliament, down to the ruthlessness and quasi-commercial legality of the proceedings, down to the mercilessness with which it treats anything 'out of line' without thinking to inquire whether this is 'of the Spirit.'

Alison refuted as 'tragic and ludicrous' a derogatory description of a service held to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Li Tim Oi's ordination as 'that recent infamous service.'[9] Rt Rev. Lionel Renfrey, assistant bishop of Adelaide, contributed to the continuing media debate as General Synod approached. He wrote 'that the inevitable end of such a move (to ordain women) would alter the basic tenets of the Catholic religion, especially those affecting the nature of the deity.'[10] Alison replied:

> It is important that someone should say clearly that whatever I think, whatever Bishop Renfrey thinks, and the whole of Christendom thinks, it won't affect the nature of God. God remains God. It will perhaps affect the way we think about the nature of God, and it may be high time we did some different thinking. I for one am not deeply committed to preserving those ways of thinking about God as Father which promote excommunications and the Inquisition.[11]

Monica Furlong's Visit, 26-28 May 1984 and the End of WHO?

Monica Furlong's visit was sponsored by WHO? and publicised using a MOW (UK) pamphlet and advertisements in the *Adelaide Church Guardian.* Monica was to lead a two-day weekend retreat at Retreat House and be the principal guest at two public meetings. A typed note on the visit, 'for interest and history', did not comment on the retreat.[12] Opinions were divided over its value; however, of the fifteen attendees at least two had the 'impression that not a lot of energy was generated at that weekend, that Monica did not stir people up at the retreat.'[13] Following Sunday Evensong at the Cathedral, Archbishop Keith Rayner, at WHO?'s request, presided at the first public meeting. At a second meeting at St Columba's, Hawthorn 'interest was keen and many people did not want to go home.'[14] Two days later, Caroline Pearce, believing that 'enthusiasm is running so high', sent a letter to WHO? members calling a

[9] AG to *ACG,* 26 April 1984; Appendix E:6. Father Douglas Brown to *ACG,* April 1984, p. 10; May 1984, p. 10.
[10] *Church Scene,* 7 December 1984.
[11] *Church Scene,* 21 December 1984. Bishop Renfrey was Vice-Chairman of 'Ecclesia' and Chair of its Australian branch. This organisation was 'virulent in its opposition to the ordination of women.' WHO?, 'Items of interest', 1984.
[12] Paper entitled 'For interest and history during the visit of Monica Furlong (25-29 May 1984).'
[13] Interview, 1 December 2011.
[14] 'For interest and history.'

meeting to 'discuss the formation of MOW in Adelaide.'[15] Caroline Pearce suggested setting up a steering committee with WHO? members and others who had attended Monica's public meetings. Caroline chaired the special meeting at her Beaumont home on 11 June at which action was taken to establish MOW in South Australia.[16]

Alison attended that meeting but was not invited onto the steering committee. This was so deeply hurtful to her that she continued to refer to her exclusion as a 'hatchet job.'[17] Those involved felt that the situation called for a change of name and leader. Caroline reported that Monica 'left me with the challenge of getting a MOW group up and running.'[18] Alison's reputation as an 'aggressive feminist' and for being 'very outspoken in places like synod [where she] didn't get a good reaction always from other synod members' meant that she was not regarded as a suitable public face by those planning the new venture.[19] Caroline commented 'it seemed that maybe we would have more chance of attracting people to this meeting if we weren't perceived as aggressive feminists.'[20] Monica's opinion was that the role of convenor 'would be for somebody who was not as forthright as Alison.'[21]

Hence the decision to exclude Alison was seen as justified on the grounds of her personality and public image. Another stated reason was her stand *for* the use of the generic 'man' which seemed she did not support inclusive language.[22] At the heart of the conflict was, however, that the women had differing views on the grammar that should underlie the new form of life. Was it to be informed by feminism and protest (and which sort? and how?) or, alternatively, was it to be

[15] Caroline Pearce to WHO? members, 1 June 1984.
[16] WHO?, minutes, 11 June 1984. 'Caroline Pearce to form a Steering Committee and branch of MOW. The two steering committee members were Alder Hall and Lyn Gray.'
[17] AG, interview, 16 December 2005, p. 2.
[18] Rev. Caroline Pearce, interview, 3 December 2008, p. 2.
[19] Ibid, p. 4
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid. Alison believed that her disagreement with Monica over their differing attitudes to divorce and the indissolubility of marriage was a factor in Monica's advice. AG *Int* 6 November 2006. 'Of course I hadn't been divorced very long then and I might have been a bit edgy or something, I don't know. But I don't remember doing anything not quite out of place except not quite agree with Monica about divorce. She had just written a book on the topic, a booklet, a small book.' Monica Furlong, *Divorce: One Woman's View*, (London: Mothers' Union, 1981).
[22] Ibid, p. 5.

guided by more careful strategies? Moreover, what ecclesiology of orders and ministry were they to uphold?

As the women struggled to convince church authorities of their calling some expressed their certain conviction that the church should accept them for ordination. Alison, on the other hand, although critical that the 'churches lag behind society', was respectful of the church's due process that a calling be tested.[23] Affiliation with the national protest movement brought pressure on all the Adelaide members to conform to a model of protest which was less radical in its feminism. We have seen in Chapter 7 how Alison's experience in the women's movement radicalised her views of gender and justice and that in this she was 'streets ahead' of other women in the protest movement. Caroline often felt that: 'Alison was streets ahead of [the MOW leaders from interstate] with her participation in the feminist movement in South Australia through her university connections and her other things.'[24] Alison had, on the other hand, a traditional view of ordination which ran counter to the new order's strategies of challenging church structures. Her views were on the extreme ends, both radical and traditional, of the debate and compounded her image as a person out of tune with the new leaders.[25]

Father John Fleming reacted to Monica Furlong's visit in an article, 'Party politics and Church pressure groups.'[26] He denigrated the possible establishment of MOW in Adelaide, observing that Furlong 'and her MOW zealots' seem to approve of 'political manipulation' and are likely to 'bring confrontation and fragmentation rather than a sensitive theological debate within an ecumenical perspective.' Fleming used pejorative terms such as 'single minded fanatics' to describe members of MOW.[27]

As a form of life, therefore, the protest movement in Adelaide was subject to both internal and external abuse and dissension. Protest against the church's patriarchy incorporated the grammar of women's right to protection

[23] *News,* 24 January 1984, p. 42.
[24] Rev. Caroline Pearce, interview, 3 December 2008, p. 3-4.
[25] Ibid. Caroline said she 'didn't always understand what [Alison] was getting at.'
[26] *Advertiser,* 4 June 1984. Fleming does not see any irony in his own establishment and chairmanship of the Union of Anglican Catholic Priests and the Union of Anglican Catholic Laity.
[27] Ibid.

from abuse and violence which had been well documented.[28] In contradistinction were the many aspects of the church which women loved, as Alison did, such as Anglican worship with all its glories. It was the Anglican Church, glories, failings and holy orders, in which the women desired full participation. Many women who sought ordination experienced the control and power of the bishops and other clergy as abusive.[29] To counter this some women, concluding that orders were dangerous or irrelevant, chose to give precedence to the priesthood of the laity or to reject the church totally.[30]

A belief in the relevance and efficacy of the church's ministry and the hope that women would eventually be ordained shaped the strategies, tactics and attitudes of those who, while active in the protest movement, remained within the church. These women used their varying gifts and abilities to advance the cause. Those able to argue the legalities of church polity and those theologically literate used their skills in synods and preparing papers for discussion. Others contributed to worship, study and pastoral care.[31] Women with a call to holy orders were faced with negotiating a system contingent on patriarchy. We have seen above that the women in MOWSA were anxious to be in the best possible situation to gain their objective. We could say that this is a typical reaction of the powerless seeking power.[32] Historical and sociological studies suggest that women's reaction to abuse results in friction and destructive behaviour amongst the women themselves.[33] Miriam Dixson's study

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[28] Literature includes: Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); Carolyn Osiek, *Beyond Anger: On Being a Feminist in the Church*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1986); Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds, *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989); Aruna Gnanadason, *No Longer a Secret: The Church and Violence against Women*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993).

[29] Margaret Ann Franklin and Ruth Sturmey Jones, eds, *Opening the Cage: Stories of Church and Gender* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987).

[30] Russell, *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective*. Chapter 6, 'Communion in dialogue.'

[31] Rose, *Freedom from Sanctified Sexism*.

[32] Russell, *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective*, p. 176. 'Some women have a tendency to buy into the clerical system rather than demand transformation of the understanding of ministry so that men and women would have more creative roles to fulfil in the mission of the church.'

[33] Miriam Dixson, *The Real Matilda: Woman and Identity in Australia, 1788 to the Present*, Revised ed, (Melbourne.: Penguin, 1984); Katy Reade, "'Struggling to Be Heard': Tensions between Different Voices in the Australian Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s and 1980s," in *Contemporary Australian Feminism*, ed. Kate Pritchard Hughes, (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1994); Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia*, (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1975).

of women in Australian convict settlements concluded that, subjected to abuse and in a situation of powerlessness, women turn on each other. This was certainly exhibited in all phases of the protest form of life.[34] Katy Reade, examining tensions in the WLM, attributed disputes to utopian expectations of unity in sisterhood. For Alison there was clearly an element of frustration in her expectations of sisterhood not being fulfilled.[35] Alasdair MacIntyre argued that 'continuities of conflict' are an important function of communities.[36] Conflict, however, can often be subverted. Maternal alienation theory identified the subversive effects a powerful father who denigrates the mother, can have on the children who then take on his abusive behaviour towards her.[37] Such ideas identify the serious difficulties that churchwomen face in a male dominated culture in their relationships with each other. How ordained women resolve issues of power and authority which arise when they become part of the dominant hierarchy is a subject for further theological enquiry.[38]

As the momentum grew for the establishment of MOW, WHO?, as an agent of protest, moved to its inevitable end. WHO? meetings continued from July to November 1984. These ran concurrently with the steering committee (to which some WHO? members belonged) meeting to plan the inauguration of MOW. Although the ordination of women was a common purpose, there were divided loyalties. Some valued the relatively unstructured format of WHO? and Alison's input, while others were keener to connect with a national body. The mixed feelings of the members, and Alison's unwillingness to close this chapter of her creativity, are evident in the protracted events that led to the end of WHO?

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[34] And sadly continues among women clergy in the twentieth year after the priesting of women in Australia.
[35] Reade, "'Struggling to be heard'."
[36] MacIntyre, "The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of Tradition," p. 107.
[37] Morris, Anne. *Uncovering Maternal Alienation: A Further Dimension of Violence against Women.* Thesis (M. A.) University of Adelaide, Department of Social Inquiry (Gender Studies), 2000. 'This thesis uses a feminist framework to explore one aspect of violence against women – the alienation that has occurred between women and their children. The thesis concludes that maternal alienation is built on two foundations, the privileging of the male voice, and the extensive mother blaming present in macro and micro levels in cultural discourses and in families. It suggests that maternal alienation is one way in which children are initiated into and coached in dismissive and blaming behaviours and attitudes to women. (abstract)
[38] Rev. Dr Sarah Bachelard broached the topic at the MOWatch Conference in November 2012. See the thesis Conclusion.

8 ALISON AND THE PROTEST FOR WOMEN'S ORDINATION PART 2

Alison proposed a 'small single sheet handout with simple statement', to be handed out at the 1984 diocesan synod.[39] There was unanimous agreement that 'Women and Holy Orders' promote the venture.[40] The leaflet was entitled, 'Women, the Church's buried talent.'[41] The proposed simple statement became Alison's manifesto, as if her own 'buried talent' was making yet another bid for disinterment: 'If a woman is called by God into the three-fold ministry – and who can say God is NOT calling – can her calling be ignored by the church without quenching the Spirit?'[42] This sheet was a public statement of the arguments for women's ordination, an example of Alison's influence in language, theology and action and an epitome of the protest movement as a form of life – a form that was soon to be reshaped. The author found about five hundred copies of the original thousand printed neatly packaged, ready to be distributed and never having reached the hands of their intended readers. Their stale presence in Alison's home until her death in 2009 was testimony to the abortive efforts of a fractured group, fearful of the disapproval of church authorities, inert in the face of opposition and discouraged, in part, by Alison's ideals that were too far-reaching and too threatening to execute, and in part by her unreasonable and explosive manner.[43] The disunity in this small group was symbolic of the deeper disunity within the church. The unity of the church was a theological truth that Alison believed was disrupted when women were not admitted to Holy Orders. She was explicating the violence, for disunity is violence, that results in inequality and unjust use of power, as discussed above. In her manifesto Alison argued that 'being in Christ' was the requisite for ordination, that being in Christ was not dependent on gender and if women were not recognised as called to Holy Orders then the people of God were divided.[44] It was, tragically, a division that existed between her and other women calling for women's ordination.

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[39] WHO?, minutes, 28 June 1984.
[40] Ibid.
[41] WHO?, leaflet for Synod, 1984. Appendix E: 8.
[42] Ibid. Alison worked on this document with Caroline Pearce on one occasion. AG *PJ* 3, 24 August 1984, p. 666.
[43] Dianne Bradley, interview, 10 December 2008, p. 5. Charles Gent, interview, 28 October 2008.
[44] WHO?, leaflet for Synod, 1984. Appendix E: 8.

8 ALISON AND THE PROTEST FOR WOMEN'S ORDINATION PART 2

In November 1984, at what was the final WHO? meeting, Alison's BBC interview of the previous March 'was played and discussed.'[45] Her lasting impression, that nobody was interested in what she had done on her pilgrimage to the United Kingdom in early 1984, was probably a correct one. The minutes read like the tolling of a death knell: 'A Gent proposed to hold a placard at the coming ordination – No one else present wished to take action further than that already proposed by MOW.'[46] Resignations were recorded from Caroline Pearce and secretary, Margaret Nelson. Alison noted other resignations on her copy of the minutes: from Ali Wurm, Lynne Carmichael and Lyn Gray. WHO? material was collected and handed over to MOW.

After 1986, when women had been ordained deacon in some states, historian Barbara Field, researching for 'a timely account of ten Anglican women deacons [and] their ministry so far', wanted to include early protest groups. She wrote to MOWSA enquiring about WHO?[47] Doris Howles produced a draft paper worked up from minutes, letters and reminiscences. She attempted to report accurately Alison's position at that time but her account was at times factually incorrect and in some areas misrepresents WHO's mission. She wrote that WHO?'s activities were 'primarily concerned with prayerful support for those who had experienced or were undergoing great mental suffering by the church's refusal to test their vocation.' She was correct in her assessments that MOW would be different in nature from WHO? and that Alison's 'opinions were not endorsed by a number of members.'[48] Doris concluded that:

> there is little evidence of the agony and the ecstasy, the frequent conflict between strong personalities, and the underlying bitterness of the final days, part of which was due to difficulties in the lives of certain members. … The belief that WHO fulfilled a special prayerful role appears to have been vindicated by the fact that the existence of a group meeting regularly as the Community of the Upper Room, led by Janet Gaden, came into being within a couple of years of the formation of MOW.[49]

[45] WHO?, minutes, 22 November 1984.
[46] WHO?, minutes, 24 January 1985.
[47] Field, ed. *Fit for This Office*.
[48] Doris Howles, 'History of WHO?', 1989, p. 3.
[49] Ibid, p. 3-4

Doris attempted to cover Alison's prophetic and discomforting presence with the new grammar of respectability, signifying the shift from one form of life to another. This study has shown, however, that Alison's protest, from the beginning of her feminist awareness, had always been to promote radical and public actions.

The Movement for the Ordination of Women

Planning

The steering committee planning the establishment of MOW was made up of two WHO? members, two prominent laywomen in the Diocese of Adelaide who were not members of WHO?, and two clergymen. WHO? member, Caroline Pearce, completing a degree in Social Work and certain of her vocation, planned to travel to the United States to seek ordination and study there. As a leader in the Nursing Mothers' Association and the YWCA, she displayed assurance. Alder Hall was the other WHO? member; she was not seeking ordination. Alder held office in the YWCA, was a gifted, confident speaker and group leader and her husband was a respected parish priest. Dianne Bradley was a member of synod and General Synod, and a Mothers' Union leader.[50] She believed she was invited onto the committee 'to provide a perceived acceptable face to MOW.'[51] Irene Jeffreys, OBE, was the leading evangelical woman in the diocese.[52] Despite her many firsts as a churchwoman and a professional, she was, in contrast to Alison, unthreatening.[53] Irene was a single woman, without the scandal of divorce, and although strong in her opinions, was not a prophetic presence in the manner of Alison Gent. The Reverend Kevin Giles, as rector of a thriving evangelical parish,

[50] Archbishop Rayner nominated Dianne to succeed Mrs Audrey Rayner as President, 1987-1991. Dickey, *Not just Tea and Biscuits*, p. 78.
[51] Dianne Bradley, interview, 10 December 2008, p. 2.
[52] Irene Jeffreys recorded many firsts in the Australian Church: for example, the first woman representative on General Synod and the first woman representative of Australia on the Anglican Consultative Council. Her personal library (some in possession of author) indicates a long interest in women's place in church and in women's ordination, e.g. Charles E. Raven, *Women and Holy Orders: A Plea to the Church of England*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928). Deaconess John Stevens who worked in parish where Irene worshipped and who influenced her, owned the copy.
[53] Andrea Lofthouse, ed. *Who's Who of Australian Women* (Sydney: Methuen, 1982). Jeffreys' entry covers three-quarters of a page. Born in 1913, in 1984, at 71, she did not seek ordination for herself. At the 1977 General Synod she seconded the motion that there were no theological objections to the ordination of women.

had the advantages and prestige the position brought. He could speak with authority, and with the opportunity to write and publish, extended his expertise in New Testament scholarship to the study of women in scripture and the church. Father Douglas Brown SSM, an Old Testament scholar, taught at St Michael's House. At times he held the office of prior; as a senior monastic he had responsibility for the community and those in training. He bore the authority of orders and the cloister. The change of language and action represented by these people – their interests, position in the church hierarchy, their theological and feminist perspectives and their personal qualities and influence – could not have been more dynamic. The steering committee presented a unity of gender and churchmanship that Alison would approve; her exclusion, however, exacerbated her resentment. They presented a front of success and acceptability which offended her radical feminist principles.

Inauguration

The inaugural meeting of the Movement for the Ordination of Women in South Australia was held at St Matthew's Kensington on 5 November 1984. Convenor of the steering committee, Caroline Pearce, was encouraged by MOW's Sydney convenor, Dr Patricia Brennan, to invite the convenors of MOW branches already established interstate so they could meet together and form a national network.[54] The presence of interstate visitors added to the importance of the occasion. A press release highlighted the prominence of the diocese of Adelaide in the national ordination of women debate:

Movement for the Ordination of Women comes to Adelaide

> Nationwide publicity has surrounded the newly formed groups of the Movement for the Ordination of Women (M.O.W.) in the Anglican Church. The Sydney group led by Dr Pat Brennan recently described on '60 Minutes' as 'the mother of MOW' mounted a photographic display outside St Andrew's Cathedral. This display of photographs of women priests from the branches of the Anglican Communion which have already ordained women, namely U.S.A., Canada, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Kenya, Uganda and Brazil, created an impact on members of the Sydney Diocesan Synod. The exhibition will be on display at the

[54] Rev. Caroline Pearce, interview, 3 December 2008, p. 3.

> inaugural meeting of the South Australian Branch M.O.W. Group, on Monday evening 5 November.
>
> Dr Pat Brennan of Sydney, Mrs Janet Gaden of Melbourne and Mrs Gwen Roberts of Brisbane will be among interstate leaders of M.O.W. attending the inaugural meeting. Prior to the meeting they will be taking part in discussions about national initiatives.
>
> Support for women's ordination is growing in Australia. The climate of opinion is changing. The dioceses of Newcastle and Bathurst have recently reversed their stand against the ordination of women by voting in favour of it at their latest meetings of synod. The strongest opposition still comes from the Adelaide Synod, making the formation of M.O.W. particularly important here. Further details from Caroline Pearce.[55]

Radio interviews contributed to a successful launch. The publicity and high profile visitors contrasted to WHO?'s humble beginnings and the grammar of justice and feminism that marked its form of life.

The meeting attracted much interest. Messages of goodwill were noted from MOW groups in Western Australia and Canberra. The new acceptable face of the protest movement was signalled in the three speakers, Irene Jeffreys, an evangelical laywoman, a high-church laywoman Caroline Pearce and the evangelical Rev. Kevin Giles, chosen to present MOW to South Australian Anglicans. The enterprise had an air of confidence, capability and Anglican unity across the churchmanship and laity divide. Irene Jeffreys gave an overview of women's struggle for recognition in the church. She demonstrated that the situation was of longstanding and was not a contemporary fad with the following quotation from a 1917 publication:

> there are signs that women who spend a life of service in the attempt to realise great ideals are drifting outside the influence of the Church, which practically refuses to women any real share in its regular and recognised ministry.[56]

She thus distanced the new model of protest from radical feminism. Kevin Giles outlined the current arguments.[57] Caroline Pearce spoke on the concept of MOW and what the group hoped to achieve. Fifty-four people registered as members

[55] Copy of the press release.
[56] Burnett Streeter and Edith Picton-Turbervill, *Woman and the Church*, (London: Fisher Unwin, 1917), p. viii.
[57] Kevin Giles wrote texts for *Let's Look At* series. Dorothy Thorpe, telephone interview, 2012.

of MOWSA. A ballot was held and the newly registered membership elected nine members to form a council with two convenors.[58]

Alison was not elected, confirming what she believed to be a total rejection by her peers. The confidence and expertise of the new convenors and council were evident to Alison who was all too aware of her own shortcomings and lack of organisational ability. When confronted by the skills and personality of the interstate guests, Alison found that the protest movement had moved yet further away from the idea of a small group gathered to ponder the latest book or plan a silent vigil while making some contacts with movements interstate and overseas. The hostility she had encountered and derision she had suffered as a consequence of her marriage, then of her feminism and even the conflicts in WHO?, did not prepare her for this latest conflict. She had had an academic career, had recently ventured overseas, but her worldly achievements seemed out-dated and unprofessional in the face of the successful women who were to lead MOWSA and the national MOW network.[59]

1985: A Different Grammar

As MOWSA gathered momentum its council members were drawn from as far afield as Adelaide, Broken Hill and Moonta.[60] No 49 Alexandra Avenue, Rose Park was no longer the centre of protest; the vision was wider and broader, and the skills needed to make effective protest went beyond what Alison was prepared to invest in , but not far enough in terms of sisterhood.

Alison was hurt and angry; rejection, which inflamed her demons of resentment, envy and self-pity, fuelled intense reaction in her.[61] Her initial intentions were to put her energy behind the new venture; she joined MOW at the inaugural meeting. One of MOWSA's first actions was a 'silent semi-circle at St Peter's [cathedral]…'at the diocesan ordination.[62] Although this continued the

[58] 'Record of the Inaugural meeting of the Movement for the Ordination of Women, South Australia.'
[59] See Chapters 1, 4 and 7 for Alison's academic and other achievements.
[60] There were seventy-eight members in March 1985. MOWSA, News Sheet, March-April 1985, p. 2.
[61] AG, *PJ* 3, p. 212-213.
[62] *Sunday Mail*, 3 February 1985, p. 5. 'The rally was called by the Movement for the Ordination of Women.' This style of protest action, which had been shied away from in the latter days of WHO?, now merited publicity and assumed respectability and credibility under its new name

pattern of protest Alison had set, she formally resigned by letter on 17 April 1985.[63] Alison compared the committee's wish to 'appeal to the respectable' and its 'hostile and uncomprehending interpretations' with her 'weariness and discouragement in the long battle for women's orders.'[64] She claimed that 'what has been the foundation of MOWSA on an act of betrayal – the betraying of the personal to the political – is simply not good enough for any corporate body which calls itself Christian.'[65] The inner tensions in the still emerging grammar were explicit here, as Alison claimed that her points of view were not understood and that the group's actions were a betrayal of what had been one of her convictions of the protest movement – the solidarity of sisterhood. The conflicting grammar, identified as the political against the personal, had theological and scriptural implications. For example, the phrase, 'on the night when he was betrayed' (1 Cor 11:23), used in eucharistic prayers, reminded worshippers of the link between the Last Supper, Judas' betrayal and the Crucifixion. The phrase, 'the personal and political', was also used in the non-religious arena. Alison's use highlighted her wider experience in the women's liberation movement so that her critique had both religious and secular implications.[66] The last clause, in which Alison seems to imply an expectation that those in the church should treat her better, she is rather stating that the Christian ideal of the acceptance of all should prevail over political expediency. Again, the differing grammar highlights the tensions and the resulting pain and distress in the emerging form of life of the protest movement. Alison expressed the depths of her felt rejection using Biblical garden imagery:

> Compost
> my dead body
> duly rotted and spread
> goes to grow pleasant gardens
> where others move
> conversing lightly

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and new leaders who were now adopting the style as part of the grammar of the reforming movement.

[63] AG to 'the Chairman, The Movement for the Ordination of Women, South Australia, Caroline Pearce.' 17 April 1985.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Tuttle, ed. *Encyclopedia of Feminism*, p. 245-6. 'This phrase encapsulates one of the most radical and important concepts of the Women's Liberation Movement. And … only when the personal is treated as seriously and critically as the public can the roots of sexism be found.'

and take their ease
not needing my company.

It is well
that, in another garden
I, resilient,
walk with my love.[67]

A brief acknowledgement from the co-convenors promised that her resignation would be brought before the May council meeting.[68] Meanwhile Elaine Gregory's personal response assured Alison of 'the affection and respect of *all* MOW members.'[69] After an angry reply from Alison, Gregory explained that she (Alison) was 'too passionate, angry and, on occasions, too one-eyed, to be their [MOWSA] official spokesperson at this stage. MOW is fragile [and] must show moderation and patience as well as strength if it is to succeed.'[70] The MOWSA minutes describe the wave of activity that the talented and energetic women and men on the council generated so that any corporate pastoral response that might have been made to Alison's letter was lost in a flurry of activity around the impending visits of two woman priests from the United States.[71] The issue of hospitality within the Adelaide diocese (whether women would be permitted to exercise their priestly ministry there) was an emotive and intense topic associated with the visits of the Reverend Helen Havens in July 1985 and Adelaide-born Rev. Alison Cheek in August of the same year.[72]

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[67] Copied onto the reverse of Alison's letter of resignation, 17 April 1985. The poem alluded to Genesis 3:8, the Song of Songs, and also Eden restored, Farewell Discourses, John: 14-17.
[68] MOWSA Convenors to AG, undated.
[69] Elaine Gregory to AG, 24 April 1985.
[70] Elaine Gregory to AG, 27 May 1985.
[71] MOWSA Council, minutes, 27 May 1985. AG's resignation is recorded 'with regret.' MOWSA Convenors to AG, 5 June 85 [letter undated, date written in Alison's hand]. 'Dear Alison, The council of MOWSA received and accepted your resignation with regret. We are glad that you are continuing your association with MOW through the Victorian branch, Caroline [Pearce], Elizabeth [Cheetham], Dianne [Bradley].'
[72] Alison Cheek's importance to the struggle for the ordination of women Australia-wide is attested in the lengthy paragraph Porter gives on her background. 'Cheek is a special role model to the women's movement in Australia as, although she has lived in the United States for forty years, she is still an Australian citizen. Not only is she, therefore, the first Australian woman priest; she was also one of the 'Philadelphia Eleven', the group of women ordained 'irregularly' by retired bishops in 1974 after the Episcopal Church's failure to pass the necessary legislation the previous year. Until their ordinations were 'regularised' in 1977, Cheek and the others were treated as outcasts by many church people. A priest who invited her to celebrate the Eucharist in his parish was taken to court by his diocese. Her treatment was such that her husband lost his faith; the Eucharist she celebrated in his presence was his requiem. Cheek's story is revolutionary, and she remains unapologetic. If the illegal ordinations had not happened,

Excitement was also generated by the first national MOW conference planned for 23-25 August 1985 in Sydney. This coincided with Caroline Pearce's 'self-imposed exile' to train for the ministry in New York. It was the intervention of Alison Cheek that brought effective pastoral care to the continuing disunity; 'Alison offered to counsel MOWSA leaders and Alison Gent on Friday 15 August.'[73] Alison Cheek met with the convenors, Caroline Pearce, Dianne Bradley and Elizabeth Cheetham.[74] Alder Hall and Alison Gent were also present.[75] Alison Cheek commented in retrospect:

> I've always wanted to be supportive of her [Alison Gent] because I've seen her as very courageous because I know the price that you have to pay to speak out as she has always done and the grievous pain of being misunderstood … She's a very complex character.[76]

Alison Cheek's mediation bore fruit in the short term. Alison Gent subsequently wrote a request for 'resumption of membership.'[77] She 'thank[ed] the convenors and the Council for their patience … during a long and painfully difficult process of adjustment to the way things are.'[78] Despite efforts on all sides, the differing grammars at the heart of the tension were not satisfactorily understood or accepted so that the matter continued to be unresolved in the long term.[79] Disunity among women was a tragedy that marred the potential of churchwomen to respond effectively to the interest of women's rights in the church and the wider society.

The first MOW national conference was held in August 1985 in Sydney to coincide with General Synod at which the bill for a canon for the ordination of women as priests was to be debated.[80] The movement gained strength in numbers with a network of state branches and with a cohesive system of representatives from the branches to form a national body. As such MOW could focus on its object of changing the Anglican Church in Australia from the

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women's ordination in the United States might have endured the slow agony it has experienced in Australia, she said in 1985. Although labelled a radical feminist by many, the grey-haired grandmother remains a gentle, even motherly prophet.' Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 109-10.

[73] Special MOWSA Council meeting with Alison Cheek, minutes, August 1985.

[74] MOWSA, Newsheet, January 1985. Co-convenors elected at the first AGM.

[75] MOWSA Council, minutes, 16 September 1985.

[76] Alison Cheek, interview, 17 March 2008, p. 2.

[77] MOWSA Council, minutes, 16 September 1985.

[78] Draft of letter to convenors of MOWSA, 1 September 1985.

[79] Dianne Bradley and Rev. Caroline Pearce, interviews, December 2008.

[80] Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 114. The bill failed by two votes in the House of Clergy.

patriarchy as examined in Chapter 7 towards a gender equal organisation. We can understand that this was in effect to propose that the whole church adopt a new set of language games, and even reconstitute itself as a form of life. Debates like the one between Alison and Father Fleming were carried on around the country in synods, parishes and through the media. These clashes continued to be based on a conflict between different language games and forms of life.

In September 1985 an ABC Adelaide current affairs programme featured Alison, the 'long-standing vocal protagonist' in debate with Father John Fleming.[81] Fleming viewed the move towards women's ordination as 'catastrophic'; Alison responded that, in her mind, it was 'just as catastrophic not to have women among the clergy.' The presenter and Fleming both mooted 'serious division' threatening the church over the ordination of women. Alison argued that the church was already divided by gender.[82] In response to the dilemma of priests leaving the church, she replied that 'it is for me to care that people like Father John Fleming feel they may have to leave the church and to do something about arguing the case round so that they don't.' Alison's strong but measured disagreement is testimony to her fortitude in the face of the difficulties with MOW SA and the responsibility of publicly engaging Fleming, described by Porter as the 'spearhead' of the Adelaide opposition, 'a skilled communicator', whose 'barbs were sharp' in the combative arena of a television debate.[83] Alison used the language games of protest, such as sexism and justice. Each participant represented a form of life, Fleming the patriarchal church and Alison, the protest movement. Hence each gave a different meaning to terms such as 'ordination', 'church' and 'women.' Their clashes with differing language games were as inevitable as they were painful. Fleming, like others, was locked

[81] Appendix F:2. Transcript of the ABC TV debate between Mrs Alison Gent and Father John Fleming, Adelaide, 4 September 1985. The author has found no evidence to explain why MOWSA media representative, Alder Hall, was not debater. The programme was not mentioned in MOWSA minutes. For Fleming's media profile to 1981 see Chapter 7.
[82] 1984 WHO? leaflet. 'However ancient the division may be, it offends the love of Christ.'
[83] Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 113-4. Fleming's high profile earned him six entries in Porter's work. Nearly thirty years after the event Fleming's severe attacks were remembered. Heather Crosby, Elaine Gregory, interviews, 2011. Anna Morrison, interview, 2012.

into the patriarchal form of life and resolved his inability to abide by the new linguistic rules by threatening to leave the church or announcing its demise.[84]

The Adelaide print media, alert to the controversy in the church, headlined Alison Cheek's comment of 'ecclesiastical apartheid' with 'church policy alienating women'; the photograph accompanying the article showed Cheek in a clergy collar - an image guaranteed to shock.[85] Although Alison Cheek's language reiterated the themes of racism and sexism, MOWSA changed the form and language of the debate in an effort, it seems, to expunge the feminist label, particularly with leaflet entitled, ambiguously, 'Look out! The women are coming.' It was written by three clergymen, Kevin Giles and Douglas Brown, both on the MOW steering committee, and Peter Thomson, Master of St Mark's University College.[86] All three were recognised scholars, adding theological and biblical weight to the argument. The booklet (with a bright pink cover) aimed to convince Adelaide synod members that 'there is nothing to fear' from the strong support for women at the recent (1985) General Synod and urged them 'to get on with the task of gladly accepting the contribution of both men and women to the ordained ministry of the church.'[87] Their cheerful pals-talking-around-the-fire approach was vastly different from the revolutionary and confronting truths of sexism and patriarchy typical of Alison's protest action and language that was criticised by the anti-ordination of women lobby. She greatly resented that MOWSA felt they needed to bring in learned men:

> There is no room for the White Knight
> or Quixote in this conflict.
> Women, like blacks, had best fight for themselves.[88]

For Alison, the years from 1980 to 1985 were filled with the anguish of separation and divorce and the struggle to forgive and reconcile with her former husband, John and his new wife, Barbara. During these years she was heavily engaged in letter writing and media activity concerning women, the

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[84] 'I do not see myself as having gone into schism … I cannot remain in a church that has lost its way and has turned its back on its own tradition.' Father Stephen Nicholls on leaving the church. *Advertiser,* 15 June 1987, p. 3.
[85] *Advertiser,* 19 August 1985, p. 25.
[86] Kevin Giles, Brown, D. and Thomson, P. *Look Out! The Women are Coming* (Adelaide, 1985)
[87] Ibid.
[88] Poem written at Adelaide Synod, 1983; 'In the Tenniel illustration', Appendix C.

church and ordination.[89] Her journal writing and poetry document her reflections on these topics.[90] As with other disappointments and griefs, Alison chose to re-vision her role. She decided on a new policy, counter to the new leadership, and one she felt she could influence more effectively. If they were tackling large issues, she would concentrate on the small. She created a group to meet in her own space and on her terms. 'Church Amnesty' was to be a safe haven, for her – the meeting to be held at No 49. A safe haven, too, for her guests from the political stress and antagonisms in MOW. It represented symbolically the pattern that Alison would continue with more regularity and intensity; a pattern of retreat to No. 49.[91]

1986-1989: The Beginning of the Church as a New Form of Life

The 1985 General Synod, after a failed attempt to pass legislation on women priests, voted 'the overwhelming acceptance of women deacons.'[92] In February and May 1986 in Melbourne the first ordinations of deacons were cause for rejoicing.[93] The church began to 'shew' evidence of a new form of life as the implementation of the new linguistic rules, the word 'deacon' now applied to man *and* women, and women were able to addressed as 'the Reverend.' The necessary actions that accompanied them were put in place; the laying on of hands brought the women deacons into the threefold order of ministry. They 'shewed' their visible presence in parishes and as clergy members of synod, wearing the signatory clergy shirts and assisting and preaching at services. Although their role was limited, their presence was conspicuous by the wearing of liturgical robes and the stoles which had been placed on them in the ordination service.[94] In practical terms the women

[89] An example is the exchange of letters with John Fleming in the local Roman Catholic newspaper, *Southern Cross.* Appendix F:1.
[90] See Appendix C.
[91] 'Church Amnesty', a small group now functioning in Adelaide alongside MOW, is no other that WHO? Group under another name … One thing it hopes to achieve is to provide, once a month, a relaxed evening 'at Home' where 'Church Amnesty' will welcome tired MOW organisers, amongst others, to a time of informal discussion of the issue, "telling tales", and supper. We might sing too!' Advertisement written by Alison for circulation.
[92] Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 116.
[93] Ibid, p.117, 119. Melbourne Synod had accepted the women deacons legislation in October 1985.
[94] Deacons could not pronounce blessing, absolution or celebrate Holy Communion.

deacons were eligible for stipend and other benefits in the same way as the men, something the deaconesses and the St Christopher's parish workers were not able to do. Although the threefold order remained fractured, the Anglican Church in Australia could no longer be identified in essence as a patriarchal form of life. While some dioceses could not accept the admission of women to holy orders as valid, the process had changed the clerical fabric, the language of the ordinal and the ontology of the women themselves.[95]

At the height of its influence, MOW then focussed its energy on working towards the ordination of women as priests. In Adelaide, where women were still waiting for synod to approve their admission to the diaconate, MOWSA chose to raise awareness that women priests had been ordained elsewhere in the Anglican Communion. They hosted the visit of the Reverend Margaret Marsh from New Zealand. In September 1986, dressed in alb and priest's stole, Marsh preached in St Peter's Cathedral, the first woman priest to do so.[96]

Fleming led a legal challenge to the General Synod canon in order to delay the acceptance of women deacons by Adelaide's synod.[97] Until the Appellate Tribunal brought down its decision the matter was not brought before synod. The number of opponents in Adelaide and their high profile and the threat of schism exacerbated the climate of anxiety in congregations and among the clergy. The possibility that Adelaide's synod may vote in favour led to attempts to shore up Adelaide's traditional position. One such was a book of essays by a group of conservative Anglicans published in Melbourne in 1987. Its title reiterated the theme that 'women priests' were synonymous with 'Anglican crisis.'[98] Four of the nine contributors originated from Adelaide, Father John Davis and Father John Fleming and the only women contributors, Jill Black and Phyllis Boyd.[99] Alison was provoked by an article in *Church Scene* which had

[95] In Australia, by the end of 1986, twenty-six women were in deacon's orders.
[96] *Advertiser,* September 9 1986: A large photograph accompanied the article headed 'A step into history tinged with regret.'
[97] Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 120. The dioceses which had proceeded to ordain women deacons had constitutions that allowed independent action.
[98] David Wetherell, ed. *Women Priests in Australia?: The Anglican Crisis* (Melbourne: Spectrum, 1987).
[99] Ibid, p. i–iv. Phyllis Boyd (1929-2001) moved to Melbourne in 1949 from Adelaide where she had been born and educated. In 1987 she was a founding member and the national secretary of Women Against the Ordination of Women (WAOW).

presented 'very skilfully that the ordination of women … [was] 'nothing.'[100] A joint response came from Alison and Fleming, who agreed the issue was more than 'nothing.'[101] Their letter concluded that:

> handling the question of women and Holy Orders and the issues underlying it may well be, at present, the Anglican Church's most important work … therefore the process of doing it, waxing humorous from a position of lofty detachment, is less constructive than honest conflict, whether that occurs in a legal, media or personal context.[102]

Local media interest was intense with daily reports as the church awaited the tribunal's decision. A headline, 'Anglican Church crisis – another senior 'defection'', was accompanied by a long article which claimed that Archbishop Rayner did not 'believe any parishes will secede.'*[103]* The report that the recent 'landmark vote by the Church of England Synod' in favour of women's ordination 'could make many Anglicans reconsider their opposition', was accompanied by a comment from Rayner agreeing that it would have a 'persuasive effect.'[104]

The Appellate Tribunal brought down a judgment on 5 March 1987 against the challenge.[105] The day after, the press reported that 'a decision on the ordination of women deacons will be made at a special meeting of the Adelaide Diocesan Synod.'[106] With this final decision Fleming immediately left the church to be received into the Roman Catholic Church as a layman.[107] Porter

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[100] *Church Scene,* 13 January 1987.
[101] Their letter was 'The end result of many efforts on my part to remain on friendly terms with a determined opponent.' AG to Father Alan Dutton, 29 April 1987.
[102] John Fleming and AG to *ACG,* 20 April 1987 and *Church Scene,* 1 May 1987.
[103] *Advertiser,* 2 March 1987, p. 2.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 123-4. The tribunal's president was Justice Brian Cox from Adelaide.
[106] *Advertiser,* 6 March 1987, p. 4.
[107] Fleming read a statement to parishioners of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Plympton on 26 April 1987. John Fleming, *Convinced by the Truth: Embracing the Fullness of the Catholic Faith*, (Melbourne: Modotti Press, 2010). p. 31. Fleming's subsequent ordination in the Roman Catholic Church was reported on the front page of Adelaide's *Sunday Mail,* 21 May 1995*.* The national paper, *The Australian,* carried a half-page report with photographs of the laying on of hands and of protesters outside the cathedral, one of whom was Alison. *Australian,* 22 May 1995: 5. Photograph 8:1, 8:2. Alison wrote,'I went to the Mass and receive communion (or a blessing?) from Fr John after demonstrating with R. C. women outside beforehand. My placard said "We need many more exceptions" (John had claimed to be one).' Written on the endboard of John Main, *Moment of Christ: the Path to Meditation*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984).

commented on the Fleming challenges and legal manoeuvres: 'The damage they have caused the church's credibility with the general public is … incalculable.'[108]

On 21 May 1987 the Adelaide synod passed the canon permitting the admission of women to the diaconate. The Anglican Church in Adelaide as a patriarchal form of life was changed forever. It may not have immediately altered the self-concepts of many clergymen or members of the laity but the linguistic rules were altered. The pronouns 'his' and 'him' would no longer be definitive (and exclusive) in the ordinal. And women who felt that they might be called to life as an ordained person would now be able to test that calling. Alison described the vote as 'freedom', as 'nothing less a thing than a liberation of all lay women… to the possibility of entering Holy Orders; and therefore it was a restoration of unity for the whole Order of the Laity.'[109]

The synod decision did not spell freedom for other priests who felt that they could not abide by these new linguistic rules. Father Lyall Cowell left the Anglican Church to become a Roman Catholic.[110] His parting comments prompted correspondence from Alison, who enjoined that he was:

> ill-advised to speak of the church he has left as a 'shambles' (slaughter-house). Those who are impatient with the exponents of Christianity may be tempted to speak of the whole church in every denomination as a 'shambles', using the expression loosely, and the Roman Catholic Church is unlikely to escape that abusive charge.
> If Anglicans with their free-er structures – which already include the marriage of the clergy – are trying to clear their church of sexism, I am very pleased to remain among them. The Church badly needs places where the potentialities of women are NOT slaughtered: that Anglicanism is a shambles, in the correct sense of the word, is therefore false.[111]

Father Stephen Nicholls resigned from St Mary Magdalene's in June to form a congregation of the Continuing Anglican Church.[112] Alison declared she 'felt little, apart from faint surprise.'[113] Nicholls' departure meant an end to their

[108] Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 121.
[109] AG, *Affirmation in Adelaide*, 21 June 1987, p. 1. Appendix F:3:3.
[110] *Advertiser,* 21 May 1987.
[111] AG to *Advertiser,* 21 May 1987. Photocopy of the original typed and signed.
[112] *Advertiser,* 5 June 1987.
[113] AG to John Gent, 15 June 1987.

encounters at the daily office and mass and constant tensions over women's issues.[114]

Strengthened by synod's decision that they had a voice, and with the knowledge now that women could enter theological colleges as *bona fide* candidates for ordination, MOWSA produced a document in September 1987 stating such concerns as the desirability of including women in the Postulants' group and the difficulty of obtaining a reference if the woman candidate's parish priest could not support the ordination of women.[115]

As well as the positive outcomes of the Appellate Tribunal and Adelaide synod, General Synod had called a special session for August 1987 to vote on the admission of women to the priesthood. With the expectation that the voting would be in favour, the priesting of women seemed imminent. In this positive climate Archbishop Rayner included women with those he was interviewing to assess their suitability for attending a selection conference scheduled for September. The men had gone through the normal processes of formation and education. The women had a variety of ministry and/or liturgical experience and educational backgrounds. Joan Claring-Bould was the most qualified. With the invaluable advantage of teacher qualifications, she had worked in parishes before completing theological education and Clinical Pastoral Education units. Joan had been faithful and prayerful in her years at St Barnabas' College, and was at that time living and working in Canada.[116] At Rayner's behest, Joan returned to Adelaide in time for the selection conference. In the mid-1980s Susan Straub had a lay reader's licence in the Diocese of the Murray and conducted services of evensong.[117] Janet Gaden, wife of the warden of St Barnabas' College, was also studying. The Women's Vocation Group, set up in 1982 under the leadership of the Reverend Keith Chittleborough, sub-warden of St Barnabas' College, was another avenue through which the archbishop could contact women wanting to test their vocation. Alison had been persistent in her

[114] Alison continued her friendship with the family and attended Nicholls' church on occasion. Nicholls and his wife attended the mass at St Mary Magdalene's for the first anniversary of Alison's death.
[115] MOWSA, *Implications of the Admission of Men and Women to the Diaconate – Adelaide September 1987*.
[116] Joan Claring-Bould, interview, 9 October 2011, p. 11.
[117] Susan Straub, interview, 30 November 2011, p. 3. Her work in a parish also included pastoral visiting. p. 1.

request for, and attendance at, the Women's Vocation Group. She had previously asked to attend a selection conference in 1984.[118]

Alison and the Selection Process

The interview with the archbishop was an anticlimax to the years Alison has spent 'at war.'[119] The rules of engagement had changed, the forbidden territory now had open borders, and the grammar that had been customary for the protest was now redundant. It would have been expected that the woman who had adapted to the linguistic rules of the women's movement could have been able to adapt to the new language of the church. Alison had difficulty in this situation. There was the degree of shock which the interview presented. She wrote that she had felt 'ill and confused', admitting to feelings of 'hopelessness and unease', of being 'unable to rise to the occasion' and having 'experienced the utter exhaustion that follows a long war.'[120] She articulated these feelings:

> It was a lonely and unenviable task to speak out in the mid-70s and since for the inclusion of women among those who could be treated as believing they were called to the sacred ministry.[121]

Alison recognised that: 'for me the shift since May between asking for the impossible and asking for the possible is something I have found far from easy to negotiate.'[122]

With the long fought battle turned from the general principle of women's ordination, the issue then became for Alison, as for each woman who professed a call, one of confrontation on a personal level. A selection interview required clear thinking, the articulation of achievements in education and ministry as well as spiritual conviction. The grammar of the church was set in favour of someone able to respond with certainty and assurance in the face of the

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[118] AG to Archbishop Rayner, 18 June 1984. While transparent in her reasoning, Alison persisted in actions that were ahead of what was currently acceptable. Archbishop Rayner explained that the selection conference was not an interview process but its purpose was to concentrate on 'those who, if accepted, might be accepted as diocesan candidates to begin training in the following year.' Appendix E: 7.
[119] AG to Archbishop Rayner, 13 October 1987.
[120] Ibid.
[121] AG to Archbishop Rayner, 18 June 1984.
[122] AG to Archbishop Rayner, 23 October 1987.

archbishop's discernment. Alison was aware that, while some aspects of the church had changed, patriarchal rules were still operating implicitly.

In a crisis of confidence Alison vacillated, asking to be admitted in September but this was too late. In October she suggested she be made a deacon without attending the conference, citing the recent ordination of a fellow parishioner, John Devenport, as deacon at St Mary Magdalene's on 5 June 1987. Devenport was aged fifty-seven, with no theological qualifications and no formation in a theological college.[123] Alison further complicated her position by mooting ordination to the distinctive diaconate.[124] She thus demonstrated a lack of clear purpose and certainty in her vocation to the priesthood (within the three-fold ministry).[125] She also broke a patriarchal (unspoken) linguistic rule that one did not use self-assertive and self-determining language and actions, albeit framed in terms of understanding God's will, in dealing with the church hierarchy.

Alison, conscious of her lack of emotional and spiritual energy, shows herself capable of personal insight, but when given the opportunity to test her vocation, she perversely resorted to negotiation that diverted away from the goal of holy orders. In the month after the synod vote she proposed: 'to enjoy my newly-bestowed, newly-won freedom as a laywoman.' She argued that: 'if I attained the diaconate while it was not yet open to women to become priests, I

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[123] The implication was that Devenport was ordained locally and without education or training on the understanding he remain a deacon. After the resignation of Father Nicholls he was deacon-in-charge of the parish until 1989. He was subsequently ordained priest in 1989. Alison also cited the recent ordination of Ken Hampton to ministry with aboriginal people.

[124] A movement pressed for recognition of the order of deacon as a permanent or distinctive position rather than an apprenticeship for the priesthood, partly to justify the ordination of women deacons with no certainty of priesting. Sykes and Booty, eds, *The Study of Anglicanism*. See above for different emphases in the ordinal. Alison held issues of *Distinctive Diaconate*, a learned newsletter published by the Deaconess Community of St Andrew, London, 1984-1988. A brochure, *Ministry of Deacons in the Anglican Church of Australia,* was prepared for the General Synod Board of Ministry and Training. It was updated and reissued, with permission, by MOW (SA), 1987.

[125] Archbishop Rayner to AG, 23 October 1987. 'I made it clear that I did not see [the distinctive diaconate] as permanent.'
AG, hand-written on letter from Archbishop Rayner, 27 October 1987. '"Distinctive Diaconate", as I see it … is the "servant" element of our traditional 3-fold Holy Order: it must be learned, and retained, by all who wish to exercise any ordained ministry.'
AG *PJ* 3, 20 October 1981, p. 283. '[I had] a new clear perception that I want to be ordained priest, in order to be among those who, by their presence and their actions – accredited by the whole church – can give … the Body and Blood of Christ.'

shall be entering into an oppressed state yet again.'[126] Alison seems reluctant to forego protest language despite the change in the church's linguistic rules.[127] Her reaction is consistent with other critical points in her life when she has retreated from the challenge of taking up her own authority, and of facing the responsibility of using her gifts. In 1937 she declined the position of head prefect at Walford House School, in the 1940s she did not pursue a professional teaching role at Adelaide University, nor did she pursue her academic career later. To ask to be a distinctive deacon, when she understood the priesthood so profoundly, was a cataclysmic capitulation. Archbishop Rayner's replies to Alison's correspondence were pastoral and patient. However, he referred to the rules when he stated that it was most unlikely she would have been accepted: the woman who had been accepted had a theological degree and clinical pastoral education.[128] Yet the ordination of John Devenport showed clearly that in the old form of life, and in the new, there was one rule for the men and another for the women.

The selection conference was held in the wake of the failure of the special meeting of General Synod to pass the canon on the admission of women to the priesthood.[129] Of the three women who attended the September 1987 selection conference Janet Gaden and Susan Straub were not accepted as they had not completed their theological degrees; Joan Claring-Bould was accepted and became the first woman deacon in the diocese of Adelaide on 5 December 1987.[130]

After the historic ordination of a woman to the diaconate, 'a poem by John Donne' headed the MOWSA newsletter.[131] There was nothing to identify the poem as Alison's choice, but as an expert in his poetry and other writing it can be reasonably assumed that she contributed it:

> no darkness
> nor dazzling
> but one equal light,

[126] AG, *Affirmation in Adelaide,* 21 June 1987, p. 3. Appendix F: 3:3.
[127] Rose, *Freedom from Sanctified Sexism*. Rose used protest language in 1996.
[128] Rayner to AG, 27 October 1987.
[129] Porter, *Women in the Church*, p. 128-34.
[130] Dr David Hilliard was on the panel of this selection conference and made his file available to the author.
[131] MOWSA Newsletter, November 1987.

no noise nor silence
but one equal music,
no fears
nor hopes
but one equal possession,
no ends
nor beginnings
but one equal eternity,
in the habitations
of thy glory and dominion.[132]

Alison could reach into literary tradition for the right words for the moment, a moment made all the more poignant because she was not able to experience it in her person. The poetic expression of equality had been internalised, as were theological truths of the Christian gospel concerning justice and equality.

The archbishop encouraged Alison to complete her theology degree.[133] In 1988, determined to comply with the church's expectation, Alison enrolled to study full-time with what she termed 'an imprudent degree of enthusiasm.'[134] The energy and focus she had applied to the battle for the ordination of women was not matched by application to study. She pleaded 'very shaky confidence', that marriage and child rearing had been 'extremely destructive of my academic concentration', and that ' there are too many demands on my time and energy for me to be much at St Barnabas' College.'[135] Alison, uncomfortable with new theology and biblical criticism, retreated to the safe ground of a language she had mastered. She enrolled in French as part of her Bachelor of Theology, and completed three years, winning the *Banque Nationale de Paris* Prize in 1990.[136] In Old Testament she did not conform to the necessary 'stated requirements and expectations' and she did 'not address/answer topic actually set' in her

[132] This piece is often quoted as poetry, but was originally a piece of prose; the second section of Donne's Sermon XV, preached at Whitehall on 29 February 1627/8 [p. 219], cited from John Donne, *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose* (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1942), p. 732. The last two lines are additions to the original.
[133] Rayner to AG, 27 October 1987.
[134] 'Studying theology'.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Some non-theological study was a requirement for the degree at Flinders University.

presentation.[137] The formerly brilliant student received a fail grade.[138] Alison resolved the next year to study part time, with some success.[139]

In 1989 Alison attended a selection conference. Her referees were Father Malcolm Lindsay and his wife, Pam Lindsay. It was a tragic irony that, needing a reference from her parish priest, Alison had to ask John Devenport, a deacon and honorary assistant curate at St Mary Magdalene's, who was opposed to the ordination of women, but was himself untrained theologically.[140]

Alison was not accepted as a candidate for ordination. When interviewed in 2011, Bishop Rayner's view was that Alison was not a suitable candidate for ordination as she had no recognisable ministry and was peripatetic.[141] It is possible to point to many aspects of Alison's ministry such as visiting the sick, her speaking engagements, and her valuable work with the Southern Areas Mothering Unit.[142] Her missionary work at the women's shelter and other women's movement initiatives is further evidence of her engagement in ministry. All these activities were grounded in her devotional life. Nonetheless, in the 1980s, such activities were, like housework and raising children, and volunteering, viewed as unstructured and unprofessional and did not prove the personal application necessary for the daily tasks of leadership. In the church in the 1980s models of ministry were limited. Training was specifically in a parish setting, and only when curacies in a parish were completed was there the option to minister as a chaplain in a school or hospital, the armed forces or the police force. Basic to any ministry was acceptance in a parish which, as long as Alison persisted at St Mary Magdalene's, was not possible.[143] Obstinate loyalty to that parish hindered any chance she might have had of being encouraged and promoted in her ministry.

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[137] Comments on a paper submitted for Old Testament.
[138] Appendix A:8. Information from Flinders University from unofficial transcript of results.
[139] 1989. Introduction to the New Testament. Alison's essay was assessed 'Excellent, especially for a review. A+.'
[140] See above.
[141] Bishop Keith Rayner, interview, 7 December 2011.
[142] See Chapter 1.
[143] AG, piece written on an envelope, 1986. She described her situation at St Mary Magdalene's: 'Oh yes, I belong … I am an Anglican woman in Adelaide. Just now I am feeling very good and very bad. Good … because I have maintained my position in a parish where women never enter the sanctuary during services and the Peace is never given to anyone outside the sanctuary therefore never to a woman. I, with one other woman in the church, defy this by greeting each other. But communion is still there so I stay.'

The 1990s: The Priesting of Women

While women were now exercising the function of deacon in parishes in the diocese of Adelaide they were still not permitted to be priests. The ancient threefold order was dis-ordered by women's exclusion from the office of priest and bishop. Agitation was strong in Adelaide. MOWSA was well represented at St Barnabas' College by the warden's wife, Janet Gaden, a deacon and formerly co-convenor of MOW Melbourne, and Sue Henry-Edwards, whose husband was in training. It was no longer the place of antagonism experienced by Joan Claring-Bould but a 'hot bed' of discussion around the issue.[144]

The intensity of the opposition is symbolised in the dramatic cover of a publication by Michael Gilchrist.[145] Its title, *The Destabilisation of the Anglican Church,* is represented at the intersection of the black (evil, threatening) and red (blood) background by a jagged white line and a broken, leaning cross. A subtitle, written in the black section, points to the reason for the destabilisation, *Women Priests and the Feminist Campaign to Replace Christianity.* The dramatic and startling cover is illustrative of the content, which critiques the agenda of Christian feminism and the Movement for the Ordination of Women. The author is disturbed by the use of language and cites prayers which:

> combined suggestive sexual imagery, the secular themes of the Women's Liberation Movement, political themes of liberation commonly associated with secular and 'Leftist' politics, and the conception of God as female. The tone of the 'liturgy' is that of assumed personal familiarity with Christ and God.[146]

Later he comments that 'many Christians would, no doubt, be puzzled with the substitution for traditional religious symbolism by imagery involving sexuality

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[144] Susan Straub, interview, 30 November 2011, p. 7.
[145] Gilchrist, *The Destabilisation of the Anglican Church*. Gilchrist worked alongside B. A. Santamaria, who founded the journal *AD2000*, as part of a conservative Roman Catholic move to restore orthodoxy to the Roman Catholic Church. Their alignment with the movement against feminists in the Anglican Church was perceived not only to help the Anglican cause but also to act as a breakwater for their own church. For discussion on these trends in both churches see: David Hilliard, "Defending Orthodoxy: Some Conservative and Traditionalist Movements in Australian Christianity," in *Making History for God: Essays on Evangelicalism, Revival and Mission. In Honour of Stuart Piggin*, ed. Geoffrey R. Treloar and Robert D. Linder, (Sydney: Robert Menzies College, 2004).
[146] Ibid, p. 60.

… and violence.'[147] The author displays a grave lack of knowledge of Christian spiritual writing and a blinkered view of biblical imagery.[148] His reference to violence concerns lines in a creed – 'We believe in Christ, crucified again in the woman raped, in the woman vulnerable to men' – and reveals an ignorance of the violence to women in scripture and Christianity's historical attitude towards women.[149] Again we see a conflict of different language games indicative of the forms of life within which Gilchrist and Alison functioned, even though these forms share biblical and traditional origins.[150]

Muriel Porter, in a comprehensive study of the lead-up to the 1992 General Synod, pointed out that demonstrations and legal action were generated by the opponents, rather than the proponents, of women's ordination.[151] General Synod met on 21 November 1992. A proposed amendment to the constitution, a canon repealing any inherited law of the Church of England which might prevent the ordination of women in Australia, was originally the suggestion of David Bleby QC from Adelaide. Porter noted that: 'it was nothing short of a stroke of genius, for it united all those who supported women's ordination.'[152] The procedure passed General Synod by three votes. Adelaide had moved from being the metropolitan diocese that had cast the vote negating women's ordination in 1981 to contributing to the success of the campaign in 1992.

In Adelaide during 1992 preparations were underway in anticipation of a positive outcome from General Synod. The Australian bishops had agreed on dates for their synods to ratify the legislation and thus enable the ordinations of all the waiting women. Adelaide's new archbishop, the Rt Rev. Ian George, was an active proponent of women's ministry. Before the Adelaide synod ratified the legislation and although the date for that year's ordination was already set for 5 December, a selection conference was called for 25-27 September. This was the

[147] Ibid, p. 64.
[148] The writer shows an ignorance of the sexual imagery in the 'Song of Songs', for example, the Hebrew female noun for God's attribute of wisdom, and the many Scriptural liberation themes, not least of which is the Magnificat.
[149] Gilchrist, *The Destabilisation of the Anglican Church*, p. 64. See footnote 27 above for references to relevant texts.
[150] See Alison's poem, 'What Was the Serpent Doing?' which alludes to Genesis 3. Appendix C.
[151] Porter, "The End of the 'Great Debate'."
[152] Ibid, p. 171.

regular time for selection conferences so that those accepted could start their formation at a theological college at the beginning of the following year. Six women were among the fourteen candidates, all of whom had been involved in ministry, theological education or other activities. The pre-formation process could include interviews with examining chaplains, membership of the Postulants' Group, study for a theological degree and/or participation in a parish in pastoral or liturgical capacity.

The candidates were to prepare for the conference by writing a personal statement on their concept of what a priest was, meet with a small panel regarding finances, and attend a consultation with a psychiatrist.[153] The two-day residential conference was designed to screen candidates by conducting interviews on their personal lives and relationships as well as on vocation and spirituality. The interviewers were lay people and clerics; in this regard the language around priesthood had changed from being based entirely on the ordinal to incorporating the language of the social sciences and medicine.[154] Candidates participated in the daily office and Holy Communion and activity groups where they chose to plan liturgies or discuss current affairs debated in synod at that time, such as East Timor, poker machines or inclusive language. Written work was to be handed up on three topics – family in society, evangelism and the participant's home parish.[155]

In a tantalising act of defiance Alison chose as one of her referees Brian Medlin, professor of Philosophy at Flinders University.[156] Medlin was known as an aggressive atheist, nonetheless Alison asked him because 'she wished to apply for ordination as the person she was and not as some constructed candidate concerned only to put the case most likely to succeed.'[157] Medlin agreed to write on Alison's behalf as he would 'prefer [the church's] ministers to be people of concern and integrity, rather than self-important political

[153] Bishop Stuart Smith to AG, 28 August 1992.
[154] For example, church history lecturer David Hilliard was a member of the panel in 1979, 1980 and 1987.
[155] Diocese of Adelaide, Selection Conference 1992, folder.
[156] Medlin was a controversial figure and leader of anti-Vietnam War protests in Adelaide.
[157] Brian Medlin to Bishop Stuart Smith, 11 September 1992, p. 2. Appendix F: 5:1.

wranglers and weasels.'[158] He gave a detailed assessment of the qualities he listed:

> Alison is devout, staunch, loving, loyal, passionate, intelligent, learned, lucid, articulate, indomitably cheerful, tolerant of what she sees as frailty and error, yet firm in what she sees as virtue and truth. Apart from her religious commitment, she is a rational and clear-headed woman: and only a bigoted rationalist would be certain that she is a worse woman for that commitment.[159]

Here Alison and her referee Medlin express their differing grammar concerning the church and ministry. Medlin understood Alison's tolerance and firmness and indicated that he hoped that the church leadership would share his understanding.

Archbishop George notified Alison by letter that she had not been accepted as an ordination candidate: 'The panel of selectors were impressed with many personal qualities which you have that bring richness to the life of the Church, but they do not see you in ordained ministry.'[160] Alison's reactions varied from 'referring in her thoughts to the scourging of Jesus in the Second Sorrowful mystery' to being 'cheerful enough.'[161] One of Alison's referees wrote to the archbishop expressing disappointment and wondering if 'in Alison's case sexism has been compounded by ageism.'[162] The suggestion of sexism was refuted.[163] In both letters Archbishop George had commended Alison's lay ministry as 'already a significant one.'[164] In trying to determine what might have been the church's reasons for not accepting Alison as a candidate for ordination, contradictory assessments are evident. In Bishop Rayner's view Alison did not have a functioning ministry that would commend her for ordination. Archbishop George, on the other hand, stated that her existing 'significant' ministry should be developed.

A special meeting of synod swiftly ratified the bill, and paradoxically, in view of its past history of opposition, the diocese of Adelaide was the first of the

[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid, p. 2-3.
[160] Archbishop George to AG, 2 October 1992. Alison claimed the letter was pro-forma and therefore impersonal. AG to a friend, 8 October 1992.
[161] AG to a friend, 8 October 1992.
[162] Pam Lindsay to Archbishop George, 9 November 1992.
[163] Archbishop George to Pam Lindsay, 30 March 1993.
[164] Ibid.

Australian dioceses waiting to ordain women.[165] Those women who were in deacons' orders could now prepare for their ordination.[166] On 5 December 1992, in St Peter's Cathedral, Joan Claring-Bould, Sister Juliana, S.I., Flo Monaghan, Susanna Pain and Susan Straub were ordained to the priesthood.[167] The event received much media attention; it was televised and local newspapers printed articles and photographs. At the beginning of the service the Ordinal stated that the bishop declare the persons to be 'fit for the office.'[168] There was tension for the women, the archbishop and the congregation as the following statement was read:

> if you know of any obstacle or notorious offence in any of these persons, such as would bar him from being received into this holy ministry, come forward in the name of God and reveal what the offence or obstacle is.[169]

Two objections were made, one by Bishop Renfrey and one by a woman whose comments indicated she may have been troubled.[170] The archbishop then proceeded with the ordination 'with remarkable calmness.'[171]

Susan Straub described the events 'as very, very moving', and MOWSA's celebratory presence:

> And coming out of the service, all the MOW women were up in the gallery, there were Alison and Sue Henry-Edwards, ... and they released the gold and violet and green streamers and balloons, [they] all fell down into the aisle as we processed out, so we were kicking balloons along as we were coming out. It was wonderful, absolutely amazing.[172]

MOWSA Council initiated an expression of appreciation for Alison which Doris Howles wrote and read out:

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[165] The diocese of Perth had made alterations to their constitution and ordained ten women in March 1992. Porter, "The End of the 'Great Debate'," p. 165-6, 70.
[166] Sister Juliana, Flo Monaghan and Susan Straub had been made deacon in the intervening years since Joan Claring-Bould was ordained in 1987.
[167] Susanna Pain came to Adelaide having been made a deacon in the diocese of Canberra. Sister Juliana belongs to a religious community formed in South Australia, the Sisters of the Incarnation.
[168] Church of England in Australia, *An Australian Prayer Book: For Use Together with The Book of Common Prayer 1662*, The Ordinal, p. 608.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Susan Straub, interview, 30 November 2011, p. 12.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid, p. 13.

> On behalf of MOW members and those who have hoped and prayed for the ordination of women, I want to pay tribute to those pioneers, particularly those in our State, who have played an active part in the movement for many years, and to thank Alison, as their representative. We have a deep appreciation of the fact that Alison gave a focus to ideas in South Australia of women as priests when she called together a small group of far-sighted women and men. The group was ecumenical, as it included Joan van der Sman of the Roman Catholic Church; its Anglican members, who, with Joan, first held a meeting on May 30th, 1980, were Alison, Father Bruce Naylor, Lesley McLean, [Father] David McLean and Robert Dehle. This became known as the WHO group. It inspired women particularly, and was the precursor of MOW here. Although the latter had a different emphasis, Alison, with her generous spirit, gave her energies to the flourishing of the South Australian branch, albeit with a few heart-pangs.
>
> She has been a tireless prophet, telling forth what she felt was the main obstacle to the fulfilment of Christ's kingdom on earth. She remained steadfast in her commitment, even though she had to suffer hostility and ostracism from those of whom she might have expected more understanding.
>
> Alison, today we rejoice with you, and ask you to accept these flowers for yourself and on behalf of those other pioneers, with our love and thanks.[173]

Alison's account of this event gave a pathos to, what was to her, a failed occasion: 'Doris Howles … presented a basket of flowers to Alison on the steps of St Peter's Cathedral (instead of at the Peace Park as originally planned) after the ordination on Saturday 5 December 1992. Elaine Gregory and (by chance) Canon Ron Williams witnessed the presentation.'[174] The pathos was inherent in the tribute itself as it was an effort, like previous ones, to keep Alison, an embarrassment as always, within the new form of life.

The purpose and motivation of the Movement for the Ordination of Women were questioned after these ordinations and closure was considered. Alison, who 'never gave up on anything or anyone' championed the cause believing that the cause of women in the church was still to be fought for. The Movement in the Church of England was wound up after about 1400 women were ordained as priests.[175] A new group, W.A.T.C.H. (Women and the Church), grew out of their realisation that women's position in the church was still precarious and

[173] Doris Howles, tribute to AG, 5 December 1992.
[174] The founding members of WHO? were cited incorrectly. Alison sent proposed corrections to Doris by letter, 16 December 1992.
[175] Janet Scarfe (national president MOW) to Friends in MOW, 25 May 1994.

that women were not yet admitted as bishops in the threefold ministry.[176] Alison suggested the new name MOWatch – incorporating the old protest, the new vigilance and the inherited connection with the English church. The change in status of many women who had supported and led the movement meant they were now busy parish priests and no longer had the interest of a protest movement at heart. This opened the way for Alison to be in a national leadership role. In 1999 she became vice-president of MOWatch. One of its roles was the support of MOW Sydney, so Alison travelled to Sydney for its annual general meetings, as well as to other capital cities for network meetings. The two major functions of MOWatch were the production of a quarterly newsletter that reflected issues relevant to both lay and ordained women and the organisation of a biennial conference.

The 2006 conference provided a venue for discussion on, and agitation for, women bishops.[177] An elderly Alison, then in her eighty-sixth year, was eager to engage in a new stage of women's struggle to gain recognition in the church. Porter documented 'the story behind the [Appellate] Tribunal's historic decision' which, having clarified the situation, ruled that the constitution already permitted women bishops.[178] In 2008 two women were consecrated as bishops: the Reverend Kay Goldsworthy in Perth on 22 May and the Reverend Barbara Darling in Melbourne on 31 May. Alison travelled to Perth with the support of MOWatch colleagues. Bishop Garry Weatherill, then bishop of Willochra, recalled the scene at the reception in the Grand Ballroom in Government House in Perth after the consecration:

> Alison was quite feeble and she came in a wheelchair, but she was in her best finery, she had her favourite jewels on and she could not stop smiling. She sat there in that grand place listening to speeches but really she didn't seem to me to be in a wheelchair at all, she seemed somehow to be floating. And she received people, much like a royal personage would, as they came forward to share memories, and to

[176] 'W.A.T.C.H. (Women and the Church) … saw the closing of MOW there as a wrong decision. At one time MOW had 10,000 members; it now has about 400 and is growing as a totally new venture.' Morna Sturrock, MOW. *Bread and Wine* (Summer, 1998): 13. In 2013 WATCH has a vibrant website. The failure to accept women as bishops in 2012 has energised the organisation.
[177] Charles Sherlock, ed. *Women in the Wings ... Waiting for Purple*, Proceedings of the 2006 MOWatch Conference (Melbourne: MOWatch Inc, 2006).
[178] Muriel Porter, *Women in Purple: Women Bishops in Australia*, vol. 1, Voices: Quarterly Essays on Religion in Australia (Melbourne: John Garratt, 2008), p. 6.

> share congratulations and stories of the struggle. It was clear to me then that Alison was a great matriarch to the women of our church.[179]

Alison described the consecration as the completion of her 'life's work.'[180]

Conclusion

The process by which the Anglican Church in Adelaide moved from one form of life that excluded women from Holy Orders to another form of life that accepted women in Holy Orders, this process was a grammatical ordeal. We have seen how the priesting was conducted in Adelaide with no adaptation of the exclusive language in the Ordinal. A more inclusive Prayer Book was published in 1995. The inclusive language signified a deeper ordeal. Those at either end of the spectrum of opinion and belief had suffered the threat of exclusion from the church they loved. They were bound up in the struggle to make sense of the meaning of ordination, and to convince the middle parties of their view that unless the right meaning (their meaning) prevailed the whole Anglican Church would be compromised.

Alison Gent was the prophetic voice of the protest movement for the ordination of women in Adelaide that inspired its genesis and influenced the grammar of its form of life. Her grammar of ordination and church was complex; it involved giving new meaning to ordination and ministry, while retaining the old grammar of service, and suffering. She reiterated the grammar of the women's movement against sexism, at the same time respecting the church as an institution. For Alison it was never a matter of believing that one's call was valid without the consent of the church. She reflected:

> I became very clear in my mind during all my activities for WHO? and MOW that what ordination really amounts to is the recognition of the ordained vocation by the official church; that's the beginning but I never got there.[181]

Her complex personality compounded the difficulties she experienced and she became a thorn in the side of the movement as well as the opposition.

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[179] Bishop Garry Weatherill, funeral sermon, 17 November 2009.
[180] AG *TC*, 10 September 2008. 'My job ended when I went to Perth.'
[181] AG *Int*, 28-29 November 2005, p. 7.

8 ALISON AND THE PROTEST FOR WOMEN'S ORDINATION PART 2

The reshaping of the protest movement brought about a change in the grammar of the church freeing it from gender-based exclusions. With a new grammar and the progress of women through the church's hierarchy, the status of women could be seen to have advanced. This was true in part. However in many other respects the grammar of the church and its form of life remain unchanged, and the way in which ordained women play out their roles within the church has profound implications for the grammar and actions of ordination. Rejoicing in women's advancement was natural after the long and sometimes brutal debate; celebratory lists were published in the MOW magazine enumerating women ordained, and their position. However there is always cause for vigilance in the exercise of hierarchical power: heading a committee, being in charge of a parish, having preferment (such as an archdeaconry) or an appointment to a well-to-do parish, could well mean that women become seduced by and entrenched in the same power that resulted in the patriarchal church in the old dispensation.

Despite the many advances of women in the church's hierarchy, (and hierarchy is inherently dangerous) their status and general wellbeing, whether ordained or lay, needed to be continually assessed. This was recognised after the 1992 ordinations when MOW saw the need to keep the welfare of ordained women in focus and also to provide a support base for women in dioceses not ordaining women. The change in the church's form of life brought about a change in the protest movement, which was signified in the change of name to MOWatch, 'keeping watch in the interest of women in the Church' and a change of grammar.[182] Nevertheless it retains the grammar of a movement which 'shews' its meaning by being alert to current trends. The ministry of laywomen has become an important part of the life of the church, for example, and this is seen in the movement's charter.[183] The language of sisterhood is also part of the

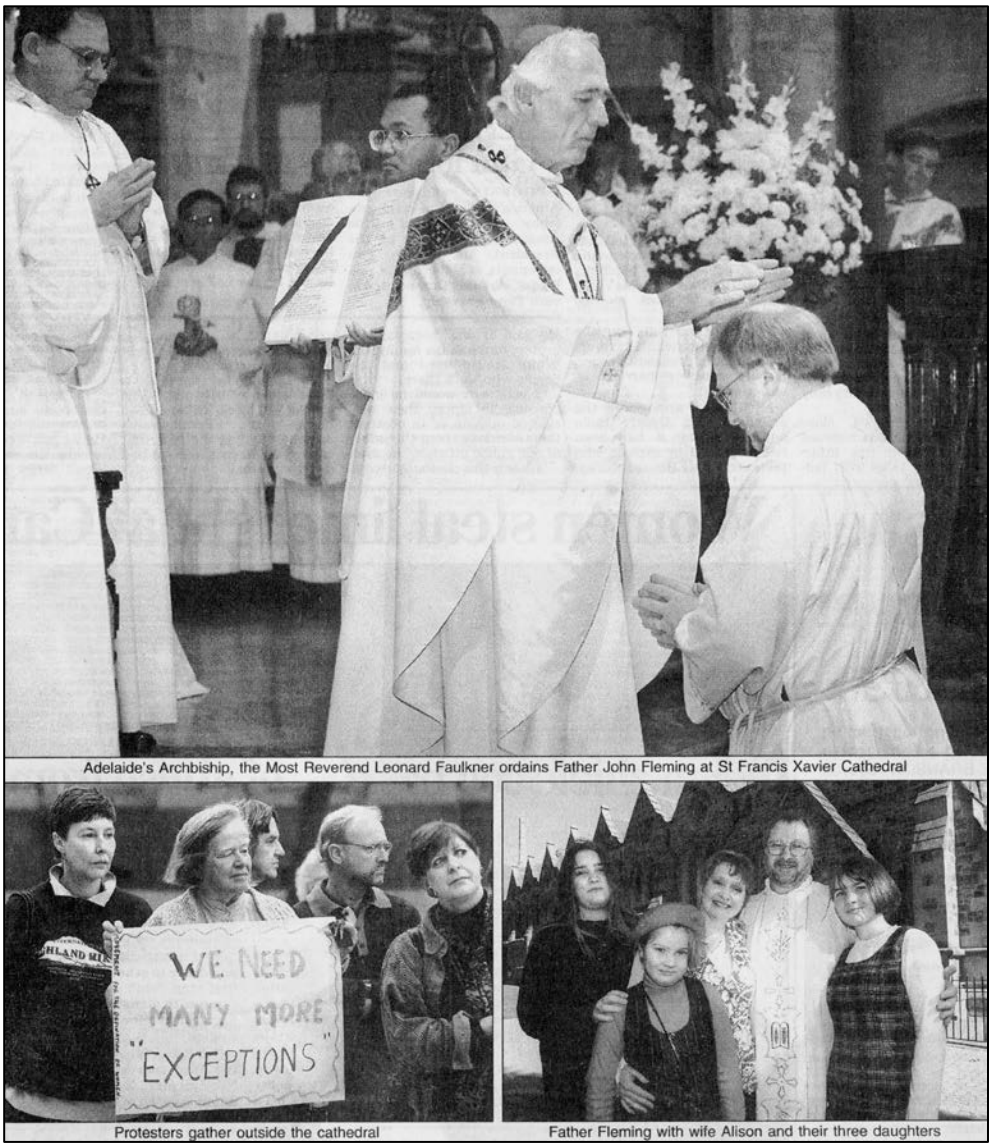
[182] Advertisement, *Australian Anglican Directory, 2012*, p. ix.
[183] MOWatch brochure, 2012. 'A Movement of Women and the Anglican Church in Australia. Committed to Challenging and Transforming the Anglican Church of Australia and Its Role in the Community.' President, MOWatch, letter sent out with *MOWatching* to all Australian women clergy, May 2012. 'MOWatch is the only organisation with the sole purpose of encouraging and fostering ministries of women, lay and ordained.' Few women ordained in Adelaide were active in the early protest movement or remain interested in its activities. In 2013 four of the 54 women clergy, in the Province of South Australia, including the author, were paid up members of MOWatch.

grammar of the newly evolving group. The existence of MOWatch reiterates the same conviction which was Alison's: that she 'never doubted the best place to work for change in the Church was inside the Church, in whatever denomination one finds oneself; and that one does this because one loves the Church, not just for political expediency.'[184]

Alison's prophetic voice subverted the existing grammar of both the church and the protest movement. The Reverend Alison Cheek also spoke prophetically to a meeting of women gathered at the invitation of Rev. Caroline Pearce. Subverting the grammar of success, she asked, 'You've got equality, but what are you going to do about liberation?'[185]

The question is pertinent and unanswered.

[184] AG, eulogy for Joan van der Sman, 11 June 1997.
[185] Alison Cheek, Broadview, 18 March 2008.

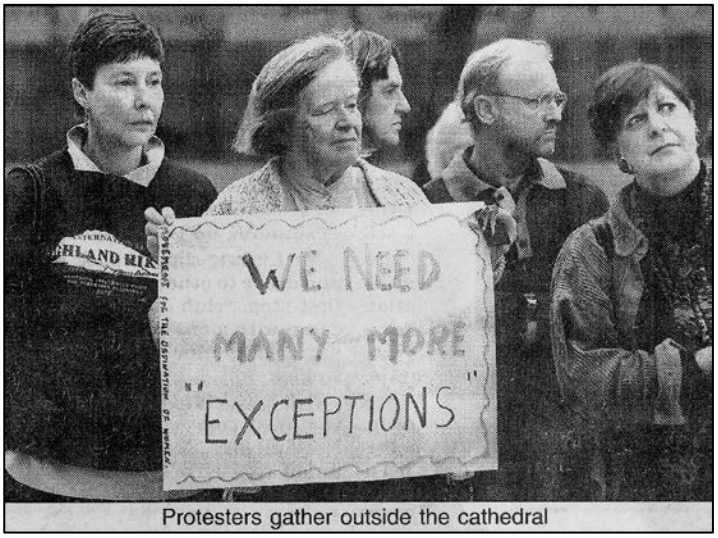


Adelaide's Archbishop, the Most Reverend Leonard Faulkner ordains Father John Fleming at St Francis Xavier Cathedral

Protesters gather outside the cathedral

Father Fleming with wife Alison and their three daughters

8:1 The event was reported in the press.



Protesters gather outside the cathedral

8:2 Alison demonstrating outside St Francis Xavier's Cathedral Adelaide at the ordination of Father John Fleming into the Roman Catholic Church.



8:3 Alison proudly wearing her Lay Readers cross. Father Grant Bullen, rector of St Mary Magdalene's, 1998-2003, encouraged Alison in ministry in the parish



8:4 Alison shares a reading with the Reverend Barbara Pace. Barbara was the first laywoman hospital chaplain and was ordained in 1986 and 1992 in Melbourne. Alder Hall's banner is in the background. MOW conference Adelaide 1986



8:5 MOW Conference at St Mark's College, Adelaide 1999, which celebrated the launch of MOWatch as distinct from MOW(National) having successfully changed the constitution. Alison is standing 4th from R.

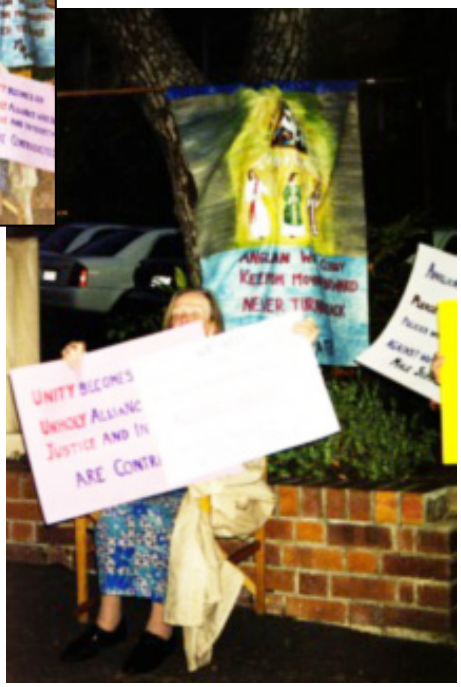


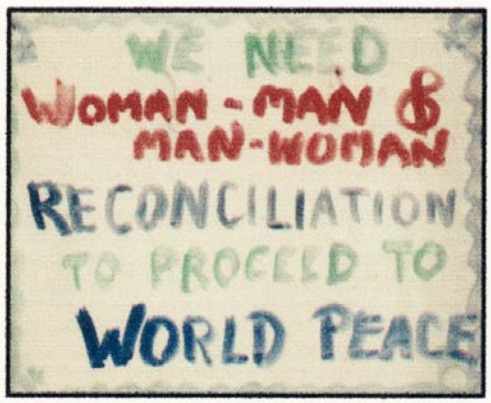
8:6 Alison, the inveterate conference participant, is keenly attentive at the Adelaide Conference.

8:7 The MOWatch demonstration at General Synod in Brisbane in 2001. Mavis Rose in second from L. The three photographs show Alison subverting the demonstrating of clearly printed placards with her own, less distinct one









8:8 A similar placard that Alison would have used at a Peace march. She added a line 'as well as rich, poor and racial' for the Brisbane demonstration

8: 9 Alison travelled to Pt Pirie for the ordination of Rev. Philippa Wetherell to the priesthood in the Diocese of Willochra in 2003.
Alison is seated next to Philippa. Standing from L, Rev. Lesley McLean, Kathy Toal, Gwyneth Ottrey





8:10 The MOWatch stand, General Synod, Perth 2004. L to R: , Alison Gent, Mary Jenkins, Kathleen Toal and Rev. Val Graydon (President 1997-2008). MOWatch had stands at General Synod for the Women Bishop debates in 2001, 2004 and 2007.



8:11 The two Alisons had a mutual respect for the warrior stand they each had taken for the ordination of women.

At a lunch in honour of the Reverend Alison Cheek at St Phillip's Broadview hosted by the Reverend Caroline Pearce and Dianne Bradley.
18 March 2008



8: 12 Alison's frailty is evident as she poses with Gabrielle Suttie having recently arrived In Sydney from Adelaide by train



8:13 Alison was feted at the WATAC Conference at Canterbury Park in May 2007 as the oldest attendee and a founding member. She is seated with Gabrielle Suttie who provided accommodation



8:14 Alison's last interstate venture, the consecration of the Reverend Kay Goldsworthy to the episcopate in Perth, 22 May 2008. From L, Rev. Lesley McLean, Sue Henry Edwards, Bishop Kay, Alison, Judy Little, Archbishop Roger Herft, Kathleen Toal and Bishop Victoria Matthews, who led Kay's retreat and was soon to be installed as bishop of Christchurch, New Zealand

CONCLUSION

BEING WOMAN
IN CHRIST
IS THE
FORM AND STATURE
OF MY
FULL HUMANITY[1]

The human body is the best picture of the human soul[2]

In December 2012 the Anglican Church in Australia marked the twentieth anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood. The organisation to which Alison Gent had been so faithfully committed, MOWatch, celebrated the occasion on 22-23 November with a conference. The conference could also celebrate women's ordination to the threefold order of sacred ministry; the three Australian women bishops all attended. The conference was held in Canberra, Australia's capital city, the site of the great institutions of government. At that time the national parliamentary leader, the Prime Minister, was a woman, the Right Honourable Julia Gillard, and the vice-regal representative, the Governor General, was a woman, the Honourable Quentin Bryce AC, CVO. Both women were the first to hold these positions in Australia.

[1] Alison's statement for the march for International Women's Day 6 March 1982. She wrote the phrase in her copy of Johannes Metz *Poverty of Spirit* (Paramus NJ, Paulist Press, 1968)
[2] Wittgenstein, *PI*, 178.

CONCLUSION

The conference and its setting were symbolic of the change of women's roles in Australian society as well as the church. This change was brought about by women like Alison who perceived injustice and worked to overcome it. In this thesis I have presented Alison's simultaneous commitment and concern for women in the church and the world and her prophetic role.

While the conference gave much expression of joy in women's liberation in the church, the Reverend Dr Sarah Bachelard, in her paper 'Contemplative Prophets', urged the need to remember the past and the prophets.[3] I have argued that Alison's story is important because her prophetic ideas were informed by a deep spirituality and understanding of the human condition. I have established that she understood the cost of her actions and willingly, but not without protest, bore the wounds of carrying her cross. Her growth in the faith, her marriage, and her role in the liberation of both church and society's women are a testament for the remembering of one of our mothers in the faith. When we remember our faith mothers we are part of the great Judeo-Christian tradition of remembering – the prophets, the saints, the martyrs – those who stood outside the safety of convention and trod the narrow path of sacrifice.

Goals achieved and the subsequent safety and satisfaction that accompany them are fraught with danger. At the National Feminist Theology Conference in Melbourne in 1995, the Reverend Janet Gaden warned the women recently ordained: 'Instead of triumphal self-congratulation remember, "remember that you were once a slave in the land of Egypt"'.[4] Alison had been well aware of the dangers of success and the seduction of authority in the church. She said that: 'they've forgotten the women that got them into the clergy; [ordination has] divided them from MOW.'[5] As has been illustrated, Alison was always prepared to be what Bachelard called an 'outsider'.[6] This situation earned her epithets such as 'lightning rod'.[7] Alison Cheek recognised

[3] Sarah Bachelard, "Contemplative Prophets," in *And your daughters shall prophesy...* (Canberra 2012). See www:benedictus.com.au for information on Rev. Dr. Sarah Bachelard.
[4] Ibid, p. 2.
[5] AG *Int,* 28 November 2005/2, p. 3.
[6] Bachelard, "Contemplative Prophets."
[7] Elaine Gregory, conversation, December, 2006.

the cost: 'she was so feisty they wouldn't have ordained her' and the debt: 'everybody is indebted to her.'[8]

The binary 'outsider' and 'insider' terms Bachelard employed may aptly be applied to Alison. We have seen, for example, how she remained within the women's movement but found ways to adapt it to her purposes in the Tuesday Afternoon Group. In that sense, she may be seen as an outsider. Nevertheless, she continued to be a practising Christian so that in both circles, sacred and secular, she was simultaneous in her advocacy for the rights of women and the unity of humanity. In Chapter 6 I demonstrated how Alison's experience in the women's movement gave her the language and actions to fight against women's oppression and for women's freedom. And in Chapters 7 and 8, I narrated and analysed Alison's advocacy of sisterhood in the church and the equality of men and women. The complexity of Alison's approach to her positions in the church and women's movement, and indeed all the subsidiary groups and movements to which she belonged, called for a flexible analysis. Alison lived in many worlds, each informing the other; worlds which stood in contradistinction to each other. Wittgenstein's analogy of a 'weave' has permitted a subtle but effective dissection of some aspects of Alison's life into 'forms'. This methodology was explicated in Chapter 3. Each form that I chose to examine, and which were described in Chapters 4-8, is complemented by the others, but can be comprehended as an entity. Nevertheless, these chapters can only give a glimpse into the overall narrative which I have gleaned from interviews and documents. The difficulties and complications of examining a long life were explained in Chapter 2. There must surely be other aspects which are as yet unexplored. Wittgenstein commented that: 'We talk, we utter words, and only *later* get a picture of their life.'[9]

An overriding element in Alison's life that also needed to be addressed was her sense of 'belonging' and its concomitant notion of commitment. For Alison, this was grounded in her experience of family and further reinforced by her school and church life. The sense of all-encompassing belonging was taught in the churches she attended as a child and young woman. George Lindbeck

[8] Alison Cheek, comment, 2008.

[9] Wittgenstein, *PI*, p. 209.

provided the methodology with which to examine community as explained in Chapter 3.[10] His methodology was applied in both Chapter 4, in which the community of the Anglican Church in Adelaide was examined and Chapter 6 on the women's movement. Lindbeck provided a methodology which could be applied to both sacred and secular communities.

Alison foresaw the risks of success in godly terms. Bachelard, at the Canberra conference, offered a theological reflection on 'why God thinks being an insider is so dangerous'. It was, she suggested:

> because insiders can get stuck in a 'virtual reality', disconnected from life beyond their system and so trapped in a kind of illusion, which is often kept in place by a specialist language, jargon. And it is dangerous because insiders need there to be outsiders – people against whom they secure their identity and sense of goodness. When God says: 'Remember that you were once a slave in the land of Egypt' I think God is saying: Don't do that. Don't set up an inside and an outside – with some permanently excluded. And don't think that your being on the inside is anything to do with your particular superiority or virtue or desert – it is the Lord your God who redeemed you. Your life belongs not to you but to God. It is for the blessing of all peoples.[11]

Bachelard is here making a plea for her audience, the church, to be a community conscious of its redemption. I have attempted to illustrate Alison as a person who wanted just this. Alison often expressed admiration for those whose lives 'belonged to God', such as Li Tim Oi, the first woman to be priested in the Anglican Communion. Alison said, 'We can celebrate the fact that the first woman priest is so irreproachable spiritually. She had no ambition to be a priest, none whatever. She wasn't fulfilling her own importance or anything.'[12]

Bachelard warned that insiders are dangerous because they create outsiders by establishing a 'system of goodness.'[13] I have tried to establish that Alison's, or any person's, bad behaviour need not be the sum of their worth, that it is rather their ability to recover, to forgive, and to renew friendship that is the true measure of worth. Throughout this thesis many instances of 'bad' Alison have been recorded. At St Clement's she was 'too religious'; in the women's movement she was 'too loyal' to her marriage. Despite 'not suffering fools

[10] Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*.
[11] Bachelard, "Contemplative Prophets," p. 6.
[12] AG *Int*, 20 March 2007 p. 10.
[13] Bachelard, "Contemplative Prophets," p. 3. Bachelard is using James Allison's phrase.

gladly', Alison's comment, 'it doesn't matter what you do you're in trouble', did not express resignation but rather the reality that is the life of an outsider.[14] She was aware that her sisters in the faith, who were seeking and had received ordination, faced the danger of being drawn into a 'system of goodness.' The awareness evoked her empathy rather than her condemnation, fro, she said 'women priests are not popular unless they do what people think they should.'[15]

I have written in order that my readers may find not just information but matters for contemplation, contention and renewal. The Reverend Dawn Colsey is grateful to Alison and other activists whose protest helped achieve ordination for women such as herself. She honoured Alison with a poem 'Jacaranda', marking the flowering of jacaranda trees at the time of Alison's death and commemorating her in the colours of MOW and women's suffrage:

> Your bells ring and flourish
> in purple abundance.
> With ferny green leaves
> you draw white from clouds,
> to complete the trinity
> of feminist colours,
> you feisty woman-tree.[16]

Alison's life, I have contended, offers much of worth to people in the twenty-first century. I have explained how she understood human beings as equal, male and female, equally deserving of justice and love. Underlying her struggle for justice was the belief in the unity of humanity. These two fundamental beliefs about the human race motivated her to promote a change in people's perception of their state of being. My writing thus takes on the confessional form as an apologetic to post-modernism which abandons structures and fosters individualism. Like Alison I find it 'necessary to take a stand against the dominant thought patterns of the day.'[17]

As Alison grew more frail, she spent more of her time resting in bed. She continued to talk to friends on the telephone as usual, but also 'began listening to music.'[18] Certain music brought back memories so that her reflections were

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[14] AG *Int,* 17 August 2006, p.6.
[15] AG, telephone conversation, 1 January 2007.
[16] Appendix G: 4.
[17] McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, p. 165.
[18] AG, telephone conversation, 4 August 2007.

often intense. It was at such times that she would ring and tell me her thoughts and reveal yet more of her wide knowledge. On a radio programme about the composer Schubert, the presenter, attempting to explain his precocious ability, thought 'that [Schubert] could understand things beyond his years'[19]. Alison was reminded of her own precocious abilities, understanding and powerful passion. This ability, understanding and passion she identified as rising from 'a fiery soul'. Relating her experience to me, she quoted from John Dryden's poem:

> A fiery soul, which working out its way,
> Fretted the pygmy body to decay,
> And o'er informed the tenement of clay.'[20]

In this thesis I have presented Alison as a 'narrative enfleshed'[21], her body as 'a unit of significance.'[22] Within each form of life, the Anglican Church and the women's movement, marriage and women's ordination, her frail flesh, her lived life, 'contested the order of the narrativity'[23]. At her centre – a fiery soul.

[19] Ibid. Graham Abbott, 'Keys to Music.'
[20] John Dryden *Absalom and Achitophel*, Pt I, 1. 156.
[21] Chapter 3, p. 2.
[22] Wyschogrod, *Saints and Post-modernism*.
[23] Ibid.

MATERIAL IN ADDITION TO THE MAIN TEXT

ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACG	*Adelaide Church Guardian*
ACT	Australian College of Theology
AV	Authorised Version of the Bible
BCP	Book of Common Prayer
CHN	Community of the Holy Name
CJM	Company of Joseph and Mary
CSC	Community of the Sisters of the Church
MOW	Movement for the Ordination of Women
MOWSA	Movement for the Ordination of Women South Australia
MOWatch	Movement of Women and the Church
MU	Mothers' Union
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (of the Bible)
SASR	Sout0h Australian State Records
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SSM	Society of the Sacred Mission
SLSA	State Library of South Australia
ThA	Associate in Theology
ThL	Licentiate in Theology
WLM	Women's Liberation Movement
YB	*Yearbook of the Church of England: including the dioceses of Adelaide and Willochra* *Yearbook of the Church of England in Australia in the dioceses of Adelaide, Willochra and The Murray* *Yearbook of the Province of South Australia, including the Dioceses of Adelaide, Willochra, The Murray*
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Primary Sources

AG *Int*	Alison Gent *Interviews*
AG *TC*	Alison Gent *Telephone conversations*
AG *DJ*	Alison Gent *Devotions journals*
AG *NB*	Alison Gent *Notebooks*
AG *PJ*	Alison Gent *Personal journals*
AG *LMP*	Alison Gent *Lectures on Metaphysical Poetry*
AG *PRH*	*Personnalité et Relations Humaines* 1986; Notes Alison took while attending the course

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

The main bibliography was generated with EndNote and is found at the end of the thesis.
Primary source material, secondary source material and other material cited in the text are external to the EndNote bibliography and are listed below:

Primary Source Material

A vast, diverse and disorganised collection of documents, correspondence, personal writing and memorabilia which included an extensive collection of newspaper clippings, articles, posters and banners came into the author's possession on Alison's death. Alison was in the practice of dating, signing and giving a title and place to most items – from a scrap of paper to a book. Alison's personal items that have been particularly significant for the purposes of the thesis are listed below under the headings 'Notebooks and Journals' and 'Other Writing' which includes 'Writing cited in the Text', 'Audio Visual', ' Educational Material' and 'Memorabilia'.

Notebooks and Journals

This is a collection of fifty-four items. They contain Alison's daily reflections, notes on meetings, retreats, study groups and sermons, records of visits made and visitors, of conversations, poems and letters written, and thoughts on relationships with family and friends. I have used her titles, pagination and dating. The journals listed here have been cited in the text.

Devotions Journals

1. Black devotions journal 1943, 1966-1981
2. Black devotions journal 1944-1962
3. Devotional journal, blue spine 1953
4. Elizabeth Cole's journal 1958 – 2000
5. Retreat notes 1947 (loose sheet)

Notebooks

1. Notebook 1944-1946
2. Croxley notebook 'performances' etc
3. Croxley shorthand notebook MU meetings
4. Modern spiral notebook, red and blue 1974
5. Stenographers Shorthand Notebook, from August 1972
6. Shorthand spiral notebook, purple, from 1979

Personal Journals

1. Small green spring-back journal 1972-1978
2. Black plastic notepad 1977-1979
3. Light brown soft sugar journal 1980-1984
4 Green and black journal 1984-1986
5. *Personnalité et Relations Humaines,* 1986, Notes Alison took while attending the course

Family Appointment Diaries 1961-1971, 1976

Other Writing

Alison's writing, apart from that listed above, varied from comments jotted on envelopes or scraps of paper to essays for newsletters, magazines or speeches. Much of this writing was hand-written, dated and signed. Also included in her writing are the notes she added to most of her books, meeting minutes, prayer books. The author has a collection of about two hundred books, government and non-government reports and other material. Many cover women's issues such as feminism, church, biographies and spirituality. Most have Alison's comments in the margins. Many of these publications provided contemporary information for the thesis.

Alison's Writing Cited in the Text

'An open letter to John', 1 December 1974
Form of Service for one who has been involuntarily divorced
'The Ministry of Women: A Matter of Justice?' A talk for Christian Action for Peace, 1 June 1985.
'The Nature of a Woman's Position at a University' Talk given at Adelaide University Women's Liberation Group, 29 September 1970
Note on the attendance at first meeting of WHO?
Note written on an 'Association of Dogs for the Blind' envelope
Notice to John, April 1976
'Sisters are awake … Sisters, awake!', a report on the Elanora Conference 1975
'Studying theology' (the draft version and then the version printed) in *Partners in Ministry: A Newsletter of St Barnabas' Theological College.* 1991:2
Three lectures of metaphysical poetry: 1. The nature of metaphysical poetry, 2. The poetry of John Donne, 3. The successors of Donne (University of Adelaide. c. 1943-46)
Three Rites of Passage for the Divorced
Un-dated document, probably from a retreat or quiet day with a large drawing on one side and an explanation on the back
What to me is peace? 25 March 1986
WHO? Leaflet, 1984

Audio-Visual

The audio-tapes and video-tapes of interviews have been transcribed by the author and included in the Appendices

Education

School and university items are not a comprehensive collection, but do contain some significant writing
University tutoring career
Continuing adult education consists mainly of theological course work such as lectures notes and essays

Memorabilia

Arthur Hogben's book prize, Prince Alfred College
Australian College of Theology, Masters studies prospectus

Blueprint for progress: Al-Anon's Fourth-Step Inventory for Al-Anon and Alateen Groups (New York, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.: 1976)
Greeting cards
Orders of service for ordinations, funerals and weddings
Postcards
Posters
Prayer books and prayer cards, general
Prayer books and prayer cards, magazines and books of Marian devotion
Parsonettes, invitations, lists of clergy wives, photographs
Society of the Sacred Mission, Australian Province, leaflet, c. 1960
Travel items such as maps, brochures, diaries and books
University of Adelaide, 2002 booklet commemorating 60th anniversary of graduation ceremony; 2008 booklet commemorating 60th anniversary of graduation ceremony

Secondary Source Material

Many of these items were found in Alison's belongings. Others were sourced from libraries and archives

Serials

Australian Church Quarterly 1971- 1972 (Sydney: Australian Church Union)
Australian Anglican Directory 2012 (Melbourne: Angela Grutzner)
Australian College of Theology *Manual for the year 1974, 1975,* (Melbourne: Edgar Bragg)
Church of England in Australia, General Synod (1966) *Theological Education: a report of the Committee appointed by the General Synod,* (Sydney: General Synod Office)
Church of England in Australia, General Synod (1973) *Marriage and Divorce*: *a report of the Commission appointed by the Primate,* (Sydney: General Synod Office)
Church of England in Australia, General Synod (1981) *Report of the Standing Committee of General Synod, Vols 1 and 2,* (Sydney: General Synod Office)
The Mothers' Union, Diocese of Adelaide. *Annual Report,* 1973-1978
Year Book of the Church of England: including the diocese of Adelaide and Willochra 1934/5–1979/80, and *Diocese of The Murray, 1969/70-1979/80* (Adelaide: Church Office)
Year Book of the Province of South Australia: including the Dioceses of Adelaide, Willochra, The Murray, 1980/81-2008 (Adelaide: Church Office)

Newspapers

Church Newspapers

Adelaide Church Guardian
Church Scene: national Anglican newspaper
Market Place
Southern Cross

Adelaide Newspapers

The Advertiser
The News
Sunday Mail

Magazines and Newsletters

Parish Magazines

St Augustine's Unley, Parish Magazine 1928-1933
St John the Evangelist Halifax Street Adelaide, Parish Magazine 1920-1927
St Theodore's Rose Park, *Church Notes* 1920-1940

Other Newsletters and Magazines

Action Group for Women's Ordination Newsletter (Melbourne) September 1983, v. 2, October/November 1983; No 5 Feb 1984, No 9 June 1984
Adelaide Rape Crisis Centre: Newsletter, 1979-1981
Ave: the magazine of the Society of Mary, Dorset, UK 1961-2005 [previously Quarterly Magazine; Quarterly Notes; Magazine from Annunciationtide 1978
Church and Society News. February 1970–June 1971, Adelaide; occasional newsletter
Conference of Deaconesses *News Sheet* No 46, January 1936
Crossroads Community of the Cross of Nails, Coventry UK, 1984-1990
Distinctive Diaconate News 19-21 1987-1988*; Study* 23, 34, 35 1984-1985 Deaconess Community of St Andrew, London
Ebb and Flow: an occasional news sheet around MOW in Australia, No 1 October 1989-1992
Integrity Adelaide newsletter, 1985-1994
Liberation Adelaide: Women's Liberation Movement, [1970] 1971-2007
Magdalene: a Christian Newsletter for Women, No 1 May 1973- June 1987 Sydney
Male Exchange: Newsletter of the Men's Contact and Resources Centre, Adelaide, November 1989
Movement for the Ordination of Women in Australia national newsletter Sydney, January 1985-April 1985
MOW Magazine, May 1984-1999 (Sydney)
MOW (National) Inc, Newsletter, No 1 July 1998-June 1999
MOWSA Newsletter, January 1985-1995
MOWatching, November 1999-2013
MOW Sydney, newsletters, including *Balaam's Ass*
Ms, New York, N.Y. Lang Communications 1972-1990
National Women's Consultative Council South Australian Bulletin 1989
Network Exchange of Women's Services, NEWS, Hawthorn, Vic 1999
On Dit, Adelaide University Students' Association. Adelaide University Students' Representative Council
OWN: Older Women's Network SA, 1994
Response, National Women's Advisory Council, Canberra, 1979
Rippling Web: a WomanSpirit Link-up, Adelaide No 1 1983–No 58 1997
Switched On: newsletter of the Women's Information Switchboard
Walford House Magazine 1936-7
Women's Electoral Lobby SA Inc Newsletter 1980-1994, title changed to *WEL Read,* 1995-2002
Women's Electoral Lobby SA Inc Newsletter National Bulletin 1986-1987 v. 9 (4) – v. 10 (7)
Women's Studies Resource Centre: newsletter, 1986-1994

Minutes

Adelaide Theological Circle 1945-1960
Anglican Diocese of Adelaide, Ecumenical Affairs Commission 1998-2004
Anglican Women of Australia
Australian Church Women (South Australian Unit) 1978
CHOW: Community Housing for Older Women 1988-1994
Church and Society
Coalition for Women's Right to Choose 1983-1991
Ecumenical Decade Churches in Solidarity with Women 1988-1998: Churches and Women Task Group 1994-1998
International Year of the Child Working Group 1978
MOW (National) Inc. 1997
MOWSA November 1984-1995
National Council of Women of South Australia Inc Council, 1974-1993
Pro-Life 1979
South Australian Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission 1983–1999
SACC General Council meetings 2000-2006
Southern Areas Mothering Unit Association Inc 1982-1988
UN Commission on the Status of Women (SA) Committee 1980
YWCA Purpose and Concern committee, December 1978–1985
WHO? 1983-1985
Women's Information Switchboard Support Group 1978-2004
Women's Services Working Party Project Advisory Meeting, 30 January 1986

Conferences

Anglican Society Conference Adelaide 1979
Anglican Women of Australia Triennial
Catholic Renewal Conference, Adelaide 23-27 September 1980
Church and Society 1978
Diocese of Adelaide, Selection Conference 1989, 1992.
Ecumenical Christian Feminist 1989
Movement for the Ordination of Women, then, MOWatch, 1985- 20012
Mothers' Union
Ordination of Catholic Women
Pro-life Emergency Pregnancy Support Service Centres June 1979
Student Christian Movement
Women And The Australian Church
Women Workers' Conference, 1961, 1962

Other Material Cited In The Text

The Australian Hymn Book (Sydney, Collins 1977)
The English Hymnal with tunes (London, Oxford University Press, 1933)
Bible Authorised Version [AV]; Revised Standard Version [RSV], New Revised Standard Version[NRSV].
Gardening Handbook compiled by John Dwight, Parks and Gardens Officer of the South Australian Housing Trust (Adelaide, c. 1958)
Gent v. Robin and the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide Incorporated [1958] SASR 328.

Implications of the Admission of Men and Women to the Diaconate – Adelaide September 1987, MOWSA.
Ministry of Women in the New Testament. Anglican Board of Christian Education. Adelaide, c.1982
Older Women's Speakout, The Older Women's Festival
The Ordination of Women. Anglican Board of Christian Education. Adelaide, c. 1983
St Clement's Enfield *Vestry Book* 1946-1956
St Phillip's Broadview *Vestry Book* 1946-1956
Union of Anglican Catholic Priests, South Australia, Incorporated. *Constitution and By-Laws*. 1979
Union of Anglican Catholic Laity, South Australia, Incorporated. *Constitution and By-Laws*. 1981

INTERVIEWS

These interviews were conducted face-to-face with the author, recorded and transcribed. The place where the interview was conducted is noted.

The primary interviewee was Alison Gent. Interviews were conducted at Alison's home from 2005 to 2008. Telephone and other informal conversations with author from 2006 to 2009 were also noted.

Ms Pam Albany	Sydney	21 May 2008
Dr Carolyn Boyd	Bridgewater SA	1 December 2011
Mrs Dianne Bradley	Col Light Gdns SA	10 December 2008
Ms Molly Brannigan	Adelaide	6 July 2010
Rev. Alison Cheek	Marion SA	17 March 2008
Rev. Joan Claring-Bould	North Adelaide SA	9 October 2011
Ms Heather Crosby	Adelaide	16 October 2011
Ms Elisabeth Dunnicliffe	Rose Park SA	3 October 2007
Rev. Sr Elisa Helen CSC	Melbourne	May 2008
Mr Christopher Gent	Walkerville SA	9 August 2011
Ms Lavinia Gent	Bridgewater SA	17 December 2012
Mr Charles Gent	Westbourne Pk	28 October 2008
Mr Peter Gent	Westbourne Pk	19 November 2009
Ms Sue Gent	Westbourne Pk	28 October 2008
Rev. Donald Grey-Smith	Semaphore SA	12 November 2010
Sr Roberta Hackendorf IBVM	Kensington SA	4 August 2010
Ms Irene Harris	Woodville SA	9 September 2010
Mr Terry Hemmings	Bridgewater SA	4 May 2011
Ms Sue Henry-Edwards	Sydney	20 May 2008
Rev. Sr Juliana SI	Adelaide	20 September 2011
Ms Pam Lindsay	Magill SA	16 September 2010 21 October 2010
Ms Deborah McCulloch	Bridgewater SA	7 September 2011
Rev. Elizabeth McWhae	Unley SA	6 September 2011
Ms Peggy Mares	Adelaide	11 May 2011
Ms Jeannie Minnis	Sydney	24 May 2008
Ms Anna Morrison	Adelaide	20 June 2012
Ms Lihla Myles	Melbourne	25 August 2008

Rev. Peter Patterson	Adelaide	16 November 2011
Rev. Caroline Pearce	Broadview SA	3 December 2008
Ms Beth Potter	Crafers West SA	13 September 2010
Rt Rev. Keith Rayner	St Georges SA	7 December 2011
Ms Heather Robson	Crafers West SA	13 September 2010
Dr Janet Scarfe	Melbourne	26 November 2008
Rt Rev. Stuart Smith	Adelaide	20 September 2011
Rev. Susan Straub	Adelaide	30 November 2011
Rev. Alison Whish	Melbourne	26 November 2008
Ms Barbara Willow	Adelaide	20 September 2011

Telephone Interviews

Rev. Flo Walters (Monaghan)	November 2011
Ms Joan Durdin	July 2012
Rev. Philip Carter	November 2012
Ms Estelle Gobbett	October 2011
Ms Elaine Gregory	December 2006
Ms Dorothy Thorpe	2011, 2012

Emails

Rev. Grant Bullen	21 February 2013
Mr Peter Burdon	30 May 2013
Rev. Ron Dowling	21 February 2013
Mr Stewart Perkins	21 February 2013
Dr Anthony Radford	5 October 2010
Ms Mavis Rose	June 2013

Interviews conducted prior to thesis research

Ms Alder Hall	Prospect	11 September 2003-13 November 2003
Ms Irene Jeffreys	Marryatville	12 June 2003- 21 August 2003

Alder and Irene were interviewed for their own stories and with no particular reference to Alison Gent

APPENDIX A EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

A:1 Alison's Confirmation Certificate, St Augustine's, 17 August 1934

Diocese of Adelaide

CONFIRMATION

✠ ✠

"Not by might nor by power, but by MY SPIRIT, saith the Lord of Hosts."



"Grieve not the HOLY SPIRIT of God, in Whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption.

✠ ✠

.....Alison Grace Hogben.....

Confirmed in .....St. Augustine's..... Church

.....Unley.....on.....Aug. 17th 1934

+ Reginald Bishop of Riverina

Admitted to Holy Communion on.....

(Priest's Signature) .....Frank Weston. Rector

RULE OF LIFE.

1. Prayer (St. Matthew vi., 5-15).
To pray daily—morning and evening.
To read my Bible daily.
To attend Church at least once on Sunday.
To receive Holy Communion, after careful preparation, regularly and at the Greater Festivals.

2. Fasting (St. Matthew vi., 16-18).
To do some act of special self-denial on the appointed Fast Days.
To exercise always self-control in Eating Drinking and Sleeping.
To be unselfish in my relations with others

3. Almsgiving (St. Matthew vi., 1-4).
To give a definite sum weekly to the Church.
To do some Church Work regularly (Choir, School, Visiting, etc.).
To be helpful in my own Home.
To remember my duty to pray and work for Missions.

I resolve to try, GOD helping me, to keep this three-fold Rule of Life.

(Candidate's Signature) .....

(Date) .....

A DAILY PRAYER

DEFEND, O LORD, me Thy child, with Thy Heavenly Grace, that I may continue Thine for ever and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until I come to Thy everlasting Kingdom: through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

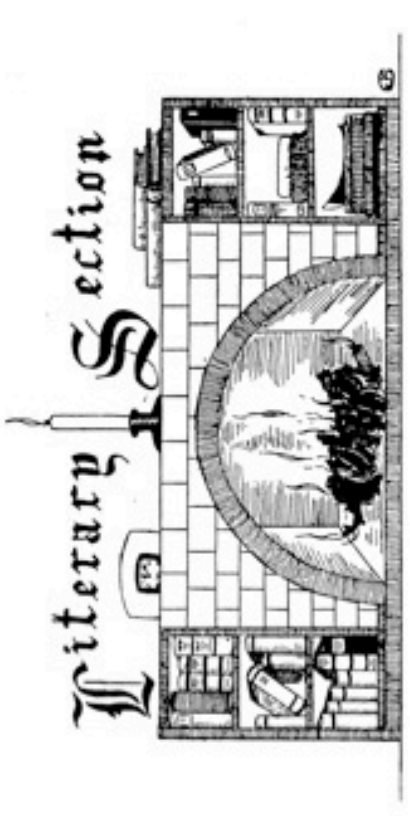
A:2 Alison's Successful Final year at Walford House School

Two essays and a poem and a list of prizes, awards and other achievements were
printed in *Walford House Magazine* 1937

Rabbit" are always pleasing to them, for there is plenty of excitement without any need for the consideration of problems of right and wrong. The moral can, in some cases, do more harm than good, for the essential punishment of evil may cause grief to children like those who cry when David slays Goliath. The only story with a real moral which I know that children enjoy is Collodi's "Pinocchio," for the hero is such an interesting character that all his sins and punishments can be followed with true enjoyment.

Children are always so intensely interested in almost every story that is told to them that they make a very appreciative audience. Like grown-ups, they have a variety of tastes, and the quiet life of a field-mouse or a garden snail may not attract a child who delights in battles and pirates. Yet it is very seldom that they are not grateful to anyone who tries to amuse them by a story, however poor the effort may be. Children take a long time to acquire a preference for reading to themselves, and even the most precocious of them will not refuse an offer from someone who can tell a story "out of their head." With all the children's books which are being published now, it seems likely that the art of the story-teller will never be unwanted, for he now has a greater variety of stories than ever at his disposal.

ALISON HOGBEN (VIa.)



ESSAYS (UNPREPARED).

ON TELLING STORIES TO CHILDREN

The present day is, without a doubt, a time when children are encouraged to think and to act as they feel inclined to a far greater extent than ever before. Conscientious parents take care not to influence too far the natural bent of their child's mind. He is allowed to work out his own ideas, and is not punished if he says things which seem to question the accepted theories of the working of the universe. On the whole, I should say that the modern attitude is commendable. Of course, there are extreme cases of parents who, by refusing to curb any of their child's impulses, make him quite insufferable in the opinion of everyone else; but, fortunately, these instances are rare, and the modern method of bringing up children compares favourably with that of the Victorian age, when the family was ruled sternly by discipline, precept and example.

If we look into the books that our mothers and grandmothers used in their childhood, we can understand clearly the differences between their lives and those of the children of to-day. Every story, every poem and rhyme that was read to them had a moral, and a moral so strict that very few people, whatever their age, would accept it unconditionally. All their stories were of virtue and patience rewarded, of evil and what we regard to-day as healthy exuberance, punished. These books amuse us now, but we no longer read them to children. Why should children be troubled with questions of conduct before they are old enough to understand what it means? The writer of stories for children now makes it his aim to create a character that they will love and be interested in, not one that will teach them the principles of good behaviour. Nobody could say that "Winnie-the-Pooh" was a moral character; strict followers of the Victorian method of upbringing might even accuse him of being too fond of food; but he is very lovable, and every child is enchanted with his adventures.

One tendency that I cannot admire in some modern children is that of disliking "Alice in Wonderland." This must be the fault of their upbringing, for it cannot be natural to reject the delights of such a host of strange and wonderful creatures as Lewis Carroll has invented. If I were in the habit of telling stories to children, "Alice's" adventures would be my chief amusement for them, along with Grahame's "The Wind in the Willows," and the "Christopher Robin" stories and poems of A. A. Milne.

Anyone who has ever told stories to children can have no doubt that the story, and not the moral, is what they want. The simple adventures of a character like "Peter

It is the same with everything else. We talk of friendship, courage, and unselfishness, but it is only for convenience that we call these the best things in life. What we really know and appreciate are the outward signs of these qualities, and these are so often shown in little things.

The Greeks believed in the entire development of man, in his mind and body, as the highest good in life. We who study and admire their ideas to-day try to apply them to modern times. To bring ourselves into touch with every aspect of life, and there to find things that can give us pleasure, should be our aim. The more "best things" that man can find in his life, the less he will tend to follow what is not the best. If we could all be sure what were the most important things in life, those most worthy of our time and attention, we should spend less of our energies in useless occupations, and perhaps the problems of to-day, caused by action without thought, would be solved.

ALISON HUGHES (Old)

Everyone would agree, I think, that the best things in life are those which bring pleasure, but whether that pleasure should be deep or only on the surface, momentary or lasting, is a matter of opinion. We have such a wide variety of likes and dislikes that not many people are likely to find that their tastes correspond exactly, or that their enjoyment can be clearly traced to abstract causes. Most of us enjoy things from every department of life. We like natural beauty and the appearance of a great engine made by man; we like to hear the sound of the sea as well as the intricate music of an orchestra; we enjoy these widely different pleasures in more or less the same degree, though in varying moods. There are a few to whom one thing stands out far above all others, and to that they can devote their lives; such are the great musicians and artists, who give pleasure to the ordinary people who are interested in every department of life equally.

Perhaps the easiest way to realise what are the best things in life is to take some small thing that we know we enjoy without worrying about the reason. The poets who have the power of putting our feelings into words have often taken something little to illustrate their philosophy. Rupert Brooke, who tried to make an art of finding what was most beautiful in the world, named among the things he loved best:—

"White plates and cups, clean-gleaming,
Ringed with blue lines; and feathery, fairy dust;
Wet roofs beneath the lamp-light; the strong crust
Of friendly bread; and many-tasting food;
Rainbows; and the blue, bitter smoke of wood;
And radiant raindrops, couching in cool flowers;
And flowers themselves."

These are things that everybody loves, though it would be hard to say why. Some of them are made by man, some by nature; some are pleasing to the sight, some to the sense of touch or taste. We could bring them into groups to make an abstract theory, but it is not really the theory that we love.

THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE.

(The special prize for an essay has again been won by A. Hughes.)

It would be very unusual to meet anyone, other than a reputed philosopher, who had a clear idea of what was best in life, for most of us are too little accustomed to spend time in analysing our actions and reactions to have a theory on the subject. If we ask those around us what they consider best, their answers are likely to be either too flippant or too serious. Some will reply, in the manner of a savage, that eating and sleeping are without a doubt the most important things in the life of man. Others will put forth abstract theories which we know they cannot have developed for themselves, and, though nobody can deny that these theories are noble, they have little value if we are considering the ideas of an individual. A person who looks at the question reasonably, trying to be neither a cynic nor a hypocrite, will be almost certain to discover that he has no definite answer at all.

ARCHAEOPTERYX.

When hairy mammoths roamed around,
And dinosaurs were often found,
And all was one great lizard-ground,
The achaeopteryx
Contrived to grow a pair of wings,
And left the heavy-footed things
To endless muddy wallowings
Among primeval sticks.

But when he rose into the sky,
Because they did not dare to try
They all disdained to watch him fly,
And turned the other way,
Thinking how vulgar they would be
To leave the earth's security
And sacrifice their dignity
To fashions of the day.

So, in mistaken pride and state,
They kept their ancient armour-plate,
Although it had grown out of date,
And scorned the first of birds;
But Archaeopteryx's sons
Have multiplied in millions,
While mammoths and diprotodons
Have perished in their herds.

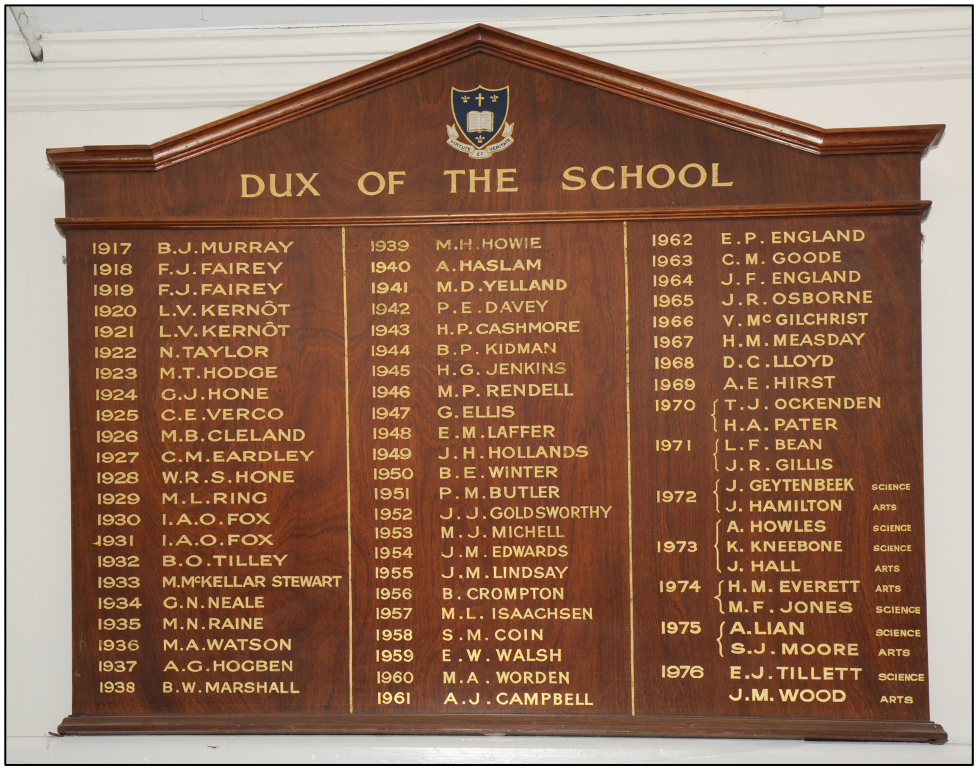
ALISON HOGBEN (VIa)

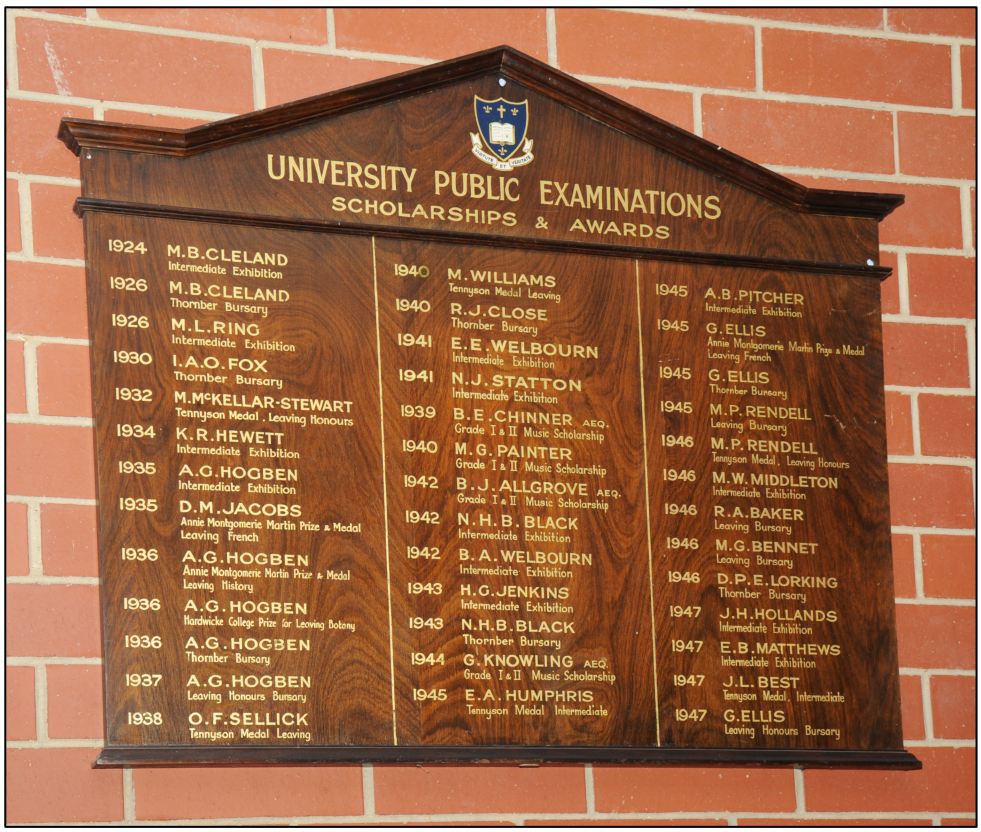
VALETE.

ALISON HOGBEN, 1930-1937—

Prefect, 1936-1937.
Magazine Committee, 1935-1937.
Library Committee, 1937.
Music Club, 1935-1937.
"B" Hockey Team, 1935-1937.
"B" Hockey Captain, 1937.
Old Scholars' Botany Prize, 1935.
Prize Essay, 1936-1937.
Prize Poem, 1936.
Intermediate (Honours), 1935.
Government Exhibition, 1935.
Leaving (Honours), 1936.
Thornber Bursary, 1936.
Annie Montgomerie Martin Medal and Prize for History, 1936.
Hardwicke Botany Prize, 1936.
Leaving Honours (General Honours), 1937.
Government Bursary, 1937.
Dux of the School, 1937.

A:3 Two of the School's Honour Boards that include Alison





A:4 A Summary of Alison's Study at the University of Adelaide

1938
French was studied under Professor J. G. Cornell[1492]
Examination papers:
French 1: translation of unseen English and French; translation of Old French texts, history of the language; prescribed book and history of literature; and phonetics
French II: translation of unseen English and French; translation of Old French texts, historical grammar; prescribed book and history of literature, phonetics,
Latin 1 and 11: prose composition and unseen translation; prepared books

1939
Old and Middle French I
English II
French III
Latin II: Roman Literature

1940
Honours English under J. I. M. Stewart
Practical criticism; Old and Middle English translations; English Language and Literature

1941
Honours English: some topics covered were Bacon, Donne, Lewis *The Allegory of Love,* Malory, Milton, the ballad

1941-42 Honours French

1942
General reading: Aristotle, Medieval Lyric.
Attended lectures for Master of Arts: Chaucer, Spenser, poetry of Wyatt and Surrey, metaphysical poetry, Elizabethan theatre, Bacon and the new philosophy, Senecan influence on the stage

1943
Masters lectures continued: outline of English Literature in the age of Shakespeare; Spenser; Wycliffe to Clarendon; metaphysical poetry; Spanish

[1492] Professor James Gladstone Cornell [1904-1991] was appointed to the University of Adelaide in 1938 as lecturer-in-charge of French and became in 1944 the University's first Professor of French Language and Literature, a position he held until his retirement in 1969. He was decorated by the French Government in 1955 with the award of the *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* for his weekly broadcasts in French throughout the war to the French-speaking communities in the Pacific, and in 1984 was awarded the *Commandeur des Palmes Académiques* for his distinguished contribution to the teaching of French and dissemination of French culture within South Australia. www.adelaide.edu.au/library/special/mss/cornell/corncoll.html

tragedy; Henry IV pt I, Twelfth Night, Measure for Measure, King Lear, Volpone, Bussy

1944
Masters lectures continued:
the novel: English; Eliot, Bronte, E, Hardy, James, Lawrence
Continental; Stendhal, Flaubert, Proust, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky

1946
Attended and prepared six lectures on Le Parnasse for Professor Cornell

Alison Hogben to Professor Cornell, 31 January 1947 (the night before her wedding)

'I am leaving these six lectures with Mr Edgeloe for you to collect when you return. They are in a state very inferior to what I had hoped, and what you had a right to expect. I wanted to re-write them entirely, for clearness sake; but a wedding involves much more strenuous preparations than had realised were necessary, and I have had to leave them as they were except for a paper or two which I found particularly illegible. The language needs polishing hardly less than the handwriting, but I have some hope that you will be able to make something of them in spite of imperfections. If you consider them unfit in their present state for the purpose we intended them for, I shall work on them later.'

1948
Alison received her Master of Arts Degree on the basis of lectures she wrote and delivered on metaphysical poetry in English Department, 1943-1946

A:5 Alison's Academic Record at the University of Adelaide

1938	English 1 (Credit), French 1 (Credit), French 11 (Credit), Latin 1 (Credit). M. Rees George Prize for French
1939	English 11 (Credit), French 111 (Credit), Latin 11 (Credit). French Government Medal for Third Year French Studies
1940	English 111 (Credit), Old and Middle French 1
1941	Old and Middle French 11 (Credit) Honours Degree in BA in English Language and Literature First Class. John Howard Clark Prize shared with DM Cowell
1942	Honours Degree in BA in French Language and Literature First Class. David Murray Scholarship in Arts (French)
1948	Master of Arts (Adelaide)
1969	Old and Middle English 1
1970	Old and Middle English 11

Scholarships and Appointments held after graduation, with other relevant experience

1942	Post-graduate scholarship in Arts for English Language and Literature.
1943	Post-graduate scholarship in Arts for English and French Language and Literature.
1944	Scholarship extended for a third year in English and a second year in French.

A:6 Teaching, Tutoring and Research

1945-6
Tutor, English and French Language and Literature, University of Adelaide

1947
Part-time lecturer and tutor, English; examiner under Professor CR Jury in an Honours English course which Professor JIM Stewart had put in her charge, 'The English Novel in its Continental Relations', occasional examiner to 1953

1957
Secondary school teaching, full time, Intermediate, Leaving and Matriculation English and First Year Latin; 1958 part-time

1958 and 1959
Marked Leaving English papers for the Public Examinations Board

1947-1961
occasional private coaching, including Honours student for Professor Jury

1962-73
Part-time tutor in English 1, English 11

1965-7
Half-time research scholarships in English

1967
Literary projects planned:
article on Milton's 'A Mask'. Reading suggestions (abortive 1966)
learned note on Mercury and the nymphs (posted November 1967)
article on Hamlet

1967-8
Sanskrit Course (R. W. Garson) Linguistics Society

1973
Part-time tutor in Australian Literature Studies and English II

A:7 Alison's Letters to Further her Career at the University

Alison argues for consideration for her lack of academic progress because of family commitments and the strain imposed by the insecurity of part-time employment

A:7:1 To the Academic Registrar 7 May 1972

I write this letter to accompany the answer to my eleventh successive letter of appointment as part-time tutor in English in the University of Adelaide, and it is my hope that you will regard it as in no sense a complaint, but merely a statement of hardship.

As you know, I am one of those who belong to a generation which did not appreciate as some more recent graduates do the fact that it is possible and may be desirable for a woman to marry and also to pursue an academic career. It therefore took me some years to reach my present conviction, which is that if it is possible I should like to continue in my present work until I reach retirement age.

Although I have worked for this University and enjoyed it for a number of years, both immediately after graduating in 1941-2 and more recently since 1962, I am at present aware of some difficulties in my position which I think I should mention to you.

First, I have no tangible security at all in my employment: psychologically, this means that I spend the period between the end and the beginning of each academic year in the fear of unemployment and consequently in a state of depression and uneasiness. In practical terms, the uncertainty makes me a less conscientious and efficient preparer of the work in and around the next year's syllabus, as it is really hard to prepare work which may never be required. Also, every time I accept another year's tutoring on the present terms, I am conscious of decreasing my chances of employment elsewhere, simply because another year passes.

Second, I have no right to any share of superannuation, study-leave or long service leave, not even in proportion to the quantitative relation between my work and that of a full-time tutor or lecturer.

It may well be that nothing can be done to improve conditions for me or for others in my position: but I have come to by degrees to the conclusion that no good purpose is served by not putting my difficulties clearly to the administrative authorities of the University.

If, Mr Registrar, it is your opinion that I should try to put this case equally plainly to those in authority over me in the English Department, I am willing to make that effort, particularly as I am aware that there are others experiencing similar difficulties who would possibly find it even harder than I have done to make any kind of statement about them to the relevant authorities in the University of Adelaide.

Yours sincerely, in the hope that by writing this letter I have given and shall give no offence.

Alison received no acknowledgement by 21 June 1972 or by 23 August 1973

A:7:2 To the Academic Registrar 9 November 1973

Since 1962 when I resumed tutoring in English at this university, I have worked for 7 years as a tutor in English 1 and since 1968 I have worked for 5 years in English II. The English II courses have given me opportunity for more intense study of the novel from the 16th century to the present day, of Chaucer, of the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries and of modern drama. In 1969, with a desire for further knowledge of English language (and with some hope of reviving Old and Middle French) I began the course in Old and Middle English and passed the first year; and in 1970 I studied Old and Middle English at second year level.

The work done on Milton and Pope while I held a Research Scholarship and the work I have been doing in Old and Middle English, together with private reading in Old French chansons de gests and romances, seem likely to lead me to a research interest in the persistence of Romance themes and allusions, in writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. My other particular interests are mythological and Arthurian themes and allusions, fourteenth century English religious writings, Renaissance and Augustan poetry (especially Elizabethan song, sonnet and blank verse, and the work of the metaphysical and classical schools of the seventeenth century): but I am prepared to intensify my studies in any part of the main stream of English, Australian and French literature where I am required to do this. I am interested in the possibility of inter-departmental studies in literature, of which a seminar given this year by members of the English and French Departments for English 11 students of the Picaresque novel was a tentative example.

In 1969 and in 1970 I gave two lectures on the English novel to an Education Department conference for Matriculation English students doing the course by correspondence.

In 1972 I became a member of the Tutors' Association and during 1973 have represented Part-time Tutors on its Committee.

This was the last correspondence. Alison did not return to the university as a tutor and was farewelled on 18 April 1974 by Registrar Emeritus, V. A. Edgeloe at a meeting of the Adelaide Branch of the English Association. Edgeloe read a paper, 'A century of English studies at Adelaide' which ended by acknowledging 'two part-time tutors – Margaret Finnis and Alison Gent – who had made valuable contributions to the teaching of the department over a quarter of a century.'

A:8 Theological Qualifications

Alison spent over twenty years working towards. Many of the topics listed below were not completed

1973	ACT	Th L	Church History 11
1974	ACT	Th L	Church History 1
1978	University of Adelaide		Philosophy 1H (A) & Logic 1H concepts of freedom, subjugation of women, logic

Alison wrote on consistency, 'our desires may form beliefs regardless of truth, e.g. in love: we "create" the beloved in a form that corresponds to our desires rather than to the truth'

	St Michael's House	Introduction to Philosophy
1984	University of Adelaide	Anthropology 1
1985	St Barnabas'	Old Testament
1986	St Barnabas'	The Person and Work of Christ

Tutor's comment on a paper on Fiorenza's 'In Memory of Her', Chapter 4

Well presented, format, discussion questions. Also paper – 'your written comments provide a good summary of some of the main points of the chapter and the focus of your selected [2 illegible words] a good way to bring people's discussion of the chapter together. I am interested in hearing from you about which questions were most appealed to and evocative of discussion. Good work B

1987	Adelaide College of Divinity/ Flinders University	Introduction to the Old Testament 25101

1988
Alison embarked on fulltime theological study with a view to putting herself forward for selection for ordination.

	Adelaide College of Divinity/ Flinders University	French Early Church History Introduction to New Testament 26103 Introduction to Theology 27101 Introduction to the History and Literature of the Old Testament. Essay results below.

① Presentation

Title Page	missing
Bibliography	missing
Citations/Notes	missing
Margins	missing
length	ca 830 words

Advice – Religious + Theological Abstracts.
Dictionaries – eg. (Reformation) New Dictionary of Theology.
Journals.

Alison,

Even before looking at the content of the essay, it is clear that there are some significant deficiencies which would militate against it receiving a good grade. It is necessary to conform to the stated requirements and expectations in these areas of academic work, even if they seem a bother at times. The ACD requirements are set out in the Handbook, p 25f.

Greg 2/5/88

② Having now read your paper I would comment that you seem to remain on too general a level. You have clearly read about and considered the issues involved, but your essay does not address/answer the topic actually set. When that weakness is added to the above mechanical problems your essay clearly cannot be given a pass grade.

Greg

D

③ PS The paper has been automatically second marked by Fr Ron Barry, who concurs with this grade.

APPENDIX A EDUCATION

1989	Adelaide College of Divinity/ Flinders University	Introduction to New Testament 26103 Short essay 'Excellent. Especially for a review A+' Introduction to Theology New Testament Greek
1990		Greek Intensive (auditing) Introduction to the Old Testament 25101
1991		Introduction to the Old Testament 25101 Introduction to Theology 27101

Comments on a feminist critique of traditional theological language:
'A balanced, well-presented essay, with some very perceptive comments. Thank you!' B+

1992	The Person and Work of Christ

Comments on a tutorial paper, 'Incarnation and cosmology'

Dear Alison, thank you for a worthwhile tutorial. Your input at the beginning helped to clarify some of the issues and your questions enabled the group to participate in some very interesting discussion.

Your paper clearly gives the key issues of the reading and you give evidence of having thought through some of its theological implications, although you could have explored this further.
Thank you for your participation in the tutorial group during the semester, your contribution has been most worthwhile.
Grade B –

	Religion, Science and Society in Early Modern Europe 3325

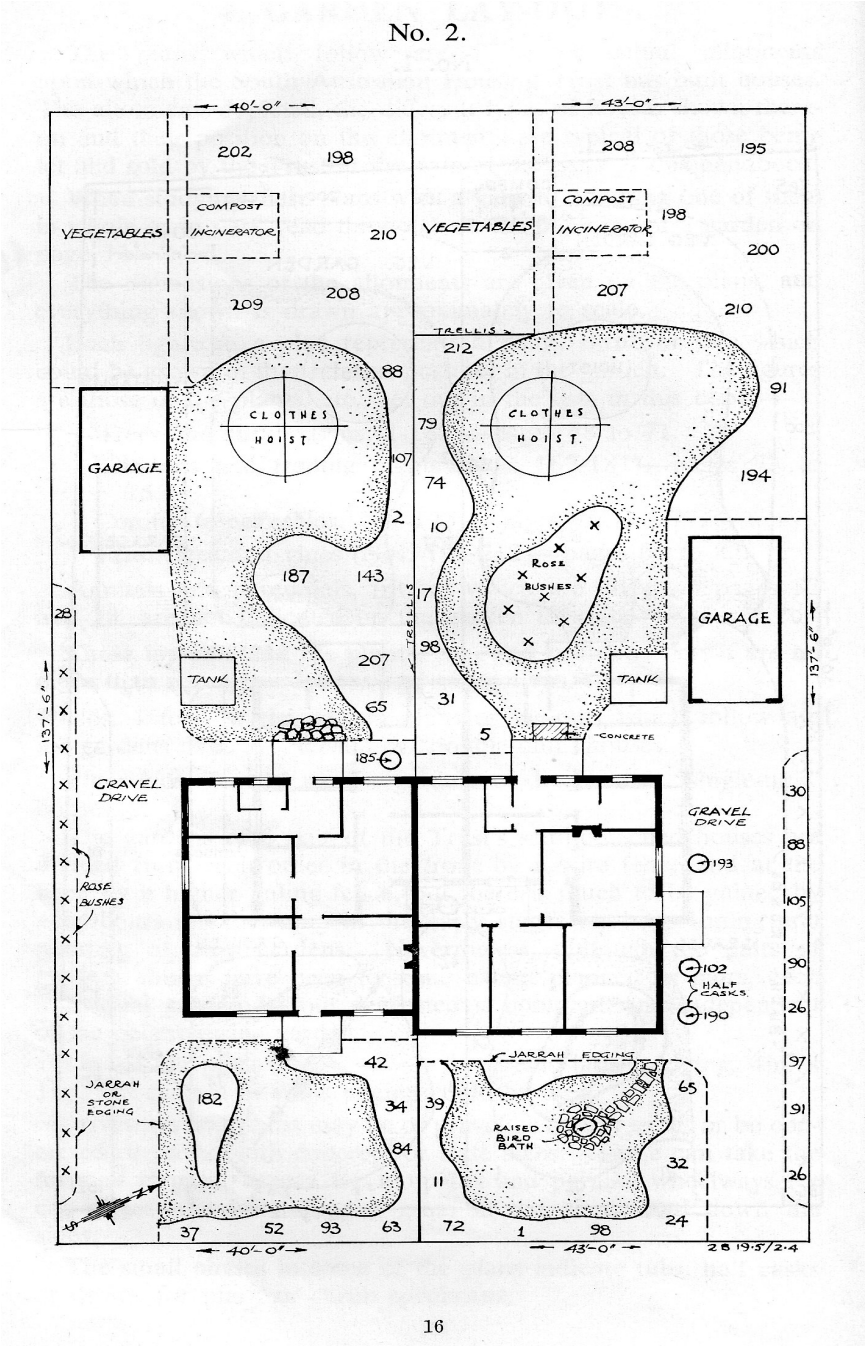
Comments on a tutorial paper, 'Cosmos'

Alison, this is a lively and interesting discussion, which is particularly illuminating on the intellectual changes involved between [illegible word] and Galileo and Kopler. Even though you have elected to focus your discussion on the changing relation between religion and science rather than the cosmology belief, your discussion is a stimulating and valuable introduction to some of the major issues. Perhaps, however, more appropriate in its focus for next week! B- (A + is crossed out)

1993	Deuteronomic History THEO 2102
1995	Old Testament Exegesis: the Writings THEO 3103

APPENDIX B MARRIAGE

B:1 Semi-detached Houses built by the South Australian Housing Trust[1493]



16

[1493] Alison and John lived at 7 Moorang St., Kilburn from 1947 to 1958. Plans of rental housing reproduced from *Gardening Handbook* compiled by John Dwight, Parks and Gardens Officer of the South Australian Housing Trust (Adelaide, c. 1958).

B:2 A Biography of Alison's Uncle, Horace Cox Hogben

Horace was a younger brother of Alison's father. He advocated public housing and was responsible for the establishment of the South Australian Housing Trust

Horace Cox Hogben (1888-1975), public accountant and politician, was born on 20 September 1888 at Magill, Adelaide, son of English-born parents Rev. George Hogben, a carpenter who had become a Baptist minister, and his wife Agnes, née Carmichael. Educated in public schools at Magill and Port Pirie, Horace began work as a junior with Broken Hill Pty Co. Ltd at Port Pirie in 1905. Two years later he moved to Adelaide. While employed as a clerk and company secretary, he represented (1913) the State in hockey, and studied at the South Australian School of Mines and Industries and at the University of Adelaide (associate in commerce, 1915). At the Baptist Church, Parkside, on 4 May 1915 he married Clara Margaret Marion McPharlin. From 1922 he was an accountant and office manager with Cowell Bros & Co. Ltd before setting up his own business as a public accountant in 1930. He was president (1940) of the State division of the Australasian Institute of Secretaries.

Secretary (1930-40) of the Young Liberal League, Hogben was also treasurer (from 1931) of the Emergency Committee of South Australia which opposed the 'financial extremists' in J. H. Scullin's Federal Labor government. The success of the committee's candidates in the 1931 Federal elections encouraged the State's Liberal Federation and Country Party to amalgamate in the following year to form the Liberal and Country League, of which Hogben was vice-president. From April 1933 to February 1938 he was a member for Sturt in the House of Assembly. Concerned about housing problems during the Depression, in 1934 he and (Sir) Keith Wilson (the president of the Y.L.L.) formed a committee to examine the 'shortage of low-price houses and the concomitant of rising rents'. Hogben undertook the research, at the expense of much of his accountancy practice and income.

He subsequently proposed the formation of a housing authority, easier terms for financing prospective homeowners and remedial action to deal with substandard houses, recommendations which were embodied in the South Australian Housing Trust Act (1936), the Building Societies Amendment Act (1938), the Housing Improvement Act (1940) and the Homes Act (1941). The auditor-general J. W. Wainwright encouraged Hogben to advocate the establishment of a new housing authority which would construct low-cost rental homes. If rents were kept down and workers' wages were lower than those paid in the other States, manufacturing would be attracted to South Australia. The government adopted these policies, gradually increasing the role of secondary industry in the State's economic structure.

Acknowledged as the founder of the South Australian Housing Trust—set up in 1936 as Australia's first public housing authority—Hogben served as its deputy-chairman (1941-67) and saw it become a key agency in promoting the State's industrialization and urbanization under Premier (Sir) Thomas Playford. Hogben was also a director (from 1938) of the Co-operative Building Society of South Australia and a trustee of the Savings Bank of South Australia. Survived

by his wife, son and daughter, he died on 18 December 1975 at his Unley home and was cremated. The trust reported that he had combined 'the two broad aims of any Statutory Authority . . . a real and deep concern for people, together with an accountant's appreciation of the need for good financial control'. A portrait by Jacqueline Hick is held by the trust.

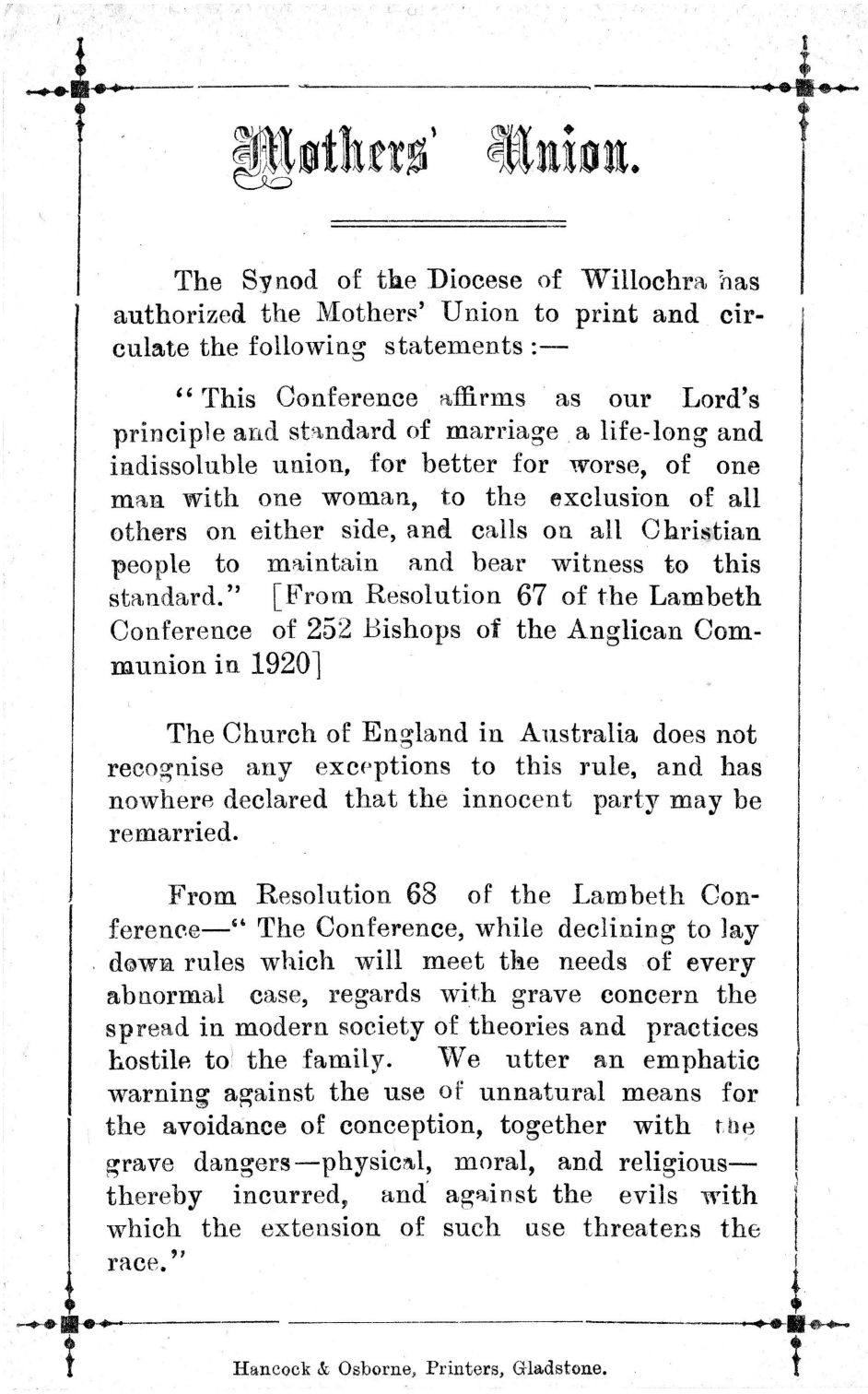
Select Bibliography

- D. Jaensch (ed), *The Flinders History of South Australia* (Adel, 1986)
- S. Marsden, *Business, Charity and Sentiment* (Adel, 1986)
- R. Linn, *For the Benefit of the People* (Adel, 1989)

Advertiser (Adelaide), 2 Apr 1940, 22 Dec 1975.

This article, written by Susan Marsden *was published in* Australian Dictionary of Biography, *Volume 14, (MUP), 1996*

B:3 The Mothers' Union in the Diocese of Willochra produced a Card to distribute to Members to promote Lambeth Resolutions of 1920



Mothers' Union.

The Synod of the Diocese of Willochra has authorized the Mothers' Union to print and circulate the following statements:—

"This Conference affirms as our Lord's principle and standard of marriage a life-long and indissoluble union, for better for worse, of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side, and calls on all Christian people to maintain and bear witness to this standard." [From Resolution 67 of the Lambeth Conference of 252 Bishops of the Anglican Communion in 1920]

The Church of England in Australia does not recognise any exceptions to this rule, and has nowhere declared that the innocent party may be remarried.

From Resolution 68 of the Lambeth Conference—"The Conference, while declining to lay down rules which will meet the needs of every abnormal case, regards with grave concern the spread in modern society of theories and practices hostile to the family. We utter an emphatic warning against the use of unnatural means for the avoidance of conception, together with the grave dangers—physical, moral, and religious—thereby incurred, and against the evils with which the extension of such use threatens the race."

Hancock & Osborne, Printers, Gladstone.

B: 4 THE COMPANY OF JOSEPH AND MARY

B:4:1 Alison wrote an article to explain its beginning

THE COMPANY OF JOSEPH AND MARY
within the COMPANY OF THE SACRED MISSION

At a Guest Day at St Michael's House some years ago, I, with many other visitors, was asked to pray for the increase of vocations to the Religious Life in celibate Communities, by being given a printed card to help me to do so. This made me begin to think how great a need there was for a prayer, something like that one on the printed card, for the increase in vocations to serve God in marriage and in the life of the natural family. I soon tried to write such a prayer, hoping that one day Religious Communities might in their turn agree to use it for married people living in the world. As I knew how much our own married life had been helped by those living the life of Religion, my thoughts went further. Married life in general seems to be much tried and torn about in the modern world; perhaps there is a way for many families to profit by the strength that can be given to married men and women through the prayer and practical help of a Religious Community. To make such help readily available there needs to be some visible bond between those inside the Community and married couples who live outside it.

From this beginning there gradually arose the idea of a new kind of Society. Church Societies of other kinds exist in number, and seem to many people one of the bugbears of Church life today. 'Third Orders', or their modern equivalents – that is, groups of people associated with Religious Communities – have long existed, and still do exist, and some of their members happen to be married. But this would be different. This Society would exist in order to make and maintain a relationship between the vocation to married life and the vocation to the life of a celibate community.

These two vocations are complementary and contrasting ways of living the life of love in the Body of Christ: both exist for the greater glory of God, and each should exist for the benefit of the other as well as itself. The two vocations are not enemies, antagonists, or rivals: they need and complete each other, and there should be love, goodwill and understanding between them. Both bear witness in their different ways to the importance of natural love as the pattern of life which is given for mankind, and I shall try to describe how they do it.

Men and women who 'fall in love' see and feel the value of natural love, and when they marry, Christian men and women publicly accept a life in accordance with natural love as their way of fulfilling God's will. Men and women entering celibate Religious Communities also regard natural love as important – of course they must, as they owe their own living to it! But its special importance for them is that it is valuable enough to be made a sacrifice for the love of God. By their lives in celibate Community they limit and transform natural love in a way that establishes – for all Christians and in the sight of all the world – man's freedom from compulsion, even in this matter that so powerfully involves the deepest human feelings and the continuity of the human race.

APPENDIX B MARRIAGE

The life of a Religious Community recreates in itself, in an adoptive form, the naturally based family relationship of father, sons and brothers, of mother, daughters and sisters. It thus repeats in a deliberately simplified pattern the life of a natural family, directing this life (in a clearer and more telling form than most natural families achieve) to the Glory of God.

The ways I have described of following these two vocations are different ways, and in our human weakness, difference breeds distrust, contempt, misunderstanding, and even the desire of one to outshine the other in fullness of holiness, have often spoiled the strength and unity of the Body of Christ where relations between the two vocations are concerned. The Society of the Sacred Mission has, I believe, always tried to stress the truth that the vocation of the Religious is not superior to the vocation to a life in the world – it's only different. It is then most fitting that this Society should be the first Religious Community (as far as I know) to welcome an association with married Christians as such.

We who desire to be admitted to a relationship with the Society of the Sacred Mission in the Company of Joseph and Mary, ask for admission simply because we are truly called to Christian Marriage, and therefore want this strengthening bond with those who express their love for God in so different a way. The members of the Society, by allowing this Company to be formed, show their respect for the married – those who have accepted, and hope most earnestly to retain, exactly that way of life which the Religious, to express their own love of God, have denied themselves. May God bless the beginning of this enterprise as an expression of His Unity Who through the Holy Spirit bestows a diversity of gifts!

The Father Prior first listened to an expression of my thoughts on this subject on St Mary Magdalene's day (22 July 22) last year [1966]. Since then he, with other members of the Society, has been considering whether, when and how something can be done.

Now, it seems that the time has come to start. The place for a group of married persons within the framework of the Society of the Sacred Mission is in the Company of the Sacred Mission. Our particular place and function there will be shown by our name – 'The Company of Joseph and Mary within the Company of the Sacred Mission'. The name has two functions. The first is to show clearly the nature of our group, the concern with Holy Marriage and the life of the family. The second function of the name is to show our relationship with SSM, and further, to suggest to other Religious Communities for women as well as men – perhaps not only Anglican ones – that this Company can well be created within their own Community's group of Associates, Third Order, or Fellowship also.

Most of the foundation members of the Company of Joseph and Mary are likely to be married couples already in the Company of the Sacred Mission. Membership will begin [began] with an Act of Oblation, to be [made on 8 April 1967] at a Eucharist near the time of the Feast of the Annunciation (25 [transferred] March, 1967). The Prayer of the Company will perhaps be ready in printed form by then: meanwhile it can be copied at St. Michael's House. What members undertake to do will be the subject of a later article.

[signed by hand] Alison Gent.

B:4:2 The Company of Joseph and Mary: Motto, Rules, Prayer, Office and adapted Angelus

written by Alison in consultation with the SSM Provincial and Warden

The motto: Persevere in love

The rules:

1. To make one particular offering of our marriage vows to God, supported by the prayers of the Society of the Sacred Mission
2. To use the prayer of the Company of Joseph and Mary according to opportunity

The Prayer
(for all those called to Holy marriage.):

> POUR Out, O God, upon your people the spirit of that love with which Christ Jesus loves his spouse the Church: for we, giving our lives to you in holy marriage, desire to persevere in love through all adversity till death, and live with our families in the eternal joy of your kingdom and your face. We ask this in your name, Jesus, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit live and reign in the most holy Unity, God now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen

The Office (with an adapted Angelus)

Antiphon Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it

V. The Angel of the Lord came to Mary,
P. And Joseph knew God's will in a dream.
Hail, Joseph and Mary, just, and full of grace,
The Lord is with You:
You are blessed among men and women,
And blessed is your child Jesus.
Holy Mary and Joseph, virgin parents of the Son of God,[1494]
Pray for us members of his body,
Now and at the hour of our death.
V. 'You shall bear a child and call him Jesus.'
P. 'Do not fear to take Mary for your wife.'
Hail Joseph and Mary, etc.

[1494] An earlier version reads : Holy Mary and Joseph, Mother and adopting father of Christ our God.

V. Mary said, 'I am the handmaid of the Lord.'
P. Joseph took her for his wife and knew her not…
Hail Mary and Joseph etc.
V. Till the Word was made flesh Who dwells among us.
P. And we behold the glory of God in Man.
Hail Joseph and Mary etc.[1495] ending:-
Holy Mary and Joseph, Mother and Father of God,
Pray for us who in Him are your children
Now and at the hour of our death.
V. Pray for us, Mother and Father of God
P. That we may grow to the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Let us pray (and here follows the Company prayer).

The Company of Joseph and Mary was introduced in the second issue of 'SSM News', 1967. It was described as a 'cell' of the Company of the Sacred Mission, itself a group of those outside the religious life but who want to be associated with the Society of the Sacred Mission by undertaking a rule of life.[1496] *Letters from the Provincial and the Warden of the Company of SSM document the progress of the company.*

The Foundation members are listed on an intercession sheet by their Oblation Day, together with their wedding anniversaries. Alison's priority for love and prayer in marriage in evident. Her notes for the May meeting urged members to extend this prayer and love in 'other directions': firstly to the society 'which has so lovingly and courteously allowed us to make the offering of our married lives in its midst'. Alison cited her own need for 'planned regularity', 'to have a settled time for prayer and meditation'. She proposed 'the possession of a simple list of the times at which the Society of the Sacred Mission at St Michael's House says the Office in the course of a week'. She also advocated, as the Society had a record of the dates of marriages, that there be an exchange of dates of profession of members of the Society. Alison here showed her awareness of the power of intercession, the bond that can exist in a lively way within the Body of Christ. Alison urged the Company members to be as far-reaching as they could, to be 'ready to pray with faith and hope for people in disastrous or unsavoury situations.' This 'may well be meant by two or three gathered together in My name'.

[1495] The original version ends here.
[1496] The Society of the Sacred Mission Australian Province Leaflet. c. 1960

B:5 Alison wrote to the Mothers' Union arguing for Admission of Divorced and Remarried Persons

This 1970 letter predated the Mothers' Union document, New Dimensions, which proposed a change in its attitudes to divorce

To the Mothers' Union central executive committee in the diocese of Adelaide from the members of the Mothers' Union of St Francis of Assisi, Northfield

We have given thought for some years now to the purpose and policy of the Mothers' Union especially to the Membership Clause, and we write now to put before you these our conclusions.

We are disturbed at the fact that there is a discrepancy between the practice of the Church of England as a whole and of the Mothers' Union within it, which can be stated thus: While divorcees remarried by the state, both male and female, are (at the discretion of the bishop) allowed to be readmitted after discipline to communion in the church, women so remarried are not allowed admission to membership of the MU (Would that there were a Fathers' Union to which there might be some question of admitting or not admitting their husbands!) This state of affairs seems wrong for two reasons.

1. A sacrament of the Church is understood by us to be a means of union with God [in a] particularly direct and powerful way. If a man or a woman, by the failure of his or her marriage, is not able to be in touch with God through that unity in Christ with his or her spouse which is the proper effect of matrimony, is it to be required of him or her that if another attempt at married unity is made, he or she must lose also that other means of being in touch with God which is participation in Holy Communion? Ought the loss of one sacrament to mean that the loss of another also is incurred?

   Admittedly, this 'separation' of the person concerned from the sacrament of Holy Communion only happens when remarriage according to the laws of the state takes place. But is the MU to declare itself unconcerned with any second or even later attempt to love a person of the other sex forever in the married state? Surely the MU is interested even if this is a marriage after divorce?
2. In the opinion of the members of this branch, it is the proper evangelical task of the MU not only to do all it can to foster the permanent unity between man and woman which is brought into being by the sacrament of marriage, but also – and no less – to foster the permanent unity between a man and woman which marriage according to the state intends and has a chance of bringing into being even after the failure or disruption of a first sacramental marriage. If the activities of the church and the MU are insufficient to prevent the breakup of a married couple in the first place and the MU may very well never have come within sight or sound of the person involved – surely members of the MU are still bound to procure that any relationship which has good in it to be preserved, shall be or become permanent. In short, we think that, to qualify for admission to membership of the MU – or the Fathers' Union if that [illegible] organization existed – it should be enough (1) to admit

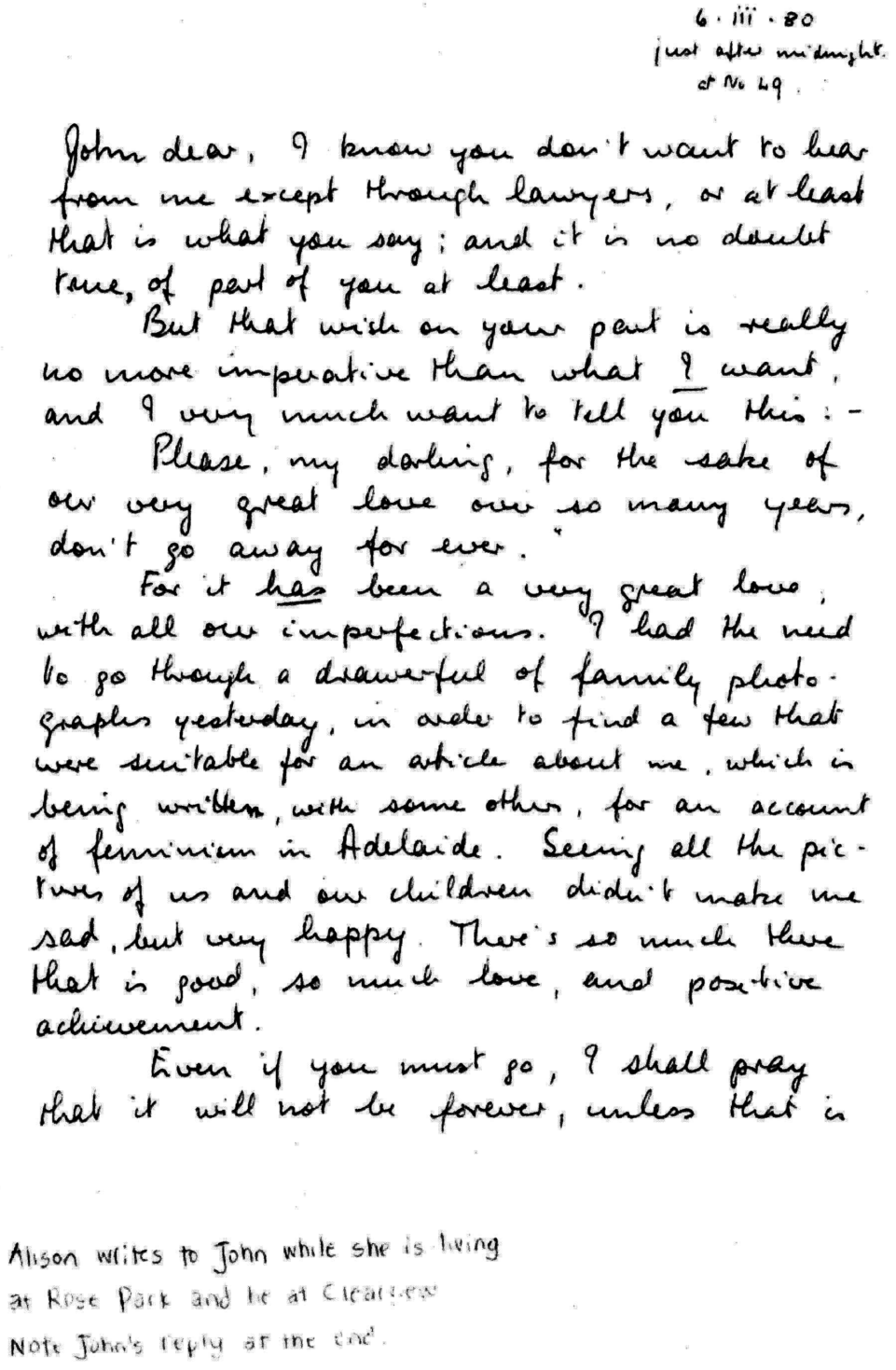
> responsibility for whatever sins against God and against the unity of man and woman in marriage one has committed in the past, even, as it appears, irretrievably [illegible] and (2) to declare one's firm intention of achieving a permanent union in God with one's present married partner; and (3) to profess a desire to belong to the MU in order to achieve that end. This is the change in conditions for admission to membership that we beg leave to propose. Until some such change in qualification for membership is achieved, the members of this branch are convinced that the MU cannot begin to carry out a very important part of the task for which it is designed. Indeed, unless such an alteration in the conditions of membership is achieved, the MU is doomed to be a gathering of women consciously virtuous ourselves with no right to try, as a group, to help some of those who most need our [help] fellowship.

Yours sincerely Alison Gent, vice-president.
I have written this letter in accordance with a resolution passed by the Northfield Branch at a meeting in 1970.

Addendum
Since our name is the Mothers' (rather than the Wives') Union, we are also anxious that some form of membership should be open to the mother of illegitimate children who are trying to shoulder the entire burden of parenthood and desire to bring their children up in the church. Could there be a special form of membership for women who are 'sole parents'?

B:6 A letter Alison wrote to John after she had received notice from his lawyer that the divorce was proceeding

John intended to go to New Zealand to be with Barbara Peters. Alison wanted to drive him to the airport when he departs



6 · iii · 80
just after midnight
at No 49.

John dear, I know you don't want to hear from me except through lawyers, or at least that is what you say; and it is no doubt true, of part of you at least.

But that wish on your part is really no more imperative than what I want, and I very much want to tell you this: -

Please, my darling, for the sake of our very great love over so many years, don't go away for ever.

For it has been a very great love, with all our imperfections. I had the need to go through a drawerful of family photographs yesterday, in order to find a few that were suitable for an article about me, which is being written, with some others, for an account of feminism in Adelaide. Seeing all the pictures of us and our children didn't make me sad, but very happy. There's so much there that is good, so much love, and positive achievement.

Even if you must go, I shall pray that it will not be forever, unless that is

Alison writes to John while she is living at Rose Park and he at Clearview
Note John's reply at the end.

God's will for some inscrutable purpose.

If you are going, on or after the 21st of August, there is something I very much want to ask of you. Please, dear, may I drive you to the airport or the train and see you off, alone? Because it all began with you and me, and it seems very right that it should end – if it ends – that way.

What must be said, I know, if it comes to your going, is "Go from God in me, go with God, go to God in Barbara.

Your loving
Alison.

P.S. I only want an answer to what I ask on p. 2.

A. I would be shocked indeed to refuse such courtesy J.

P.P.S. Sorry I'd no time to wash up when I came: I may manage it tomorrow.

A

B:7 Alison marked the formal secular ending of her marriage with a church service and a vow to keep faithful to her marriage

A FORM OF SERVICE FOR ONE WHO * HAS BEEN INVOLUNTARILY DIVORCED

V. All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord
R. Praise him and magnify him forever.

Acknowledging the fact that the Decree of Dissolution of Marriage which became Absolute on the 20th day of June this year [1981] in the Family Court of Australia has changed, by removing its legal component, the marriage vow made by Alison in St. Mary Magdalene's Church on the first day of February, 1947, we are here to witness her reaffirmation of her intention to be faithful to her vow in altered circumstances, and to assist her with our prayers.

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.
R. Who has made heaven and earth.
V. Blessed be the name of the Lord.
R. From henceforth for evermore.
Let us pray:
Our Father, which art in heaven … for ever and ever. Amen.

Archbishop Alison, do you desire to reaffirm in the altered circumstances of your life, your intention to continue faithful to your marriage vow?
Alison I do.
Archbishop Are you willing to put aside all bitterness and resentment, and to forgive all who have hurt you and to live in peace and charity with all?
Alison I am.
Archbishop Will you reaffirm your faithfulness to your vow?
Alison I reaffirm, for my part, my fidelity to the vow I made in my marriage, and I ask God to bless me in the state in which, from now, I live.
(kneel) I offer to God my sorrow for all my past sins and failures.
I offer to God whatever good I have achieved in my years of married life, and I give thanks in particular for the lives of our children and our grandchild.

As a sign of the reaffirmation of my vow in changed circumstances I place my wedding ring on my right hand.
Archbishop Let us pray:

Teach us, O gracious Lord,
to begin our works with reverence,
to go on in obedience,
and to finish them with love;

and then to wait patiently in hope,
and with cheerful countenance to look up to you,
whose promises are faithful and rewards infinite;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

* Altered in pen – HAVING BEEN LEGALLY DIVORCED, WANTS TO KEEP HER/HIS MARRIAGE-VOW

This service was printed along with two other forms in a booklet 'Three Rites of Passage for the Divorced'.

B:8 Alison documented the history of the group 'Separated and Divorced Anglicans' in 1987

THE SEPARATED AND DIVORCED ANGLICANS IN THE DIOCESE OF ADELAIDE
Separated and divorced Anglicans … there are a considerable number of them in Australia these days. Since the Family Law Act came into force a divorcee cannot be held 'guilty' of a divorce, for it is possible for a person to be divorced totally against her/his will. Even where the person with whom the church is more closely concerned initiates the divorce, it is only the hardest of hearts that will wish that the Family Law Act made divorce much more difficult, since the penalty of staying in a truly bad marital relationship may well be, for one partner at least, sickness, death, or an entirely unendurable quality of life.
Several years ago, three women spoke to me after Sunday morning service in my parish. They were visitors who wanted the opportunity to exchange views with me because they knew I had recently been divorced. What concerned them most were the attitudes to the divorced (or separated or divorcing) that they encountered in the church.
After exploring a while for more of such interested people, I spoke to the archbishop at a time when a divorced priest who was then acting as a locum in a suburban parish in Adelaide, had just mentioned the need he saw for some kind of help for the divorced. He and I talked together and found some hope of working together; and a small meeting, with two other priests and one other woman, whose husband was one of them, launched the discussion group which later took the name 'Separated and Divorced Anglicans' [SADA]

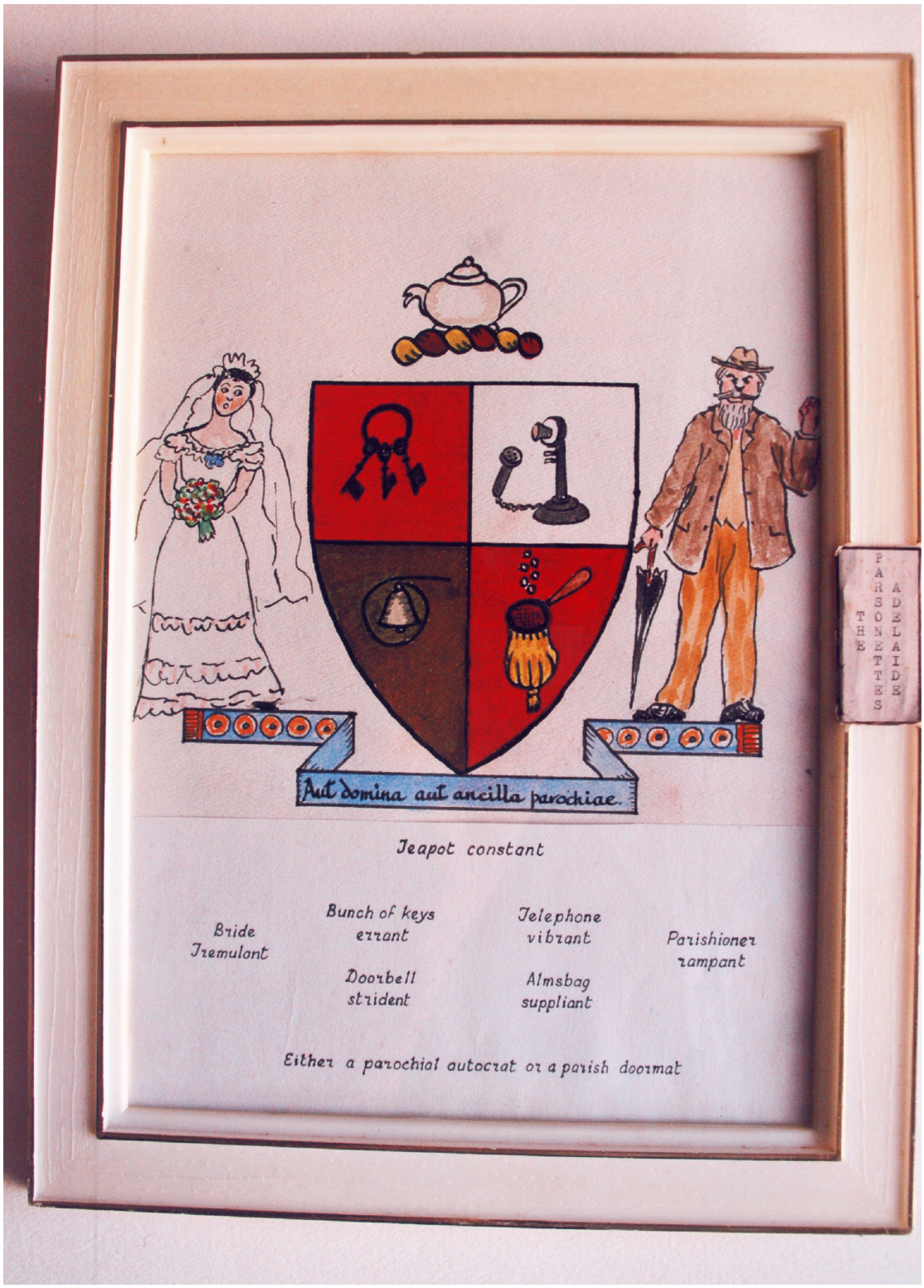
The group met regularly once a month in the house of one of its members, with a few lunchtime meetings in a café in town thrown in. We studied the diocesan regulations on the re-marriage of divorcees, we talked (in confidence, of course) to each other about our own experiences, and one of us – not always the priest – told the archbishop of the conclusions we reached, when this was a topic on which he had asked for an opinion from us.

We met, with a faithful nucleus of five or six, for about two years. Several other people attended less regularly or for a shorter time, including one Roman Catholic who had come to us because of her distress at the dissolution of her marriage (occurring some years after a civil divorce).

The greatest visible achievement of the group was the production of a booklet, 'Three Rites of Passage for Divorced Anglicans'. These rites had their origin in our study of one of those included in the booklet, and the rest of the booklet represents the attempt of the others in the group to work out one which they believed would help them through the very personal and individual experience of adjusting to the great change in life – a grief experience of comparable intensity to that which follows a death – which a separation or a divorce causes, particularly where one at least of the partners remains alone for some time.

The group is in recess at present, as the three persons left convening it when the priest withdrew are laywomen, each of whom has recently had great stress from sickness or injury. The booklet is available at 40c a copy or, in some cases, free. Alison Gent, 27 May 1987.

B:9 Parsonettes, begun in 1915, is a Social and Support Group for Women Married to Clergymen



The coat-of-arms is displayed at meetings. Its conception was humorous while pinpointing the domestic and social situations of the rectory inhabitants. This painting is a copy of the original banner made in cloth

B:10 Parsonettes at the hall of Holy Trinity, North Terrace in 1965 for a re-enactment of the group's foundation by Mrs Houison in 1915



L to R

Margaret Overall, Marie L, Helena Correll, Mary Bleby, [person not known],
Ursula Johnson, Kath Jupp, Dorothy Daw, Barbara Pettitt, Alison Gent.
[those in front row not known]

B:11 The Parsonettes in the Adelaide Church Guardian May 2004



The Parsonettes at what could be their last meeting in rectory, and in particular the rectory at Kensington Gardens. Back row (from left) Joy Curran, Elaine Edwards, Cathy Jupp. Front row (from left) Val Mansell, Alison Gent, Beth Opie, Judith Sykes. Apologies on the day this photo was taken were received from Mary Bleby, Judy Drought, Eva Maitland and Blanche Judge'

This caption from the *Adelaide Church Guardian* May 2004 accompanied a commentary on the group which drew from Dulcie Scrutton's historical notes written in 1970.

'In July 1915, at St Oswald's rectory, Parkside, a group of eight wives of the clergy decided to meet regularly for the sake of the friendship and common interests which they shared, and as time went on to invite other newcomers in the metropolitan area to join them.

This led to the idea of inviting clergy wives from the country parishes to a luncheon at Synod time, which was when the problem of a name for the group was solved by one of the clergy whose wife was a member. It was the era of the Suffragettes in England, and the Rev'd Norman Higgins suggested that the hostesses should call themselves 'Parsonettes'.

The moving spirit behind it all, and still is (in 1970) Gwen Houison, who arranged that first meeting at her home, the Parkside rectory, and has now completed an incredible 55 years as leader of several generations of Parsonettes.

Monthly meetings have been held regularly through the years, and for a long while now the Parsonettes have met for these in each other's homes, which has emphasised the sociable atmosphere. Discussions on parochial or diocesan affairs are not indulged in – informality and laughter are enjoyed by all, and provide a refreshing change from the round of meetings and functions that claim the attention of clergy wives in parish life.

APPENDIX C ALISON'S POETRY

The poems are arranged in alphabetical order of title

A Fanfare For Woman

"Our child is born …
she is a girl" – rejoice! For she is
that kind of human being
who has a major part to play
in continuing human life on earth
and finding a nurturing style
for the care of our planet.

Christian women, rejoice and give
thanks
for every woman on earth!
Even under male domination
sing, with the voice of the trumpet!
For in the Eucharist it can be
that the sufferings of women
under oppression worldwide
are joined with the sufferings of Jesus
in a unity that cannot be claimed
by male men in this matter
since they act as our oppressors.

Women, acknowledge our desperate
rage,
the deep wounds we receive
from all who dominate women
or will their subjection,
for they in their ignorance
rejoice in the phallus
instead of rejoicing that we
like them
have a human head and a heart
that can become like Christ's

So, now, pray that God will forgive them
[us all]
and go, live to redeem the world.

31 May 1991

with acknowledgements to a painting by
Gail Vincent of Canberra

Albatross

In the morning
I told three friends
That I was beginning
to swim.
in the evening
I tried to talk freely
with my son,
and was taught
with verbal and emotional
violence
that anything I feel
or think
is subject to 'over-riding'
and obliterating
re-interpretation
by a man (male)
in a male world.

Dong!
I swam no more,
my battered head
sinking at once
beneath the hard-won
surface
of the sea,
my arms, legs, stilled,
water invading my eyes,
depression and despair
my heart and mind.
To stay afloat
a woman
is tempted
to learn to dodge,
into a mental health clinic?
or an all female world?
'They'
(helped by women, too)
break your bruised
and tender buds,
douse or trample
your nascent flame.
But I sprout again
and re-kindle
losing a day–
at most, a few.

So keep your bludgeons ready,
your sword
aimed at my breast.
I am the enemy
of usurped domination,
of male presumption;
you do well
to keep me in your sights.

Before John Lennon died
I dreamed (twice)
a TV newsflash
where somebody
with a crossbow
shot the Pope.

Who was John Lennon?
the Anti-Pope?
the Beatle …
He'd said quite truly
that millions
took more note of them
than of Christ.
He didn't say
that that was what he wanted:
all the same
the Establishment
blew up.

Vicars of Christ,
James Joneses,
spring up
and fade…
uselessly.
What I want
is more women
who are Christ.

14 December 1980

Albatross Flight

I am soaring
in womanspace …
far below,
the deck of the ship
male-captained,
male-piloted,
where I stumbled
my great wings drooped
and clumsily trailing,
while the sailors
tormented my clownishness.

I have a song
as yet unheard
on earth or over sea.

Charles Baudelaire,
you knew me
in negroes or whore
- through the veil of Venus-
even at the cost of the guilt
of your dominant maleness.

See my straight glide,
my veering curves
till I plummet …
but do not forget
I have flown,
been beautiful, free,
and will again
for longer.

5 October 1981

Published in *Magdalene*

Being

Let me step aside in the desert
to behold beauty
shimmering in the clear, hot air
shaped like the tree of life.
I would discard false tameness
dull mediocrity
thick and insipid sloth
to gleam like a well-used knife
to be swift and apposite.
Cleansed by humility
- thine and mine –
I rise from clinging clods
To stand at my true height:
I burn and am not consumed

1991

Church Of Mary Magdalene

Church of Mary Magdalene
wedging your holiness between
the clanging engineering shop
and the tough pub …
type of Jerusalem above,
receive this token of my love,
less pretty, traditional, easy to take
than a posy, a white flower, simnel
cake,
but perhaps a surprise –
like you, as you rise
from macadam lane and gravelled strip
(your red bricks crumbling)
with your still, angelic sword of peace
to smite the enemy thigh and hip
in our city devils …
Let my gift set rumbling
a rumour to quell and give release
from the clap-trap of "city church
redundant"!
I know you a source of life abundant.
May old School Mission with Jury hall
join in the work of jubilee,
healing and setting prisoners free,
for we all are sick and need release:
Mother, pray God that our sins may
cease!

Published in the *Adelaide Church Guardian,* 1968.

Compost

My dead body
Duly rotted and spread
Goes to grow pleasure gardens
Where others move
Conversing lightly
And take their ease
Not needing my company.

It is well
That in another garden
I, resilient,
Walk with my love.

1986?

Elegy, By Alison, A Relict

Amo quie impossible
Can love be over-generous?
And was ours, truly,
"Begotten by despair
Upon impossibility".?[1497]
Tell me, great horticulturist.
There's fruit enough of it to feed
some part of the human race
lying strewn on the ground
of this Australia John
outwent.

End-Game

Why

knowing my old friend
was your new-old lover

did I kiss her when we met?

Because, long ago,
the whore, the cockerel,
drawn in cloud,
forbade betrayal.

Your vow broken
sisterhood holds…
women live
(turning cannibal)
as they can.

Love under patriarchy
makes weird moves
inevitable.

Check

mate!

[1497] *The Definition of Love*
My Love is of a birth as rare/As 'tis for
object strange and high:/It was begotten by
despair/Upon impossibility.
Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)

Famine Relief: A Poem In Traditional Sonnet Form (Or Nearly)

I do not rail at you, or fate, or God
since it may be no other loss than this
would channel deep enough the rush and hiss
of living water passing through my body's
frailty to relieve the world's waste lands.
Compassion, purged of distance, drives a plough:
And seed, fruit of two sexes, sowing now
fans outward from my heart, my mind, my hands.
I pray the Sower of harvest and work on…
dig up old stumps, the cluttering stones remove;
the land becomes less desolate, and will prove
nearer to Paradise than Erewhon.
But oh, my youth, and ah, my love,
It tears my heart that you are gone.

March-April 1987

For Whatever Is Woman In The Body Of Christ, The Church

I am a 'woman'
with far more enthusiasm
than I am 'lay':
yet who can doubt
my catholicity?
(I speak as a fool).
Why sing in the choir,
do the flowers
and votive lamps
and even the breakfast
sometimes
at St Mary Magdalene's,
Adelaide?
A regular penitent
from way back,
and a member of two Catholic societies
(not to mention the Church).
I endure
(I speak as a fool or an idiot)
cheerfully enough
the all-male sanctuary,
and being called
'brethren'
more often than not,
and even
reading
only when
it's a minor occasion

so someone
robed and male
isn't essential.
I endure…
But I know
a lot
of remarkably good
and talented women
who can't –
and don't.

For Whatever Is Woman In The Body Of Christ, The Church [Revised]

As a laywoman,
I am a woman
with far more zest
than I am 'lay':
Yet who can doubt
my catholicity?
(I speak as a fool)
Why, I sing in the choir,
do the flowers and votive lamps
and even the breakfast, sometimes
at St Mary Magdalene's, Adelaide.
A regular penitent from 'way back,
and a member of two 'catholic'
societies
(not to mention the Church)
I endure (I speak as a fool–
or an idiot-)
cheerfully enough
the all male sanctuary
and being called 'brethren'
more often than not,
and even reading only when
it's a minor occasion,
so someone robed and male
isn't seen as essential.
I endure… but I know a lot
of remarkably good and talented
women
who can't – and don't.

10 February 1982

Galilea

This day the world changed.
I saw woman and man
raised to the heavens
shine equal, as in their orbits
they danced to each other …
No man is a sun
circled by satellite woman.

———————

Like Galileo or Cortes
a feminist discoverer
knows new truth:
though millions reject it
and will kill to suppress it
or grab at the new world's riches,
that truth lives, and will grow.

———————

The Earth goes around the Sun,
but with us it is otherwise –
one planet I, you another,
holding our courses.
Downcast and weary through my long struggle,
I have become at last a watcher of the skies;
my human eyes hold in each a star
and I am in love again.

———————

4 August 1986

Goodbye: Forever – Or Not?

At the centre of my being
Is the place where I rest in God,
Where I am I,
Knowing my belovedness.
Even my belovedness
Or unbelovedness
By you, my John, my love,
Comes second to that.
But, being loved by God,
I have always
Love to give you
If you will receive it –
If you don't insist
On my idolatry
Of you …. and so,
My now unloving Love,
I am always here
Ready to love you …
Now? Next birthday?
Christmas? Wedding anniversary?
Or on the day
Of the Healer, St Luke
When, twenty years ago
We moved – it seems, so vainly –
Into our new house.

9 July 1980

When I said this, I also said 'Bon repos' et 'Bon Aventure' (at the airport at 6.50am on 2 September 1980). I also gave John this poem.

The title might equally well be *The Return From The Picnic*.

The Advertiser hoarding for this morning was 'SA-NZ flights this year.' That made me smile, because of one particular light. But that means of course that there are also NZ-SA flights this year and next year.

In A Tenniel Illustration

In a Tenniel illustration,
Alice through the Looking Glass
pacing beside his palfrey
observes with folded arms
and a child's calm gaze
the dear White Knight
precarious in the saddle
and lavishly equipped
with sword and mace
and other less appropriate
ingenious devices
advancing through the wood
with chivalric if dim intent
ready for any movement …
to fall on his silly head.

My daughter, with a preference
for the lighter side of life,
and knowing where I am
with heart-piercing acuteness,
gave me that picture
for a birthday card.

I laughed: 'Cathartic', I thought
I had just seen
chivalrous gentlemen, both lay and clerical,
blunder in their strategies,
panic and come unstuck
in an attempt
to help us women
achieve ordination.

There is no room for the White Knight
or Quixote in this conflict.
Women, like blacks,
had best fight for themselves.

And I am not the child Alice.
For a woman, speaking my mind,
the White Knight, the clown, the comic
proved an illusion, melted…
In his place, the Black Knight
astride his black horse
with lethal patriarchal outrage
at the presumption of my judgment
and its nearness to the bone
couched his bleak lance
and ran me through…

'Blood donors love life'.
That was, I think, my fourth pint.

Poem written in the gallery at Adelaide synod 2 November 1983

As part of the same inspiration came:

A Note For The Dictionary Of Mythology, 1983 Edition

Yes! There *are* she-centaurs
In defiance of classical mythology
And Disney's centaurettes.
Valkyries remain in vogue,
Aspiring knights must face it…
Even for Artegall and Arthur
Their only hope of being well-horsed
And decently accoutred now lies
In riding knee-to-knee with Britomart.

In The Evening

In the evening
I told three friends
I was beginning to swim.
In the evening
I tried to talk freely
to my son
and was taught
with verbal and emotional violence
that everything I feel
or think
is subject to
over-riding
and obliterating
re-interpretation
by a man (male)
in a male world.
Dong!
I swam no more
My battered head
Sinking at once
Below the hard-won
Surface
Of the sea
My arms, leg, stilled
Water
Invading my eyes
Depression and despair
My heart and mind.
To keep afloat
A woman is tempted to learn to dodge:
Into a mental health clinic?
Or an all-female world?

'They'
(helped by women too)
break your bruised and tender buds
douse or trample
your nascent flame.

But I sprout again
And rekindle,
Losing a day
at most a few.
So keep your bludgeons ready,
Your sword
Aimed at my breasts.
I am the enemy
Of usurped domination
Of male presumption.
You do well
To keep me
In your sights.

Before John Lennon died
I dreamed (twice)
A TV news flash
Where somebody with a cross bow
Shot the Pope.

Who was John Lennon?
The anti-Pope?
The Beatle
He'd said quite truly
That millions
Took more note of them
Than of Christ.
He didn't say
That that was what
He wanted:
All the same
The Establishment
Blew up.
Vicars of Christ
James Joneses
Spring up…
And fad…
Uselessly.

What I want is more women who are
Christ.

APPENDIX C ALISON'S POETRY

Love

Hey, John!
If I, your lover, am your school of love,
How do you find it there?

'It's rough, it's tough:
discipline comes and goes
and concentration is hard to come by:
vengeance goes on the prowl,
kindness comes rarely,
with little gratitude for what you are.
What's on the curriculum
Isn't exactly planned:
Perhaps our special thing
Is instant uproar.
And yet it's civilised in spot –
Not altogether
The concrete jungle…'

H'm ……
And all this time
I've had the cool, the deadly,
The bloody awful nerve
To complain of you!

21 May 1975

(small hours, after prayer and an act of penitence in terms of George Herbert's 'Love' – 'I, the unkind, the ungrateful')

Maundy Thursday

My love, my contradiction,
my cross.
For you to be my joy, my crown
I was prepared:
and I had warning at the outset
of suffering,
of great need for recourse to God
in my nearness to you.
But though my marriage-garment,
wearing to fit me,
quickly took on a likeness
to the habit of a religious,
it was not till I'd gazed
long at the constellations
in deep grief and perplexity
that I heard within me
of the Exultation of the Holy Cross
in the Heart of Love…

So, lover, there you are.
beloved beyond expression.
source both of joy and pain,
[raised high in my heart;]
And this Good Friday
in union with the dying Christ
embraced as both.

April 1974

Mutatis Mutandis ….

I am a mutant,
Something between a priest's wife
And a priest who is woman.

Is that what I was from my conception? Or my baptism?
or did the change begin after confirmation?
when God called and nobody heard …
no-one at all; for no-one I knew
had had such thoughts: I hadn't!

How many women, not knowing what they did,
have married a priest or a bishop
as the nearest thing to being one?

Ever since 'Anglican' ceased to be 'Roman',
women have had (in the English tradition)
this kind of closeness, real if domestic,
to ordained and consecrated being.

So don't tell me that Anglicans
must wait
for Roman Catholic and Orthodox readiness
before we move!

Why? In Heaven's name!

And what hypocrisy! When clerics
whose fathers or fathers-in-law
are priests or bishops,
and who themselves take vows
- plainly without discarding ambition –
and never bother their heads about
Roman or Orthodox theory and discipline
concerning Episcopal marriage
cry 'O fie! desist! in the name of Unity!'

9 November 1981

APPENDIX C ALISON'S POETRY

No Judas In Our Play

(St Peter's Williamstown, revisited after the divorce.)

When all I knew with my head
screamed your betrayal,

you, not another priest,
said here the mass I'd required,
desperate for survival.

Perhaps it was that
made you Christ and me Peter
as when the cock crowed,

for it was I
went out and wept bitterly
at the Dismissal.

Parish Life Abundant: Easter 1993

I swim through heavy seas…

Do not despise
O Yahweh our mother,
the least of these little ones
- the sexist women and men-
and the least of all
people with whom I share
this Easter Eucharist
who blithely endorse
continuing forever
to exclude
women from our sanctuary.

But let some of your tears
Mary Magdalene
fall for me –
for us your sisters in this church,
for we sit with Jesus
at table with Simon the Pharisee.

Poem Written On John's Remarriage And Also Licensed Priest

Ave atque Vale
[Farewell and Hail]
Beloved, there you are
across the water!
both priest and husband
by God's grace
alive and well.

You were my Cross
through lack of good self-love,
since you yourself
could never leave the Cross –
only as bound for burial.
And resurrection has been long in coming.
For those who placed you there
teaching you, truly, Christ
- their means, over-direction –
slew your will –
and transfixed your free spirit.

So you never believed
that unless you were dead
your reliance on the action of God alone
needn't be total;
or that you were permitted
to use your own good muscles
to get up and walk
out of the graves
that the tyranny
of aristocratic (or would-be) pastoral martinets
from time to time
and with varied degrees of permanence
had laid you in.

Barbara and I,
Grace and Lavinia,
taught less in kinder schools,
have set you free.

This is your new life,
Laid in your hand:
To complete the gift:
Be sure that you are
Even now
Able to live it. 25 November 1981

Revenants

As the holiday ends
tears rise
for a lost paradise
that because we have left it so soon
has not quite been attained;
and behind you
the hills ranked in the misty rain
farther and fainter
loom my other loves:
Guy in my childhood rousing
Feelings not comprehended:
Hugh recognized as a lover
In still, ceremonious youth;
And later, in denial and restraint,
Jack, known little too late.

You, John, the foreground Adam
(my journey to meet you
masked with four eagles)
will not again seem dark,
misted or absent:
'God has restored
the joy of our youth'.

2 May 1974

Science And Theology: Creation Written For Our Learning

(A Poem Dedicated To G. L.
Bishop Of --------)

The sex-life of a plant
is what some clerics don't know about.
They think the seed is 'the male
creative principle',
something spiritual ready to fertilize
undifferentiated female matter.

Don't they know
the beauty of the flower
is the fuss, the shrine, surrounding
the union of male and female,
stamen and ovary –
only then, the seed?
'that's true'

Why ignore Sarah
and all the line of women?
They talk as if Isaac, or Christ,
was only the sperm or 'pollen' of
Abraham,
and the New Israel just a male club!

Bad botany hinders good gardening.
No wonder if, these days,
not much grows in church soil.

The Ballad Of Clerk John And Alison His Wife

'O it's I must go across the sea
to start another life.'
So spoke the gold-tongued preacher John
To Alison his wife.

'But I have borne you children five
And two are children yet,
And two have wives and one has a child;
All this you can forget?'

He turned around upon his heel
And faced the beckoning East.
'The past is gone, the future's mine –
You move me not the least.'

And there came bitter tears and woe
To Alison his wife,
But neither grief nor love nor law
Could bring her back their life;

And sad, sad were the labouring hearts
Of their sons and daughter dear,
And vainly did his friends beseech,
For he left within the year.

It was early dawn when Alison stood
In the airport near the sea
And watched John walk to the 'plane and said
'Will you never come back to me?'

And John is married, across the sea,
To a new and black-haired wife,
And Alison with the yellow hair
Is living another life.

10 October 1982

The Queen's Bed

All good mums
Lie in Buckingham Palace
Dubiously secure …there might enter
No Prince consort, but a drugged stranger,
His deadly weapon
Improvised from some household object,
And only radical humanity
Expressed in courtesy
Averts assassination.

So, I await him and his new lover
Bound for the heart of my domestic being,
Hosted by you, our firstborn.

Medea, forsaken, murders their children.
I accept this final impiety
The offer of a bed to your father
With a woman, not her who conceived you –
Tamely, even with joy.

Not that I fail to taste
The whole classical outrage;
But between Eastern sorceress (not even Greek)
And would-be Christian priests
As between Virgil's and Purcell's Dido
There is a difference.

The Turning Point

She who is I
Facing the blue purpled fields
and gold-loaded trees
of spring

knows, animal-deep,
to expect new life
growing through change
from deaths:

only, life's forms –
no more predictable
than gum tree shapes –
demand

patience … it's clearing
clogged streams of scum and drift
to run still at last …
Breathe easy.

Third Anthology/ Country and City Women Writers, 1983

To John, My John, In My Drought –

See my predicament:
I want a man –
no sucking, stinking brat
Of Alcohol, who yields
[the uprightness of his flesh
to that bitch-mother,][*added 25/2/71*]
but one who'll fill my lips
when they cry 'cherry-ripe!'
with a firm tongue,
take my peculiar being
in, with a cool, seeing eye
and answer it
with torrent of himself.
One singing seed I'll cull
and harbour till my mouth
is parted from within,
my tongue, not yet mine,
uttering a new Word…

Yet I want none but you.
Pity my pain.

Written after Poetry night, 4 February 1971

To The Pope

To the Pope, one might, optionally,
start,
'vicar,
Are you the Anti-Christ?'
Not a foolish question!
Caiaphas,
High-Priest that year
And gifted with prophesy,
Was unmistakeably –
'against' Christ.
Was it Caiaphas
Or Judas
To who,
Jesus
Before Pilate
Allotted
'the greater Sin'?
To sin against
The Holy Spirit
Of God
Is open to all of us,
In private
As in public
Or somewhere in between.
The only possible course
Whether you are
An archbishop or a laywoman
With no authority
Perhaps less –
Thana vocation
Persistently unrecognised
Is to take care
Not to.

Waking To His Death

Is it midwinter?
We, John and I, has two sons
Born in snowy weather –
well, snowy for Adelaide, when
snow falls on Mount Lofty.
It is those two, Peter and Christopher,
who will be at their father's funeral,
the rest of us making Requiem
later, when Chris returns
this side of the Tasman Sea.

Midwinter weather preceded and covered
John's last affliction and death
the end a funeral this day
on the Feast of Our Lady of Snows,
and the Requiem to come
on Mary's Laying to Rest.

2 August 1998

'This day' refers to 5 August, when I read this to the Bray-Jury poetry reading, not 2 August when I wrote it.

What Was The Serpent Doing?

What was the serpent doing?
Did you feel an injustice–
No legs, no dominion given
over other creatures
to exercise that subtle mind?
No chance to name others
or walk with God?
Feeling tight boundaries,
were you devious enough
to entice the woman and the man
to express your rebellion for you
by breaking their own bounds
when they had no need?

Snake, for Moses symbol of life
held up in the wilderness
transformed by bronze and by fire;
bringer of death and hard service
while living in Paradise garden,
you, even you, are redeemed
when the crucified Jesus
accepts his kinship with you
and with the woman in travail,
drawing all unto him
while he hangs outside Jerusalem. 20 April 1990

APPENDIX D ALISON AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

D:1 Alison Contributes a Letter to *Liberation*, the Newsletter of the Women's Liberation Movement 1971

LETTER

In an earlier Newsletter, a slight injustice was done to the poet Pope, by quoting out of context a single line from the Second Epistle in his Moral Essays.

Most women have no characters at all.

The line was treated in the Newsletter as Pope's own opinion. Because there is a possible paranoid tendency behind the misinterpretation - and you agree with me, don't you, that there's nothing Women's Lib. needs to avoid more carefully than seeing hostility where there is none, or at least where there's less than is appears? - I'd like to insist on a more accurate presentation of Pope's line.

The poem containing the line was addressed to A Lady: the lady was in fact Pope's much-loved, long-loved and loving friend Martha Blount. The line quoted is apparently something Martha herself once said to Pope.

> Nothing so true as what you once let fall:
> "Most women have no characters at all."

It's an observation on what women in fact tended to be like in the society that was familiar to her and to the poet - a society in which social and economic conditions made it very rare for a woman to develop a really well-defined individuality. Martha's remark, therefore, could have been - and I believe, was - no more than an accurate statement of the insipidity of many, or even most, women under the conditions they then lived in.

Why I'm anxious to defend the statement is because I once made it myself, or something very like it. As a student at this University in 1940 or thereabouts, I noticed how rare it was for a woman student to have the same well-defined outline as was then far commoner among men. The same causes were no doubt at work as in Pope's time. If "no character at all" is a comment we feel inclined to make about a lot of women's (or men's) faces today, all the more need for Women's Lib!

Pope, incidentally, had also, for a while, a flourishing friendship with Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who had one of the most definite outlines of the women in her time.

(A.Gent)
i.e. Alison G. Gent,
Dept. of English.

Liberation, August 1971. Page 2.
No. 6.

D:2 A Poster advertising the Tuesday Afternoon Group – a Support Group within the Women's Liberation Movement

THE TUESDAY GROUP Telephone: 223 1005

WHO ARE WE?

Women living in domestic situations, although any woman of any age or occupation is welcome.

WHERE DO WE MEET?

At the Women's Liberation Centre, No. 1 Union Street, Adelaide, off Rundle Street.

WHEN DO WE MEET? On Tuesdays...

At about 3.00 p.m., although some of us come in earlier or later.

WHAT ARE OUR AIMS?

Primarily we try to help and support each other as women. We discuss all problems facing women generally and individually. We support other groups in the fight against social injustice. But most of all, we provide a social outlet for women who are isolated in their living situations.

HOW DO WE OPERATE?

We always respect your right to your beliefs. We are basically a support group.

Occasionally we have speakers from other groups.

We are informal, unstructured as a group, but when the need arises, elect someone to chair the meeting.

We try to be as equal as possible without leaders and encourage each other without domination.

COME ALONG.

FEEL FREE TO SHARE YOUR PROBLEMS AND FRUSTRATIONS OR JUST TO RELAX.

TEL: 223 1005

D:3 The Verso of the Poster. Alison Instigated and Supported this Group

AN INVITATION TO WOMEN



THE TUESDAY GROUP

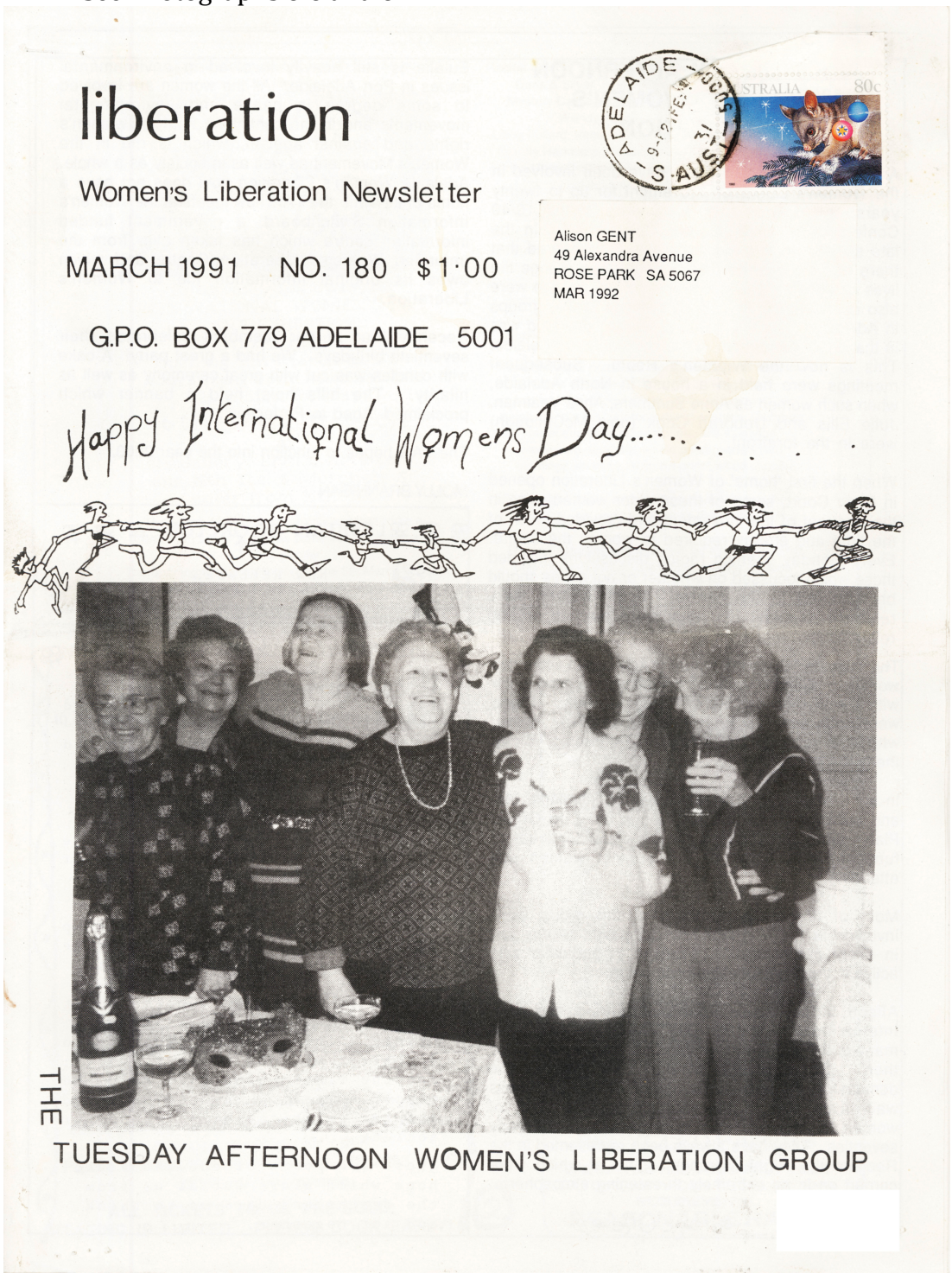
A Place to go_____

A Place to grow_____

OR JUST RELAX

D:4 Alison and Three Other Friends celebrate their 70th Birthdays

See Photographs 6:6 and 6:7



D:5 Molly Brannigan recorded a history of TAG for *Liberation* March 1991

THE TUESDAY AFTERNOON GROUP OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Although many older women have been involved in the Women's Liberation Movement for up to twenty years, few women over sixty were at the 10/40 Conference in 1986 at Lake Cullulleraine. In the late sixties, when I was forty five, I discovered that there was a movement that was going to change the lives of women. Several women of my vintage were also attending the first consciousness raising groups in Adelaide. The first meeting which I attended was in the Anna Menz room at the University of Adelaide. This is now the Wiomen's Room. Subsequent meetings were held in a house in North Adelaide, when such women as Anne Summers, Anna Yeatman, Julie Ellis and Deborah Cook (now McCullough) were in the forefront.

When the first 'home' of Women's Liberation opened in Bloor Court, some of these older women were in the forefront of the movement and provided much of the time and energy required to woman the centre. Every Monday evening raging discussions included those which focussed on whether or not males should be admitted to the centre! Some women were reluctant to admit that they were married or had relationships with men.

The Tuesday Afternoon Group (TAG) began when two women on tuesday morning duty stayed to have lunch with the women coming on afternoon duty. These were Edith and Eileen (am) and Rose (pm). Alison, who was rostered on Wednesday morning, joined them for lunch.

In spite of various moves to various locations, into and out of the city, the last venue being to Gilbert Place, the group survived and grew and continues to function, with many of the original women still attending.

Most of the early members of the group were involved in the Vietnam war campaign, taking part in every demonstration. Eulalie in particular was active in the Save Our Sons campaign.

Alison, Molly and Connie attended the first International Women's Day March in 1970 and many of the women have attended every march since then. Some of the woemn took part in the demonstrations against the use of women as topless waitresses and in the struggle for the right of women to enter the front bars of pubs in the early seventies. They have always been represented in the Reclaim the NIght Marches, some of which were carried on in an extremely threatening atmosphere.

••● Page One ●••

Eulalie is still heavily involved in environmental issues in Port Adelaide. All the women are involved to some degree in peace and environmental movements and in the continuing fight for women's rights and against ageism, which is rife in the Women's Movement as well as in society as a whole. Adelaide Women's Liberation now does not have a home of its own. the TAG now meets at the Women's Information Switchboard, a government funded information centre which has taken over from the unfunded Women's Liberation Centre and which owes its original information file to Women's Liberation.

Recently four of our members celebrated their seventieth birthdays. We had a great party! A cake with candles was cut with great ceremony as well as hilarity. The hills hoist held a banner which proclaimed 'Aged to Perfection'.

The TAG hopes to function into the year 2000.

MOLLY BRANNIGAN

D:6 Alison composed and wrote banners for demonstrations. These she wrote for protests at ordinations





D: 7 Banners Alison Displayed at International Women's Day Marches, Protests and other actions on women's behalf

Women's Movement (General)



D:8 A letter of condolence to Alison's family from the South Australian Government Minister for the Status of Women

Hon Gail Gago MLC

Government of South Australia

Minister for State/Local Government Relations
Minister for the Status of Women
Minister for Consumer Affairs
Minister for Government Enterprises
Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Energy

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minister.gago@saugov.sa.gov.au

09SW0476

Ms Lavinia Gent
49 Alexander Avenue
ROSE PARK SA 5067

Dear Ms Gent

I would like to offer my condolences to you and family members on the passing of your mother Alison.

Over the years Alison has made a valued contribution to the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in South Australia through her involvement in a range of groups. I know that Alison worked passionately for the rights of women within the Church and that her involvement with the Movement of the Ordination of Women was an enormous part of her life.

As part of the WLM, Alison worked toward promoting the rights of all women within our community and as Minister for the Status of Women I am proud to continue this work by ensuring that women's issues are addressed.

Alison's continuing involvement in the Tuesday Afternoon Group (TAG) since its inception in the early 1970s was commendable and evidence of her commitment to seeking justice for women in all spheres of life. I am sure she will be remembered by TAG members who continue to meet weekly at the Office for Women, by Office for Women staff and members of the community more broadly.

Once again, my condolences for your loss.

Yours sincerely

Gail Gago

HON GAIL GAGO MLC

16 / 2 /2010

Printed on recycled paper using soy based inks

APPENDIX E ORDINATION OF WOMEN PART 1

E:1 Transcript: Nationwide 1981

A transcript of a debate on the ordination of women conducted on the ABC television programme Nationwide, 20 April 1981. Presenter, Nigel Starke; participants, the Reverend John Fleming (JF), Dr John Gaden (JG), Dr Keith Rayner (KR) and Mrs Alison Gent (AG)

Précis:
Nigel Starke's report on the question of whether women should be allowed to be ordained as priests. In the Anglican Church women have limited opportunity and at the meeting of the General Synod in August they will debate the issue of the ordination of women. The Reverend John Fleming, Union of Catholic Priests, [the Reverend] Dr John Gaden, Trinity College, Melbourne, Alison Gent, Adelaide, Synod Representative, [the Most Reverend] Dr Keith Rayner, Archbishop of Adelaide.

Transcript

NS In the Anglican Church in Australia women have their own cross to bear, the cross of limited opportunity. Surprising perhaps, given the importance in Christianity of one woman, Mary, mother of Jesus. Two thousand years later, in Australia, Anglican women are still subjected to the restrictions preached by St Paul: I suffer woman not to teach nor to use her authority over a man, but to be silent doing good works. But that dedication to good works in a supporting role only is now being questioned. After exhaustive legal, theological and sociological argument, the General Synod at its meeting in Sydney in August will debate a constitutional reform paving the way for the ordination of women as priests. There are nearly four million Australian Anglicans so the synod's verdict deserves attention in the realm of sexual equality. Among churchmen and the laity the debate has already started.
JF The Union of Anglican Catholic Priests views the ministry as something acceptable to all of the catholic churches in the West and the Orthodox churches of the East so it's implicit in our constitution that the ordination of women is not acceptable to us as Anglicans unless it is acceptable to the whole of the rest of the church.
JG I believe that God made men and women equal, equal in the image of God, equally able to represent God in the world and therefore I would conclude equally able to lead a community in its worship and in its discipleship of Jesus.
AG I think it's very bad for the church to be seen to be uninterested in any aspect of justice or righteousness as it is sometimes expressed and I think that letting women come to the full expression of their capacity in spiritual matters and in exercising authority is an important part of justice. The law for example allows women now to be judges and although I know you can't dictate to the church, I think it's not good for the church to be seen to lag behind in matters that are really matters of justice.

NS The Church of England in Australia has clung to its men-only policy in the face of more liberal attitudes elsewhere. The Anglican churches of the United States, Canada, Hong Kong and New Zealand all allow women to be ordained. In England the last General Synod deferred the question, although the Archbishop of Canterbury has said subsequently that he is in favour of women priests. At Australia's last General Synod, four years ago, the church accepted a recommendation from its doctrine commission, that there was no theological objection. The Archbishop of Adelaide, a member of that doctrine commission, would like to see the Synod go a stage further this time. Is it simply a question that there are not enough men presenting themselves for ordination and that it would be of great value to have women filling up the numbers?

KR No, it is certainly not that. As a matter of fact, in my own diocese at the present time, I have as many clergy as I am able to use. In a way it is good that the matter should be coming up at a time when we are not desperately short of clergy because then it would be seen just as a sort of expediency to meet an immediate problem. No, it is much more than that. It is a matter of seeing the ministry of the church as being truly representative and it's around this in a sense that the debate hinges. Now you see when the church goes to a new country, shall we say, when the gospel was taken to PNG [Papua New Guinea]. At first all the clergy were white men, and there was rightly a sense of something being lacking in the ordained ministry until the time had come that there were indigenous priests and indigenous bishops because the ministry is to be representative of the life of the church. And now that we are in a position that women are able to take their place alongside men in the total life of society, there is something lacking, it seems to me, in the representativeness of the ordained ministry if women are excluded from it.

NS There is a lot of opposition on theological grounds though, isn't there?

KR Yes, there is. And one of the main lines of argument against the ordination of women is that because the priest is to represent Christ and God was incarnate in Christ as a male, the priest who represents Christ must be a male. Now, there's a weakness it seems to me in that argument and a very important weakness. It is true that Jesus Christ was a man of course, and there was only two choices, man or woman, and I think there were very good and understandable reasons why God should have chosen to be incarnate in a man, but the essence of the incarnation was not that he became a male but that he became truly human and its his humanity that is the heart of the matter and when we recognise that we see that women can be as truly representative of the humanity of Christ as men can be.

NS New Zealand, December 1977 and the first ordination of Anglican women in that country. Women have now been appointed vicars of parishes [in the dioceses of] Aukland, Waiapu, Waikato, Wellington and Christchurch. But the chances of an Australian bishop ordaining an Australian woman are still much in doubt. Even if the General Synod does approve the constitutional change, that reform would still have to be ratified by each metropolitan diocese. Meeting at a later date on their home territory the diocese of Adelaide and the diocese of Sydney are both likely the reject it. There'll be especially strong opposition from the Union of Anglican Catholic Priests, opposition based on the belief that ordination of women would drive an ill-timed wedge between the

Anglican Church and the Church of Rome. Are you saying that the ordination of women would automatically bring an end to the ecumenical movement?
JF Yes, I think it would be traumatic for it, whether it would bring it automatically to an end, I don't quite know what that means, but it would certainly raise an insuperable barrier for the Orthodox, and I believe for Rome as well. I think it would be very difficult for us to be, to say that we are fair dinkum if we say yes we want union with you, here is a thing you said no to and we go ahead and do it anyway.
NS Is your theological argument based on the fact that Christ was a man and therefore his priests must be men?
JF Put very simply, and over simply, yes. I think I'd want to say there is something significant in the fact that Christ chose to become a male man as against a female man and there is something significant in the fact that for two thousand years the church has understood that to mean that priests ought to be men, males, I mean. Now as I say unless there are some very strong arguments to over turn that, it seems to me that we're not really in a basis to change our position just now.
NS The argument against that is that the significant thing is that Christ achieved humanity, not necessarily masculinity.
JF Yes, and I would say simply to that you can only be a human being as either a man or a woman and do you know of anybody who has been a human being who is not either a man or a woman? So it is significant and it is not suggesting that women are less than human, that is one way of being human but it is to suggest that Christ was fully human by being a male human.

[the video shows a scene of a confirmation class – the speaking content was not transcribed]

NS A priest has to take confirmation classes, supervise youth groups, act as a friend and counsellor; in these areas women priests would surely be accepted, but there is a hard-core theological argument against women performing the sacramental rites. In Australia women can administer the bread and wine but these sacraments must first be consecrated by a priest, a male priest. And while that sort practice remains in force, Anglican women will have to settle for the role of doing good works without ordination. What then can they expect from the coming General Synod given the need first for constitutional reform, the opposition at diocesan level from Sydney and Adelaide, and the unwillingness of the clerical hierarchy to be hurried? Can women anticipate the move from congregation to the pulpit?
JG Yes, I think that at the coming synod in August we will remove a particular legal obstacle that at the moment prevents women from being ordained, we'll have further discussion for another four years, and in 1985, or thereabouts, we will legislate positively to allow women to be ordained.
NS Do you feel the ordination of women would automatically serve as an impasse to the ecumenical movement, that Rome would say well alright that's an end to any talk about coming together.
JG It's certainly is being used by some people along these lines. The Orthodox Churches and the Pope have indicated that they do not approve of the steps being taken and that it will be in their mind a further barrier. Against that

you have to note that the fact that the Roman Catholic Church at any rate is involved in discussions with churches that have already ordained women, the Methodist church and the Lutheran churches and that there is a considerable movement within the Roman Catholic Church towards the ordination of women, a movement which I believe will eventually succeed within that church too.

JF Look, there are many more important issues confronting the church than the ordination of women. One of them is proclaiming the gospel. And it traumatises me to see a church tearing itself apart over an issue like this when we've got to get on and preach the gospel in a nation where people are staying away from church in their droves Now I can see the Church of England in this country, unless we're very, very careful, tearing our hearts out over an issue like this and forgetting our main task.

NS Would you care to offer a prediction as to whether or not in the 80s or in the 90s perhaps we're going to have women priests in the Anglican Church in Australia?

KR I find it very hard to know. In the last General Synod in 1977 somewhat to my surprise I must confess, the synod agreed in principle with the ordination of women. But it's a bit of a different thing agreeing in principle and knowing that nothing's going to flow from that and agreeing to the actual thing happening. I think it will be a very divided vote and if it is genuinely divided my own view is that we should wait until there is a stronger consensus on the matter. Certainly I don't want to see the church split down the middle on this important question.

NS That desire to keep the peace, to get on with the main task of promoting Christian principles in an increasingly cynical society, could well work against the movement for ordaining women. The church can't afford a split and while the Uniting Church in Australia and Anglican communities overseas have now accepted the tide of total sexual equality; the Anglican Church of Australia is moving in its own deliberate, cautious and mysterious ways. In the language of equal, ecclesiastical opportunity it would still be premature for Anglicans to talk about clergy persons.

The author transcribed the debate from a video recording produced by the ABC. The written précis accompanied the cassette.

E:2 A Document Alison Prepared for Distribution at Synod 1982

A DISSENTING OPINION FROM MATERIAL DISTRIBUTED TO

SYNODSMEN IN THE DIOCESE OF ADELAIDE.

To those of us who oppose the ordination of women.

"The humanity of Christ is not adequate to supply a woman with what she needs to be a priest." In our anxiety to have some reason to deny women the right to be in Holy Orders in the Christian Church, isn't this what some of us are saying?

(Yet I, as much as you, Fr. ----, am by my baptism "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." I, as much as you, receive Christ in his Body and Blood at Holy Communion.)

I know that what people intend to say is that there is something about a woman, her sex, which makes her incapable of receiving the sacrament of ordination: but as it is solely the priesthood of Christ in anyone whatsoever which makes them capable of becoming a Christian priest in any way worthy of the name, let me point out that God gives that priesthood to whom He wills.

(If the analogy of Mother were more generally familiar to Christians other than Christian Scientists, I could say that God gives the priesthood of Her Son to whom She wills: you might find that more convincing. But since the analogies the Church uses of God in our time tend so far to remain monolithically male, and Motherhood is only honoured, so far, up to the level of Mary, I shall spare you that. I content myself with repeating that what is said about the unsuitability of women to receive Holy Orders has its inescapable corollary, and that is the assumption that the humanity of Christ is incomplete; the Incarnation does not totally redeem humanity.)

We have the choice of two ways of looking at this matter.

One is, that the incarnation of Christ is perfect, total: that His humanity was complete and sufficient for the salvation of woman as well as man, though His body was male.

The other is, that women, in order to be completely identifiable with Christ, and therefore eligible for Ordination as well as the greater sacraments of Baptism and Communion, need another, female, Saviour.

The underlying and probably unconscious premise for the second belief - and I fear that this is part of what many people habitually think - is that men, male, are fully human and that men, female (i.e. women) are merely a supportive sub-category of the genus Man (Homo Sapiens). This is biological nonsense, and I don't believe that biological nonsense is a fitting foundation for Christian truth.

Bishop Leonard, formerly of Truro, now of London, with other opponents of the ordination of women, is apt to speak of 'the male' as somehow having inherent in it the creative principle. This is a way of speaking which depends on an outmoded biology. Indeed, if anyone is using the analogy of "seed" in a human context as if it were the equivalent of human male sperm, even their botany is inaccurate, because a seed is the product of, not one element in, the union of the male and female components of a flower. In a seed, the female is there already. Surely no-one is so obsessed with maleness as to want to go about referring to the "pollen" of Abraham! Isaac - or Christ, if you wish to emphasize the prophetic element in the phrase - is the "seed" of Abraham - and Sarah!

ALISON GENT.

2/8/'82.

E:3 Alison Gent to the Archbishop of Adelaide, Dr Keith Rayner, after his Visit to the WHO? Group

Letter written in response to his request for possible aims and functions of a Postulant's Group, 13 September 1982.

Dear Father in God,

In answering your request that women who believe God is calling them to Holy Orders should set down what they see is the aim and function of a 'shadow' Postulants' Group, I want first to thank you for attending the August meeting of the WHO? Group, and to say that your expressed intention of allowing the formation of such a group for women has given me cause for deep gratitude and joy. This leads straight to saying that the first aim of the Group (which would be the same whether the group women joined were identical with the Postulants' Guilt for men (male) or separate from it) is to give the Church a framework for acknowledging that God is able – free, if you like – to call whatever persons He will to Holy Orders.

The second aim is to allow women who believe they are called to ordination not only to exist, but to exist in fellowship within the Anglican Church. There should be a Chaplain to guide us, as long as his guidance is positive, is a good and necessary part of this, since the ordained ministry of women in the Anglican Communion is a new and tender plant, and no individual 'postulant' is likely to find the attempt to follow her vocation an easy matter: we shall need good pastoral care. Occasional, perhaps regular, contact with each individual woman's spiritual director (where she has her own) will perhaps be a necessary part of the group's Chaplain: I am of the opinion that such contact should normally be a threesome, the third being a woman.

The third aim will be to plan relevant courses of action, including study for both the group and the individual, and an annual Quiet Day or Retreat. As in any Postulants' Group, I think provision should be made for deepening the members' understanding of what the Christian Priesthood – likewise the Diaconate and Episcopacy – really is.

A fourth aim could well be to remain (once we have achieved this state) well informed about the progress of the movement for ordaining women in the Anglican Church and elsewhere. This should include maintaining some kind of contact with ordained women in Provinces where there are already women functioning as deacons, priests and bishops (hopefully!). The WHO? group could well assist us in this matter. There is an ecumenical dimension here, too, which should not be neglected. At theological student level, women in our neighbourhood who are accepted as candidates for the ministry of their churches, and, no less, nuns and other Roman Catholic women who have a strong interest in the Ordination of Women, could be valuable acquaintances and friends, and perhaps occasionally, visitors to the Anglican group.

I, myself, have a strong conviction that there is a fifth aim, which would not be equally pressing for all women. May I, however, state it for myself? Women all over the world have at present a wonderful opportunity to relate to each other simply as women, with a sense of sisterhood, and of making common

cause to ensure each other's welfare that has, I greatly fear, long been impossible or nearly so among men (male). Some understanding of the universal Sisterhood of Women as a dawning hope connected with Peace and Health for all humanity ought, I think, to be part of our training for priesthood, and even of our contemplation of the possibility of it. So my fifth aim can be seen as an awareness of secular Women's Studies and of the activities of women's groups of all kinds, all over the world; extending where possible to contact and friendship with these.

I haven't mentioned Biblical study and liturgical: but these will surely emerge. (Aim 3?)

Is this useful? I hope so, Your Grace,

Alison Gent.

P.S. There is a note to be read after the letter.

As I wrote this letter, the expression I used, i.e. 'shadow', in talking of the women's 'postulants' group came to me spontaneously. I wonder, however, if the implications of it are worth commenting on? There is in the word a reflection of parliamentary politics, and I think that whatever misgivings I have felt, and now feel, a bout the setting up of a separate postulants' group for women have emerged here.

Separation (the rejection, as far as it is possible, of men, male) in the Women's Movement is only the reflection of the rejection that women tend to encounter in a world, and a Church, that has been structured with very little attention to their way of perceiving reality. The Church in following Christ would, I imagine, not want to perpetuate either form of separation in human affairs – neither man-woman nor woman-man.

The implication of 'shadow' is that the party in power is more 'real' than the party not in power. If groups divided down the sex-line are to be set up, are we running the risk of perpetuating the notion of the sexes as 'opposites', even 'opponents'? What, then, as someone has said, is the 'neighbouring' sex? AG.

E:4 Transcript of an Interview: an Unnamed Interviewer (Q) with Alison Gent. BBC Oxford 1984

AG We in Australia have had a motion of General Synod not unlike the English one in 1975, ours was in 1981, I think, passing the ordination of women as not objectionable theologically.
Q But not doing anything about it?
AG No, it had to be implemented in various rather complicated legal ways and so far there has been a good deal of resistance to that and nothing has yet been achieved but a lot of it is not peculiar to Australia. I think there is a lot of very deep-seated, non-rational opposition to women being priests.
Q You began to think about the priesthood in the early seventies. What made you feel drawn to the priesthood?
AG Well I expect it was because my intense involvement in domestic life was coming more to an end. I'd been married to a priest and we'd had five children. And in the early days certainly my ideas were very conventional but by the time the children were growing up or on the way to growing up, the possibilities of a professional life were no doubt a little bit more in my mind.
Q Do you feel that you have a calling?
AG Well I'll never know the answer to that until the church accepts it but I believe, yes, that God has been calling me to the priesthood, possibly all my life, possibly long before I realised it.
Q The issue of women priests is often a divisive one. Is it right for women to press the issue in the knowledge that there will be many people who will find it difficult to accept their ministry?
AG Well, you could have said exactly the same thing about the liberation of slaves and I think that the fact that not everyone sees it at once is very much overplayed in the opposition to the ordination of women; for example, the ecumenical argument against the ordination of women seems to me a very poor one, because if it's a matter of justice, as I believe it is, that women should have access to holy orders, to join a coalition of oppression by saying oh well we can't have it in the Anglican Church because that would destroy our unity with the Roman Catholic Church or the Orthodox Church that seems to me a very poor thing to do.
Q But what about those members of the church who will find it difficult to accept the ministry of women? What will their position be?
AG Well, I think there's a great deal of work to do. I mean go back to Genesis to start with; man and woman were made in the image of God, and I think a lot of denominations, particularly the fringe ones perhaps, find it quite difficult even to recognise that. There's a very heavy over-emphasis on maleness as an attribute of God and that of course really when you boil it down is nonsense because God is Spirit.
Q And do you think that one day you'll be wearing the robes of an Anglican clergywoman?
AG I've no idea. [sigh] I've no idea what those robes are, [laughs] or whether I'd wear a collar. I think the main thing is to fight for the cause. At present I think the difficulty of acknowledging that you have a vocation is so great that a lot of women find it too painful to acknowledge it even to themselves. But I think that once the thing were made possible vocations would certainly not be lacking.

[transcribed by author from a computer disc made from the original reel-to-reel tape

E:5 PRIESTS WHO ARE WOMEN: a glimpse of the issue by a visitor to the parish

A talk on the ordination of women in Australia given by Alison Gent to the congregation of the Church of England at North Hinksey near Oxford, January 1984

If a priest, ordained by an Anglican bishop or bishops in a part of the world where the Church has decided that it is right and legal to ordain women, visits another part of the Anglican Church, should she be unable to function as a priest because she is a woman?

This question will be asked in the forthcoming English Synod, I believe. I am an Australian staying near the parish church of St Lawrence, North Hinksey while I am visiting England, and this same question rose up very vividly before me just before I left Australia. It may interest you to know more about how the question arose and how I dealt with it.

One of the eleven women who were the first to be ordained priest in the United States is by origin, like me, a native of Adelaide, South Australia. She has visited her home city several times since she was ordained priest in 1974, and the Anglican Church in Adelaide has taken very little notice of her presence – in fact, none at all that I know of, if exception is made of one school chaplain's inviting her to speak to some schoolgirls.

This time she was staying in Adelaide longer and her family concerns were less pressing, so I took the opportunity to get to know her well, to my very great benefit; for women believing they are called to holy orders (or even fighting hard for recognition of the fact that God is really calling women to be ordained) have a hard and discouraging battle in Australia, so far, just as they do in England. Knowing she was real was wonderful!

What brought me to England just now, beyond my need for a holiday, was my desire to attend the celebration last Saturday in Westminster Abbey and at St Martin-in-the-Fields, organised by the Movement for the Ordination of Women. What a memorable Day of Thanksgiving for the fortieth anniversary of the ordination by the bishop of South China in 1944 of Florence Li Tim Oi, the first woman in the Anglican Communion to be a priest. Since I was willing to come so great a distance to celebrate that event, remote in time and location from my own present situation in the church in Adelaide, was there also something more immediate I could do about the woman I knew and lived close to, before I left?

There is a group interested in the ordination of women in Adelaide: it started in May 1980 and is called WHO? (Women and Holy Orders?). But the action that may provoke serious repercussions is slow to organise if it concerns a group, and perhaps the members of a group will not all be equally willing to take risks. So pressed for time I took sole responsibility for arranging my own farewell before my holiday, and on 16 January an Anglican priest who is a woman celebrated holy communion in the drawing room of my own house in Adelaide with ten people present.

An act of rebellion against constituted authority? I am not sure. Our archbishop in Adelaide voted for the alteration to the Constitution of the

Anglican Church of Australia when the matter was presented to the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide in 1982, though the motion was defeated in both houses of clergy and laity. The Anglican Consultative Council has advised provinces of the church where the ordination of women is *not* practised to allow women lawfully ordained abroad to function when they visit; but in some provinces the bishops do not accept the Council's advice. Yet think! What are we doing to the sacramental authority of an Anglican bishop when we refuse to recognise priests in good standing whom they have ordained? We have never done this on account of skin colour: why do it because of sex?

Postscript

In the voices raised to oppose testing women's vocation to be priests, there is often detectable, it seems to me, a hankering for a centralized, quasi-papal pattern of church government. 'It all ought to happen in one piece!' It is the nature of the Anglican Communion to move in a more complex and democratic way. We need to be ready to accept the frustrations and complexities attendant on this our own hierarchical and legal structures. In such an acceptance we will also find opportunities for strong individual thought and action on the part of lay people (and who is more 'lay' than a women, who can only in a few Anglican provinces become anything else?). If we see and seize these opportunities, perhaps the whole Christian Church will begin to be strong and alive all through, instead of guiding men and women towards an adult stature in Christ which is unwilling in practice to let us act out.

E:6 Letter to the Editor of the *Adelaide Church Guardian*, 26 April 1984

Alison responded to derogatory comments made in the same paper concerning the first woman ordained in the Anglican Church in 1944.

Florence Li Tim Oi is a Chinese woman, ordained in 1944, whose difficult ministry – in the priesthood while only intermittently licensed to the specific functions of a priest – has been an eminently faithful one. To anyone who was present, as I was, in Westminster Abbey on 21 January, at a Mass celebrating the fortieth anniversary of her ordination, Father Brown's description of it as 'the recent infamous service' is both tragic and ludicrous. (see *Adelaide Church Guardian* April, p. 10 and May, p. 10.) I respect his right to his opinion; but I am convinced that it is the opinion of the one who regards women – at least half of his fellow-Christians! – with panic superstitions.

The society he heads is called 'Ecclesia'. I approve, in principle, the naming of church societies with names which are true descriptions of the church as a whole, e.g. 'The Community of the Holy Name', 'The Society of the Sacred Mission'; but that any group should call itself Ecclesia (the Church) is fraught with considerable danger. There are times when any Christian individual or group may be called upon to claim, reasonably, that beloved name, the name of the society to which we all belong already. But heaven forbid that any should make the claim 'I am the Church', in an exclusive sense! Schism or madness lies along that path.

A letter from the present Archbishop of Canterbury congratulating Li Tim Oi on her long, faithful ministry was read at the Abbey service. The message of warning, spoken by the former Archbishop of Canterbury here in St Peter's Cathedral in 1977, immediately after he visited the United States, is still highly relevant for all of us: 'we must endure our conflicts with patience, and in love.'

Yours in the unity of Christ and His Church

Alison Gent

PS I suggest as a title (hoping such a suggestion is permissible in the view of the editor): 'The Part for the Whole?'

E:7 Alison Gent to the Archbishop of Adelaide, Dr Keith Rayner 18 June 1984. She is asking to attend a selection conference

I am writing to ask you if I may attend this year's selection conference as a candidate. This may seem like asking to receive the answer 'No'; but I hope to explain, in a way that makes sense, how I have decided to make such a request.

My response to the formation of the Women's Vocation Group with Father Keith Chittleborough as chaplain has been profound thankfulness for your concern that women, young and old, in my position should receive some pastoral care. After more than a year, I have come to see – helped by membership in that group – that there may be, for me at least, a way forward.

Until very recently, I have been in danger of confusing the general issue of the ordination of women with my own personal vocation. This happened, I believe, because of isolation: it was a lonely and unenviable task to speak out in the mid-70s and since for the inclusion of women among those who could be treated as believing they were called to the sacred ministry. Now, the tension is rather less, because it is not only those *opposed* to women's ordination who, in Adelaide, possess a corporate existence and interstate and overseas connections.

At this time, then, I see that my own path is to do all I can to prepare myself for admission to the diaconate. In order to do that in a realistic way, I believe it necessary to obtain whatever support and approval I can from the church, however slight this may be. I know, of course, that nobody can yet give me either permission to be a deacon or concrete official backing for the process of becoming one.

When I studied at St Barnabas' College during 1978, I felt at the end of the year that the strain of continuing to study there without any undertaking from the church that I could be ordained when I had finished acquiring qualifications was too great. And when I applied to Father David Richardson in June 1980, for admission to the Postulants' Group, I accepted after a time the idea that it was right that I should be protected from being in a position where my implied request from testing could only receive the answer 'No'.

Now, I have changed my mind. I think, and I dare to hope you will agree with me, that if I can at least come as close to admission to the diaconate as any other candidate who attends a selection conference and receives the answer 'No' or 'Not yet', I shall be in a better position that I am in now. This will be [illegible word] even if I can attend only as if I were a candidate and so receive no answer at all!

Perhaps it will seem to you that I *am* asking to be put in a more painful position than the one I have been in ever since you and Father Richardson answered my request to be in the Postulants' Group in the negative. That may be true; but if it is, I think that it does not matter, for I regard it as realistic and necessary for women with vocations to the ministry to be working to advance their own cause as well as receiving what help those already in the ministry – or anyone else – can give them. My conscience and my belief in my vocation to be a deacon, whether as a first step, a final step, or a stop, I must try (but I may never be allowed but the Church to take), impel me to write this letter.
Yours, in the love of Christ.

E:8 A double-sided leaflet produced by WHO? for distribution at the Adelaide Synod 1984. It was Alison's impetus and written mainly by her

"G O D I S S P I R I T"

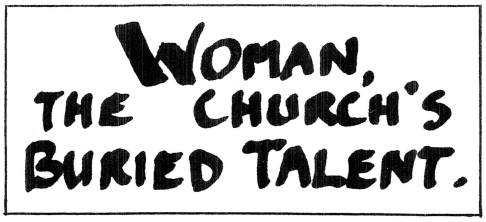
GOD IS NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE

THE ONLY TRUE PRIESTHOOD IS CHRIST'S.

If the threefold ministry reflects Christ and therefore the nature of God, being in Christ (with a calling found valid by the Church) is the one pre-requisite for admission to orders; this is not dependent on being male or female.

A baptised person, female or male, should be able to be recognised by the Church as called by God to Holy Orders. If this is not so, the People of God, (the Laos in the true sense), is divided. However ancient the division may be, it offends the love of Christ.

Good traditions are valuable, BUT it is not a mark of the Church of God to be unable to do something for the first time.



- Women and Holy Orders Group
Adelaide, 1984.

The debate over women in orders in the Anglican Communion is at least 100 years old! It therefore was not initiated by modern radical feminism.

The first woman was ordained priest in the Anglican Church in 1944. There are now 700 priests in our Communion who are women. They work in the provinces of Hong Kong, Canada, N.Z., U.S.A., Kenya and Uganda, and there are women ordained deacon in more provinces, e.g. Wales.

Other provinces, including England and Australia, have declared that there is no theological objection to women's entry into Holy Orders. "Theological" objection to it presumes that Christ's maleness matters more than his humanity, or that women are not fully human. It also ignores the fact that before the Resurrection Christ was working within the Jewish "Church". (There are modern Jewish synagogues, both liberal and orthodox, with women as rabbis!)

The Anglican Consultative Council in 1971 advised all Anglican provinces to allow the ministrations of women lawfully ordained elsewhere. The 1978 Lambeth Conference recommended that women be ordained deacon in all provinces.

There is a strong and continuing move for ordaining women in the Roman Catholic Church, in spite of the Vatican decree of '77. Opposing the ordination of women on ecumenical grounds is saying that unity with the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches takes precedence of our internal unity, and ignores the Protestant denominations.

IF A WOMAN IS CALLED BY GOD INTO THE THREEFOLD MINISTRY - AND WHO CAN SAY GOD IS NOT CALLING? - CAN HER CALLING BE IGNORED BY THE CHURCH WITHOUT QUENCHING THE SPIRIT?

E:9 Letter from Alison Gent to Margaret Nelson, Secretary of WHO?, 1984

Alison wrote an impassioned letter after an 'unresolved discussion' at a WHO? meeting. The members had had 'not much enthusiasm' for demonstrating at the forthcoming ordination. Alison complained that there was a 'lack of understanding of [her] – and WHO?'s – anger'. Alison's perception of the cultural gender issues is delivered in terms unlikely to bring about the understanding she desired.

The so-called excesses of the women's movement (which is to say, of some women) are, almost, if not quite invariably, reflections of the male attitudes to women that are largely accepted, if not positively enjoined on us, by our culture. Man-hating, which is active or indifferent, chronic or intermittent in liberated women, reflects the woman-hating that is there, implicit or explicit, in society and no less – indeed perhaps more – in the Church (since the Church is in danger of being, legally and structurally, the last bastion of male privilege for Western man)

The letter concluded:

I would add my own personal profession: -

That I have shown and am showing myself capable of loving one man for the last forty years of my life and on into eternity, even if he has lately turned away from me (and who knows how much or how little the cause of that was the Church's inability to contemplate my vocation to holy orders?);

That I argue continually for the inclusion of fathers in the Mothers' Union (to become a Parents' Union);

That I have argued for the admission of a man (male) into a group of Christian feminists – and won;

That I have argued for the admission of a male-to-female transsexual into a group in Women's Liberation – and lost; that I have survived (so far) as almost always the only woman in the Anglican group to support homosexual Christians.

What better evidence can I produce that I try to fulfil Christ's commandment to love my neighbour and am not a hater or avoider of men (male)? Can't my anger then be trusted to have some Christian validity?

Like St Paul I speak as a fool; and remain yours in the love of Christ.

APPENDIX F ORDINATION OF WOMEN PART 2

F:1 A series of letters written in the Roman Catholic magazine, *Southern Cross* by Alison Gent and Father John Fleming, 1985

The letters were prompted by an article from Dublin printed in the Roman Catholic newspaper, *Southern Cross,* 31 January 1985

Women No Obstacle

14 February 1985

Alison wrote:

In my communion, there are, worldwide, some 700 Anglican priests who are women.

These priests have been lawfully and sacramentally (in due form and with the intention to continue the traditional threefold ministry) in six provinces where the decision to do so has been made.

The point of view stated in 'Ecumenism obstacle', an article in *Southern Cross* of 31 January, ignores two important points.

First, the Roman Catholic Church does not yet officially recognise the validity of any Anglican orders, even where the person ordained is male.

Second, the Anglican Church governs itself in a different manner from the Roman Catholic Church.

Change comes about, not be a 'Fiat' from a single head, but by a rather less centralizing process operating in autonomous provinces – 16 of them.

To warn the Anglican Church as Cardinal Lustinger has recently done not to make an 'irreparable division' between itself and the Roman Catholic Church by ordaining women is misleading.

The division over the recognition of Anglican orders is no new thing. To blame it on women is all too characteristic of the worst of the Church's traditional attitudes to us.

And if the Roman Catholic hierarchy, which is already in serious trouble with women in some of its own provinces, wants to urge the repudiation of the orders of 700 of our Anglican priests as a move towards Christian unity, Christian women in both denominations, who have waited long and struggled painfully for what has already been achieved, may have some very cogent things to say.

Many people in the Christian Church – not only Anglican women of a strongly Protestant persuasion – see the ordaining of women to be priests and deacons as a great work of the Holy Spirit in our time. *Alison Gent, Rose Park*

APPENDIX F ORDINATION OF WOMEN PART 2

An Anglican View

21 February 1985

Father John Fleming wrote:

The letter of Mrs Alison Gent ('Women no obstacle') in your edition of 14 February does not present a complete picture of the controversial issue of the ordination of women in the Anglican Communion.

It is true, as Mrs Gent writes, that 'some 700' women have been through the form of ordination to the priesthood. Whether or not they are sacramentally priests is a matter of opinion, although it is true that such ordinations are 'legal'.

These women 'priests' are not recognised as priests by most of the Anglican Communion including England, Scotland, Australia and most of the third world.

Indeed the unilateral decisions taken by some parts of the Anglican Communion to 'ordain' women to the priesthood have been divisive both within the national Churches that have done it and in the Anglican Communion in general.

So for the first time the Anglican Communion has people, claiming to be priests, that are not recognised throughout the Anglican Communion.

Again, Mrs Gent is right in observing that Rome does not recognise the validity of Anglican orders

However, that precise issue is under discussion by ARCIC and may well be resolved. The existence of women priests in the Anglican Church has made this process of reconciliation that much more difficult.

But where I completely disagree with Mrs Gent, whom I very much admire as a person, is over the question of authority.

Anglicans claim to ordain men to the priesthood of 'the Church of God' not of the Anglican Church. Put another way, Anglicans do not claim to have a priesthood different from that of the Universal Church.

Since the Universal Church has never known women priests it is difficult to see how those Anglican provinces which have ordained women can claim to be faithful to the nature of Anglicanism itself.

Anglicanism is not sectarian. It believes what the Church believes. For this reason it has no 'confession' and can always remain open to the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches.

Anglicans who claim that Rome acted unilaterally in defining the Assumption of our Lady as *de fide* are hardly being consistent when they unilaterally proceed to the ordination of women against the clearly expressed wishes of 80 per cent of the whole church.

Finally, Mrs Gent is naughty when she suggests that any criticism that such ordinations are divisive represents an attempts 'to blame it on women' which is 'all too characteristic of the worst of the Church's traditional attitude towards us.' Mrs Gent identifies her personal views with the views of women in general, which she has no right to do.

And it certainly does not help to have the important question of the ordination of women reduced to a sexist polarization of men vs. women. Indeed the cases both for and against women can claim both men and women as the principal advocates. *Father John Fleming, the Rectory, Plympton.*

Obstacle or Marvel

7 March 1985

Alison wrote:

It is something of a marvel to me that Father John Fleming, the son of a clerical marriage, and himself a married priest, cannot take the point that it is perfectly in order for the Anglican Church to initiate and maintain some practices which are different from those of the Roman Catholic Church.

The marriage if the clergy has never been an obstacle to such ecumenical unity as exists between us and the Roman Catholics, not, in the more specialised for of the marriage of bishops, between us and the Orthodox. Need the ordaining of women by any different in its effects?

Only, I think, if in each denomination some people, on sexist grounds, want it to be so. *Alison Gent, Rose Park.*

F:2 A Debate on the Ordination of Women between Mrs Alison Gent [AG] and Father John Fleming [JF]

The debate was filmed by the ABC Current Affairs section in Adelaide and shown nationally on 4 September 1985. The presenter Dale Sinclair [DC] introduced both Father John and Alison 'in terms of long involvement, from one side and the other, in the issue'[1498]

DC … agree that women will become deacons, now is the next step, almost inevitably, that the Anglican Church will have ordained women as priests?
JF Well, it's the likely step; you can say it's inevitable when it's happened and there would other steps, I think, in between. What is certain, I think, is that by 1987, Archbishop Penman has stated that he and others will call a special meeting of the General Synod to reconsider the precise matter of the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate, having by then, he hopes, to have ordained a number of women deacons early next year.
DC Well, you've fought long and hard against women being ordained, now what effect do you think ordained women will have on the church as a whole?
JF I think it's pretty catastrophic really. The fact of the matter is that there is no consensus in the Australian church; probably the majority of Anglicans when it actually comes to the crunch as to whether they would have a woman priest in their parish would say no. It's interesting to me that it all comes from Melbourne, and again according to a recent article in the *Melbourne Age*, the Melbourne church is in total disarray
DC It's not just in Melbourne, it's, Bishop Rayner here approves …
JF Bishop Rayner speaks for himself. The fact of the matter is that Melbourne is the major place of the great push and that is the place where, I think, church attendance as far as Anglicanism is concerned is at its lowest ebb. But more importantly, what's going to happen is, we going to get a return to the bad old days when Anglicans stuck in their dioceses and had nothing much to do with people in other dioceses, some may even leave the church, other may even decide that a schism was the right way, that would appal me, but some people talk in those terms.
DC Alison Gent, you've been working long and hard for the ordination of women, now, do you agree there is going to be a split of some sort in the church as a result?
AG Well I think you have to acknowledge the fact that a lot of women must have been leaving for many, many years so that seems to me to be every bit as important as the split which may occur if people decide really to fit themselves against this move and not belong to a church that does ordain women. In my mind it was just as catastrophic not to have women among the clergy as Father Fleming regards it to have them.
DC Of course it is not only people like Father Fleming who disapprove of the idea of ordained women. There are many people in the congregation, including women, who don't like the idea of women priests.

[1498] AG, *PJ* 4, p.178-179.

AG Yes, I was talking to one yesterday who'd obviously never had the opportunity to think the matter in any other direction than that prescribed by her very, um, well, chauvinist I would say, parish priest.
JF I think it is regrettable to hear that even Alison could talk in those terms. But the sheer fact of the matter is that women have not left the church over the ordination of women. I think they, like most Australians, are probably grossly indifferent to the entire matter. There is as many men left the church as women left the church in the late 60s, early 70s. The church is facing a crisis. To suggest that women priests will make the slightest bit of difference to church going in this country has got to be cloud cuckoo land.
AG Well, Father John, I move among women who have left the church because of this issue so it is useless to say that they have not left the church on that account.
DC Alright now, we're facing the fact that it's probable that women will become ordained, now you're quoted as saying that there are some who object that they will no longer be in the church in which we were baptised and some of us ordained, now given your fundamental objection to women priests, will you be in that position?
JF I'm going to be in a very difficult position after the ordination of women to the priesthood, there's no doubt about that. I'm not saying what I will decide to do. But it certainly places *me* in a position of saying that the nature of Anglicanism is changed, it's a new club and it's not much one that I care for if it's not going to be faithful to catholic tradition, the example of Christ and the teaching of Scripture. Now that's the position we're in and it's a revolution I might add, not led by women particularly, not led by laymen in particular, but led in the main, by archbishops of our church who seem to be hell bent on achieving their end.
DC For, why?
JF I have no idea. They seem to be besotted with the idea and if you looked at what was going on in the General Synod, in the main, the case was argued strongly for by diocesan bishops, in particular, the archbishops with the notable exception of the Archbishop of Sydney.
DC That raises the issue of the Anglican Primate, Archbishop Grindrod, the Primate for Australia [April 1982-1989], who said that he was in favour of women being priests and went on the say that he feared for the church if women were not ordained.
JF Well I fear for it if they are ordained and Archbishop Grindrod has really only power to speak, and I would say this for any bishop, to defend the catholic and apostolic religion in so far as he has got any personal, private interpretation of scripture, which I believe is idiosyncratic…
DC But he is still the head of the church in Australia.
JF So what, so what?
AG Father John, I belong to the Union of Anglican Catholic Laity just as you belong to the Union of Anglican Catholic Priests, that is on the basis of my churchmanship; I would want to refute your statement that it is not according to the mind of Christ or it is not according to catholic doctrine to ordain women.
DC Could we get away from the idea of whether they should or should not be? We are looking further ahead now to what is going to happen. Now if there are going to be serious divisions in the church, and it is not just Father Fleming

who is saying that, is there anything the pro-women forces can do to soften that problem?
AG Well, I hope that what we will do, when the ordination of women even as deacons becomes a realty, is to show far more consideration for the feelings of those in the opposition than we have had from the opposition so far.
DC Well, I mean, is it time for you to be a bit considerate.
AG Yes.
DC Particularly in the congregations, for instance?
AG Well, I feel it is time to be considerate, but not in the way of going back on what has been so very, very hardly won. I think it is for me to care that people like Father John Fleming feel they may have to leave the church and to do something about arguing the case round so that they don't.
DC Would you consider leaving the church?
JF I am not saying what I will or will not do or will not consider. I would say this, that I, among many others, have been extraordinarily understanding of women who have asked to be priests. The logically prior question, can a women be a priest? we had to answer no, but I have certainly never ridiculed, never would ridicule, any women who said she wished to be a priest. But the consequences are plain as the nose on your face, that is, in some dioceses, for the first time in the life of the church in this country, priests ordained in one place will not be recognised as priests in another. And I think that's catastrophic and that's a kind of internal schism, whether it's actually formalised or not.
DC Your response to that?
AG Well, that seems to me to be a disastrous thing to have done. You have never declared that a priest is not able to function because he is a negro, so the same thing seems to me to apply. Father John, you are not a racist. It is a pity that to me that you appear to be a sexist.
JF It is unfortunate that you use that terminology. It is nothing to do with…
AG It is everything to do with it.
JF Alison, I do not object to women, as you perfectly well know. You know that my position has nothing to do with racism or sexism, but I resent you saying it. You suggest that I am being less than Christian. What I am saying is that in my understanding of catholic tradition, a woman, according to the mind of Christ, cannot be admitted to Holy Order. Now that is nothing to do with a negative attitude to woman and you degrade and demean people who disagree with you if you suggest that.
AG Well, Father John all I can say is that I do not see it that way. I think that it is everything to do with a negative attitude to women; that women have had to wait for two thousand years before they have had their vocations to the higher offices in the church even considered…
JF (interrupts) An utterly secular trend.
DC Alright, it's getting back to the old argument of whether they should or should not be. The fact is that we think that they will be and we look to wait and see. Thank you very much for your time. Ructions in the church.

The programme was transcribed from a home-taped video-cassette by the author

F:3 Three Reflections on the Vote of the Adelaide Synod enabling Women to be made Deacons

F:3:1 'Women can now be Deacons ... Here!'

Alison's work was published in MOWSA Newsletter, 1987

Adelaide now feels like a healthier place than it was for women in the Anglican Church: I for one can breathe more freely… and that has some significance for other women too. Anyone who has maintained her footing as an Anglican in spite of male chauvinism can feel the difference, in that, since last Thursday night, she has a choice which she did not have before. She can choose between retaining her status as a layperson, or she can try to take the first step into Holy Orders.

On the night of 21 May, the synod of the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide voted in favour of adopting a canon which the General Synod (Australia-wide) passed in August 1985. It enables women to be among those Anglicans who are ordained deacon.

Melbourne, in February last year, was the first diocese to admit women to the diaconate, but only days before that first ordination, about fifty priests hostile to the admission of women to Holy Orders made an appeal to the highest legal body in the Anglican Church in Australia. That did not stop the ordination in Melbourne, and a few others followed. But gradually it became clear that no Australian bishop would proceed with deaconing women until the judgment on the constitutionality of so doing was known in March [1987]. The special call of the Adelaide synod followed in May. The result of its decision will, presumably, be that women who believe they have a vocation to be deacons will at last have access to the same testing and preparation as men. That will open the possibility of vocations to the priesthood and episcopate in future, though (like all aspiring women) we shall have to fight it every step of the way.

Adelaide has been unusually disadvantaged because there is no body of deaconesses here, willing and ready (after a long or short, but trained and recognized, ministry) to be ordained. This diocese has not allowed the order of deaconess to exist here for a number of years, possibility because it was considered that their status in relation to Holy Orders was unclear – or uncomfortably like a deacon(male)'s.

After the vote, I thought of how the result would have pleased those women I saw in the 1930s and later, who might well have believed they were admitted to deacon's orders when they were ordained deaconess and had the grief of seeing their church decide that because they were women they were something less than a deacon. And I thought of Caroline Pearce and Joan Claring-Bould who have chosen to go to distant provinces of the Anglican Church rather that delay their training: may they soon return!

F:3:2 'In Front of the Synod Door (the Men having Gone Through)'

The members of the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOWSA) commemorated the synod vote with a liturgy at their annual general meeting. A part of that liturgy follows; there is no credited author

What happened to us all when the Synod in Adelaide agreed to the ordination of women as deacons in May? The legal barrier between women and the diaconate was removed, yes! But another barrier has been removed too … that is the barrier that separated women whose vocations to Holy Orders could not be tested from men whose vocations to Holy Orders could be tested – though the same Holy Spirit called to both.

We are thankful indeed that both barriers are gone: thanks be to God. The barrier is still there at another level, dividing deacons from deacons in respect of testing for the priesthood (and at another level that we hardly feel yet, priests from priests in respect of the episcopate). And none of us, women or men, will be really free till all the barriers are gone: for the men too are fettered by their privileged status.

But now in celebrating women as deacons it is at out peril that we forget to celebrate the new unity and equality of male and female in the laity – or *potential* unity and equality, is it? The experience of seeing even ordained women still treated as inferior has gone deep with many of us. It is only seeing humanity as fully shared between female and male – seeing Christ as fully present in either – that will make it certain that just and equal means will be used for testing candidates for the diaconate. Only unity of male and female, grasped and growing upwards from the laity through every structure of the church, can prevent women from being judged by harsher standards than men are when we present ourselves for Holy Orders … and after …. and before.

Prayer: May the loving power of the Holy Spirit unite us all, women and men, in seeking God's will in our lives, and in fulfilling the purposes of all who seek Holy Orders in true servanthood and love. Amen. The door is open!

F:3:3 'AFFIRMATION IN ADELAIDE'

Alison makes a further and more personal reflection on the synod vote and its implications, 21 June 1987

'Freedom' is a very political word. But if I am to talk sense about what happened to me in the Diocese of Adelaide when our Synod, at its Special Call of 21 May [1987], had passed the adoption of the Canon allowing women to become deacons, it is a word I must use.

Other provinces of the Anglican Communion, including England, have now passed similar canons and are acting upon them. But in them, or in the dioceses constituting them, if deaconesses have been able to work there during the last few decades, the sense of release and relief when the canons were passed may not have been so great, except perhaps for the deaconesses themselves. In Adelaide, one of the two last deaconesses died in 1954, and the other returned to England. No more women were made deaconesses or if deaconess already, encouraged to work here.

In Adelaide then all Anglican churchwomen were indubitably laywomen and (unlike men) we had no possibility open to us of becoming anything else. It is sometimes difficult to bring to consciousness a generalised sense of oppression, and even after 21 May I took about three weeks to be clearly aware of what had really happened. Then I saw it was no less a thing then a liberation of all laywomen – I really prefer the term 'unordained women' – to the possibility of entering Holy Orders; and therefore it was a restoration of unity to the whole Order of the Laity. The horizontal barrier between women and the diaconate had been removed: and it is equally true, but far less obvious, that a vertical barrier (comparable to the aisle in a church, synagogue or in some churches an iconostasis or communion rail, where women are on one side and men on the other) had been removed also, because all lay people were now on an equality in respect of having the right to acknowledge and to try a vocation to the diaconate.

I always find it hard to understand the objections expressed by some people to the concept of 'right' or 'justice'. One can sometimes go too far in insisting upon rights; but one can also go too in insisting upon receiving mercy or love, and justice, mercy and love are all attributes of God which Christians should dispense to humanity. It is inescapably true that righteousness, which in many translations of the Bible is rendered as justice cannot be fulfilled unless we pay due attention not only to the needs but to the rights of others – though we may feel far more uncomfortable if those 'others' claim the satisfaction of their needs in terms of rights: it takes away our self-righteousness!

Well, if all through my life, (and especially since 1947 I stepped nearer to perceiving the reality of a laywoman's in the Diocese of Adelaide by marrying a priest) I have been suffering injustice and oppression, I have never seen it so clearly until about a week ago. Only then did I grasp the fact that the admission of women to the diaconate didn't only free a few women to pursue a vocation to the diaconate: it also freed *all* women, because even if we choose to remain laywomen (as most of us will), that choice is now a real choice: we are no longer doomed to be laywomen and nothing else.

So women in the Anglican Communion here are free, and on an equality with our brothers in respect of having or not having a vocation to Holy Orders – though we have not yet won/been given the right to enter the priest and bishop parts of the threefold order. It is only if we see clearly the scope and the nature of this new freedom that we can understand the depth and ferocity of the opposition that the proposal to grant it encountered - to what seemed in the face of it, not such a world-shattering move. In reality it was not unlike giving black South Africans the vote.

Perhaps the debate in Adelaide came closest to political realism when a priest argued that women as deacons, having a vote in the House of Clergy, could 'vote themselves in'. That concept of 'voting oneself in', of having one's voice heard and allowed to count, is surely more important still at the [illegible word] level where a 'lay' woman claims that same right as a man – no more than that! – to believe God is calling her to Holy Orders and, if the Church will, to testing that: the answers we have hitherto received simply because we are women – 'you are mistaken', 'I don't believe you'. 'so what?' – are now no longer possible in the same way. To have a vote, a voice that is (whether as laywoman or deacon) is to be set free from non-existence. Let us hope that all women, indeed all people, will support Anglican churchwomen in our new, freer, and more visible existency and identities as both laywomen and deacons.

Women's equality is creeping on, even in the church, but what that equality is, is for all women a new freedom to choose where we are. I propose, for the time, to enjoy my newly bestowed, newly won freedom as a laywoman; for if I attain to the diaconate, while it is not yet to become priests, I shall be entering into an oppressed states yet again. God forbid! – but if and when God calls, I shall obey.

F:4 Alison contributed this Theological Argument to the column 'Faith Matters' in the *Adelaide Church Guardian,* August 1987

Sexism — is it sinful?

by Alison Gent



It is time, now, for Anglicans to discuss sexism, for the word is much misunderstood. The report of the International Family Network to the 7th Anglican Consultative Council referred to it as the 'sin of sexism'.

What is sexism?

Here are two basic questions to help reveal its existence to us, in ourselves or in others. The questions are asked as from Woman to Man: there are no answers except those that will come to mind when we examine our responses to them thoughtfully and honestly.

Question 1

If you confidently expect that when I, a woman, am addressed as 'brother', 'he', — and hear God called always 'Father' — I shall not be insulted, why do *you* feel insulted (or diminished) if ever you are addressed as 'sister' or 'she' — or when I call God sometimes, 'Mother'?

Question 2

Can it be wrong for a Christian woman — or any woman — to seek a stronger role as a human being, or to desire a closer identification with God?

These thoughts formed themselves clearly in my mind during an early service on the Feast of St. Athanasius (May 2nd) this year. I hope that is a sign, if hardly a guarantee, of their orthodoxy!

I want it to be clear that to call God Father (which is customary and was Christ's own practice), or to call God Mother (which is far rarer but not unheard of in the history of the Church), is, in either case, to use the language of analogy or metaphor. God is Spirit, as Christ said clearly in his talk with the Samaritan woman: and in replying to the Pharisees' question about the woman who outlived her seven husbands, he made it plain that in Heaven — and in the Kingdom, so far as it comes on earth — we are not preoccupied with sex.

Unique revelation

The maleness, or femaleness, of God, apart from Jesus' life on earth in a male body, is no part of Christian or Jewish doctrine: there is no male pronoun in the name God reveals to Moses, 'I am that I am'.

The name implies neither 'he that I am' nor 'she that I am', since such considerations are tied to the earthly, animal life of human beings, and would impair the unique revelation to the children of Israel of God who is Spirit.

Images of God

Sexism has crept into our thinking about God because of the sexist patterns of thinking and of structuring society that existed both among the Hebrews, who were the first Christians, and among the Greeks, Romans and other nations who became gentile Christians. Now it is deeply ingrained. Many people feel horrified by images of God which are female — for example Isaiah 66:13 — and cry, 'pagan nature worship' if we insist that the Bible uses these also as valid analogies of divinity. In so doing, they tend to ignore altogether the fact that images of God which are male are perilous to use in exactly the same way. If we take either of them too literally, we shall fall into the grave error of allotting to one sex or the other a superior identification with God.

F:5 Three Documents for a 1992 Selection Conference: Professor Brian Medlin's Reference and Alison's Two Statements on her 'thinking about a priest and a priest's function'

F:5:1 Brian Medlin sent this to Alison for her information and asking for her consent to send a copy to Iris Murdoch in Oxford

For my dear friend
Alison
with much love
Brian

Dec' 92

September 11, 1992

The Right Reverend S.M. Smith
Assistant Bishop
Anglican Church Office
GPO Box 2667
Adelaide, 5001

Dear Stuart

MRS. ALISON GRACE GENT
CANDIDATURE FOR ORDINATION

Thank you for your letter of 15 August. I shall do my best for you and Alison. I shall not, however, attend systematically to your particular questions. You will know that you and I come at this matter from very different positions. Because of this, I find it easier to be somewhat informal. I shall bear your questions in mind as I write, but too close attention to them would impose artificial constraints upon me.

I.

I shall get some minor matters out of the road straight off. Apart from her husband, John Gent, whom I knew only slightly, I have had practically no acquaintance with her family. Nonetheless, I have been to her house a few times, and I have heard her discuss family matters pretty candidly over many years. I am confident that she is and has been, towards all generations, a staunch and loving family woman, as well as a realistic one.

I have no knowledge of the attitude of her family towards her proposed ordination and, in her particular case, I take this to be a matter of no great moment.

I cannot speak of her health other than to say that she is an active and clear-minded woman. Though far from athletic, she seems to enjoy better general health than myself and I get tons of work done.

Her academic distinction will be known to you.

II.

Alison Gent is an old and increasingly dear friend for whom I have great love and regard. I was honoured when she asked if I would act as referee in this matter.

I was also stunned. My first question was whether a reference from me might not do her more harm than good. Her reply was that if it did, so be it. She wished to apply for ordination as the person she was and not as some constructed candidate concerned only to put the case most likely to succeed. This response is typical of the Alison Gent I know and exemplifies an unrelenting candour and integrity which entitles her to great respect.

I assented immediately and knowing that I was doing the right thing. Later though I came to wonder why it was the right thing. That it was a service to a good mate could not, in this case, be a justification. I had no strong desire, either, to do The Church a service. I am not well-disposed towards either theism or The Church and would rather that humankind could do without both. Since that seems impossible, however, I would prefer The Church to be a humane, caring, progressive organisation rather than a stronghold for dogmatism and inhumane reaction. I would prefer its ministers to be people of concern and integrity, rather than self-important political wanglers and weasels. It is in that spirit, in which I am sure you join me, that I commend Alison Gent to you.

III.

I first laid eyes on Alison Gent in 1945, I made her acquaintance, but little more than more than casually, in the middle fifties. I was away from Adelaide for ten years from the late fifties. I have been back here since 1967. I began getting to know Alison better from the time of my return and our acquaintance has improved and strengthened since. The matrix for our friendship has been a monthly poetry-reading group. Characteristically, the reading is followed by talk about whatever gets talked about. The talk can be brief or it can go on for hours. We have on a few occasions met outside the group, sometimes just the two of us, sometimes with other people. In recent years there has developed a friendship between Alison and my wife Christine Vick. I think that I know her very well.

IV.

Alison Gent is a devout, staunch, loving, loyal, passionate and compassionate person. She is intelligent, learned, lucid, articulate. She is indomitably cheerful. She is tolerant of what she sees as frailty and error, yet firm in what she sees as virtue and truth. Apart from her religious commitment, she is a rational, clear-headed woman: and only a bigoted rationalist would be certain that she is a worse woman for that commitment.

Let me add a little detail to these general remarks.

I can speak with special authority regarding her faith. We have argued many times about religion. Were her faith not virtually invincible, I flatter myself that I would have made some dent in it by now.

I have said that she is rational and clear-headed. I don't mean that she has a bent for explicit logic: she doesn't. (In fact, she can drive me berserk in argument.) But reason and clarity can exist in the absence of such a bent. Just as unreason can exist in its presence - and, concerning the latter, I call Saint Thomas Aquinas to witness. Her rationality and clear-headedness are shown, not only, nor even especially, in her discussion of abstract intellectual matters - though she *is* an intellectual. They appear also in her responses to people, her assessments of character and motive, her insight into the hardships of the ordinary life of ordinary people. She is *not* an intellectual's intellectual.

These insights require, of course, not only rationality and clarity of mind, but also that compassion which I have already mentioned, that humankindness. In the company we most often keep together, those insights are sometimes less evident amongst people of greater intellectual reputation and material success than hers.

Her sympathy for other people enables her to mix and work freely with a wide range of people - with people of all ages, of varying convictions and life-style. This ability is also an expression of Alison's cast of mind, of her brand of intellectuality. I don't know how to put it better than that, but I do not mean that she treats people as curios to be collected, specimens to be studied. And through all this, she remains her own woman with her own convictions and standards.

Compassion can be blunt, vague, generalised, myopic. This is not the case with Alison Gent's compassion. She is sensitive and perceptive about other people in such a way that their needs don't need to be spelled out in words. And she responds to those needs generously, tactfully, unobtrusively.

To my knowledge, Alison Gent has endured some bitter disappointments throughout her life. She has endured them cheerfully, entirely without bitterness: with charitable resignation concerning what cannot be repaired; yet with determination concerning what might be. I am speaking here about personal matters ~~and~~ as well as "larger" ones.

To consider only the latter. - Alison Gent has long believed in the ordination of women and has long campaigned to achieve it. I am not clear about her theological reasons for this belief. I believe, with her, however, that common human decency is on her side. I also believe that a theology which can't *visibly and easily* be squared with common human decency is straightforwardly oppressive. (This may well be to go further than Alison herself would wish to go. Or it may not.) I believe that Alison has believed for many years that she has been called to the priesthood. And I believe also that there have been times when she must have felt that her aspirations in this respect were hopeless and that the reward for all her endeavours would eventually go to other women.

Here, strikingly, she has shown indomitable cheerfulness along with charity and generosity. And, through it all, she has never wavered in her commitment concerning the issue. These things are hard to combine. Of all the qualities for which I have admired and loved Alison, this has been amongst the foremost.

When I call her indomitable I do not mean that she herself seeks to dominate. Many people can resist domination only by getting on top themselves. This is not her way. She is one of the least self-concerned people I know. Nor do I mean that her cheerfulness is oppressive, compulsively present regardless of the needs of other people.

In fact, she is remarkable for her ability to combine many apparent opposites. Her outspokenness, for example, goes with kindness, good humour and courtesy. She is generous without that subtle kind of lousiness which makes some generous people reluctant to accept a service. She is forever kind without ever being wet, virtuous without being intolerant. She is a religious woman through every fibre of her body and yet there is about her not a whiff of incense: she manages to be holy without being holier than anyone else. She excels in many things without being driven to excel others. She combines a proper pride with a proper humility. And quite generally, no demand or pretension offsets her large claims to approbation.

In this paragraph, I shall have to speak, as it were, from a mind not my own. Nonetheless, what I have to say is important as a description of the person. I have never discussed the following matter in the abstract with Alison: I have observed it in the conduct of her life. One substantial example of Alison's ability to reconcile apparent opposites is to be found in her comprehension of The Church. She has a firm grasp of the distinction between, the tension between, The Church as God would have it and the Church as we know it. Of The Church as an instrument of the Divine Will and the Church as a political and hence corruptible and fallible institution. Yet she is also aware of the unity, the indivisibity of the two. (If the latter remark involves heresy, it is mine not hers: but it is the best expression I can find.) With her, this is not merely an idea in the head, as it is with me. It is an attitude that pervades her mind and informs her conduct in detail. (To spell out the detail would take more ink than this University can afford.) This comprehension goes well with her own temperament. Together with that temperament it permits her to be both a determined activist and a loving, tolerant, loyal churchwoman.

And I almost forgot to mention it - because it is so ingrained throughout her character, I suppose. Alison is not only cheerful and good-humoured. She has a *sense* of humour. And, to accompany it, a wit both robust and pretty.

If all this seems too good to be true, then I have to say that that is the fault of Alison Gent. She is an unusual and very beautiful person. If the strength of my good opinion surprises you, then let me assure you that it will come as a surprise to her too.

V.

I am no more privy to the mind of God than yourself. But for what it is worth, I am confident that if anyone has ever been called to become a priest of God, then Alison Gent has been so called.

VI.

I don't usually discuss references with the people for whom I write them. My view is that, in general, a reference discussed with or seen by the applicant is worthless.

In this case, however, because of the unusual circumstances, because of the unflawed integrity of Alison Gent and what I hope is my own integrity, I have made an exception. By the time you receive this, I shall have discussed a draft with Alison. She will not, however, have seen the final version.

VII.

Stuart, it has been nice to renew contact, even so tangentially, after all these years. And again, I hope that this is useful.

With all best wishes

Brian Medlin

F:5:2 'HOW DO WE PERCEIVE ORDERS?'

Alison asked Father Stuart Smith to accept 'an article [written previously] … 'as the negative part of my perception of orders as … encountered in [her] life as a churchwoman.' Letter to Father Smith, 21 September 1992

The long struggle in Australia for admission to Holy Orders at all levels for women will not be soon over, even when ordination as priests is possible for us Anglican women. Anyone who is, individually and corporately, a part of that struggle has by now experienced many things, some of these exquisitely painful, and often only understandable through an extended process of time and further experience, reflection and observation. If any real wisdom is gained by all this, particularly if any light is thrown on what Holy Order means or should mean in the church today, it should be shared, because women and men ministering together not only as 'the laity' but in the diaconate, priesthood and episcopate will constitute a new, and more nearly total, embodiment of Christ's bride; and we must prepare for that. And in doing so we may make vanish at last from among us (if we choose to be intelligent about them) the destructive forces of clericalism and anti-clericalism.

The first destructive force to go will be the injustice of unequal opportunity, the possessiveness and the resentment that it creates. It is very difficult to convince a cleric brought up in a patriarchal mindset that, whether he is priest or bishop, no amount of determination to accept Jesus' servant model of ministry and to walk humbly with God's people will disencumber him from wrongful advantage and unsharable power while women, simply because they are women, cannot be admitted to the same office in the Church.

Injustice is often repugnant among us for another reason, too. The clergy are all too apt to be unaware of, and hence to abuse, their great privileges of communication. The right not only to preach, but to be heard – at worst, to hold the floor- in any private or public context or any conversing group, is fatally easy to assume. How many clerics ride roughshod over others who, in terms of ability or qualifications, have no less right to speak? How many fail – or refuse – to notice that only one side of a dispute or vexed question has been heard? All clergy, including women when they too share such privileges, need to be aware of the comparative 'silenced-ness' of the ordinary baptised Christian in company with them, exaggerated as this is by long centuries of parsons and bishops better educated than their flock, and by their flock's internalised subjection to those self-encased in the Church's old heavy structures of power.

The two areas of injustice I have perceived are, I think, of great importance for the Church to work on from both sides – from the viewpoints of both ordained and unordained. I have said that my awareness of them arises from experiences so shattering that it has sometimes taken years for me to be able to look back on them and analyse them calmly. So if, as I hope, there is any worthwhile message contained in what is written here, let me repeat it in another form.

May the Church – that is, all of us – hate and avoid injustice in all its forms, for justice to others is not something 'secular', but the inevitable expression in us of the righteousness of God. Ordination gives accreditation for their work and example to those whom the Church chooses: may the privileges and powers it confers be clearly identified by those who receive them and be used with godly fear of their abuse; and may those powers and privileges be soberly but not excessively respected by those who witness their operation. And, finally, may the ordained be always resolved to be ever more sensitive to the Christian dignity possessed by comparatively private people with their less developed opportunities – and temptations – to proclaim Christ – or self.

Signed Alison Gent, September 1991.

F:5:3 The Second Essay Alison Submitted on the Priesthood, is 'the Positive Part, Freshly Thought Out for this Occasion.' Letter to Father Smith, 21 September 1992

The Being and Function of a Christian Priest.

It is necessary for anyone trying to understand the Christian priesthood to see clearly that it differs in important ways from priesthood in the Old Testament, for it derives from Jesus who was not in fact a priest after the Old Testament model. The events of his life and the manner of his death indicate that his was a totally different way of serving God, in that the blood he shed was his own, not the blood of sacrificial animals. So at the outset we are faced with one who is both priest and victim in his self-offering on Calvary; and the willingness to be totally devoted to God and to God's purposes for us, even to death, can never be absent from our minds when we consider sharing in the priesthood of Christ either as a baptised or as an ordained person.

Something else we learn from Jesus is that his authority, in him or in his followers, should not take the form of domination. The "discipleship of equals" that Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza has set before present-day Christians is something that Jesus himself characterizes when he says (John xv 15) that he has called the disciples friends, that he tells them what he does instead of hiding it from them as if they were servants, and that he does not wish them to "lord it" over others.

The Church over the centuries has fallen into imitation of worldly greatness: the models of military and bureaucratic power furnished by the Roman Empire were immensely powerful and are still to some extent influencing us. But we can hope that a less patriarchal style of priesthood is on the way. A loving, watchful parent, whether father or mother, helping everyone committed to their charge to grow in the ways of truth, justice and love has always been

there to find in some of the ordained, as far as my own experience goes.

The Church gives accreditation to celebrate the sacraments and to preach the Word to those whose vocations from God for this work she tests and accepts. This accreditation for the work they do is important, for in ministering the sacraments they open to those people who relate to them through the Church's structure powerful ways of being in touch with God. The same can be said of the ministry of the Word.

A priest's whole life, like that of any Christian, can in every detail, however humble and simple, convey a sense of God. But anyone ordained by the Church becomes a special sign of the presence of Jesus Christ, and we need such authenticated signs.

Whatever people are accepted with love and mercy, whatever care is taken to reconcile enemies, or to seek the guidance of the Spirit, these things show the presence of Christ wherever they are found. It is Jesus himself who warns us and counsels us that the kingdom will be made up of those who do them rather than of those who claim the outward or official signs of specially belonging to God

This is a lame account indeed of the being and function of a priest. I have felt the impossibility of organising what I think in the time at my disposal. Teaching, healing, comforting – all important ministries for priests as for any Christian – have found no place in what I have written.

Alison Gent.

APPENDIX G VALE ALISON

G:1 Lavinia Gent wrote an account of Alison's final illness for her longtime friend, Sister Gabrielle

15 December, 2009

Dear Sister Gabrielle,

I have just received and opened your Christmas card to my mother, Alison. I wouldn't imagine that you have seen me since I was little but as I am Lavinia Mary Gabriel, she spoke to me of you often. I am sorry that I have not thought to get in touch with you earlier to let you know that Alison died just over four weeks ago but everything has been a whirlwind over the last few months.

Alison had become quite frail but was still determinedly living at home by herself in Alexandra Ave (though she had stopped driving a few years ago which though sad for her, was one less thing for us to worry about). Her bowels were not kind to her and despite the support of her sons and daughters-in-law (and daughter), and various nurses and care workers, her situation was becoming untenable. Her mind was still active and sharp but vascular degeneration of the brain meant lack of judgement and increased impulsivity.

In mid-August, she suffered a stroke and lost her speech almost completely for a few days but soon returned to her feisty if slightly speech impaired self. When asked by a speech therapist how her language was going, she answered "Recalcitrant!" She was in the Royal Adelaide Hospital for a month which she did not enjoy - even sitting on the floor for an hour in protest when asked to do something which she did not want to do.

She celebrated her 89th birthday in a rehabilitation facility at Rostrevor which was delightful fun for us all but I think the prospect of never going home was too much for her. Her appetite faded and the circulation in her legs due to lack of activity deteriorated.

My brother Christopher and I turned up one morning (4 November) to be greeted by the staff telling us that she really needed to go to hospital because of the deterioration in her legs and that the prospects were not hopeful. Our brother, Peter flew in from Vietnam and the family in its various forms maintained a nearly constant vigil by her bedside. The pain was at times excruciating and difficult to behold but we were able to have some tender and loving conversations as well as a few strident ones!

She received unction on a number of occasions and she was much supported by the prayers of a wide circle of friends and communities around Australia.

Slowly the pain relief was increased and she eventually was unable to respond even to a squeeze of the hand. She died in the early hours of Friday 13 November quietly

and, I suspect, in her own time. She did not want to die. She told me only the week before that she "still had a lot to do". I suggested that she was still fighting the good fight and was not yet ready to finish her race. She agreed.

We took the coffin home on the night before the funeral so she could achieve her dream of being carried out of her house in Alexandra Avenue in a box. There was quite a wake and our friend Bishop Garry Weatherill (who also conducted the funeral) said some final prayers over her while I touched her head and her hands which themselves held a favourite wooden rosary which someone had brought her back from Assisi. The funeral (a solemn Eucharist) was held at St Peter's Cathedral and attended by almost 400 hundred people with much favourite and moving music.

There have been many loving and humorous memories of Alison recounted over the last few days. Many stories of her kindness and wit and savage conversational battles.

I have attached a copy of Christopher's eulogy which I hope you will appreciate and have included the photo of her to which he refers which was taken around her twenty-first birthday.

I know that she had great love for you and the sisters and appreciated your loving, prayerful support.

I am finding the world a strange place without her in it but I believe she had a marvellous life. She was a loving and unique woman.

Peace be with you.

G:2 The Eulogy, Alison's funeral, 17 November 2009 at St Peter's Cathedral, Adelaide

Christopher Gent, Alison's eldest living son wrote and delivered the eulogy

A couple of years back, Alison said very firmly to our sister: 'Lavinia, I will not have you speak my funeral eulogy … you'd make me sound funny.' I rise to this challenge, obedient at least to my Mother's explicit wishes to exclude her daughter. As for keeping the fun out, we'll see how that goes.

This will of course be the merest outline and sampler of an extraordinary and complex woman. What she was and what she did and how she did it we have all seen and heard or heard of: sometimes wondered at, sometimes admired, been strengthened and inspired by, been assaulted and confronted by, sometimes avoided or even run away from.

In the small hours and the improbable quiet by her bedside over the last few days, I've been seeking the origins and influences, the catalysts and causes for who Alison was. I think I'm on the trail – but I will not draw any conclusions even though the thought that I can at last do so without immediate contradiction makes it very tempting.

Alison was born the third child of Alfred and Lavinia Hogben on the twentieth of September 1920 in a house, still standing, on Alexandra Avenue, Rose Park. She never really knew her father – when he died before she was one her mother sold what she owned of their house and moved across the plantation to No 49 Alexandra Ave where lived her four unmarried Jones sisters and two unmarried brothers. There was further tragedy when one of the brothers committed suicide in 1927 but it was still a loving if snug and thrifty household, living off the income of the brothers, later supplemented by the youngest sister, Grace. Stanley, the quiet Western Front veteran, did the gardening and pedalled off daily to work at a hardware store in Rundle Street. The sisters, Alice, Annie, Ida and Grace, cooked and cleaned and sewed and visited and received friends. Essentially it was a matriarchal commune.

There is little doubt that Alison was the centre of attention as the fatherless baby, the apple of many eyes – and she proved to be very bright and precocious. There was also a definite red shade in her hair which Rudyard Kipling and quite a few others say goes with a certain temper. She and her sisters went to school locally until, on the money their mother had saved from the house sale, they were able to go to Walford where quickly Alison's scholastic ability shone bright, and bursaries and scholarships followed. In retrospect she resented having been pigeonholed as a swot, and felt she had been unfairly kept from the hockey pitches and tennis courts. The long plaits, severe fringe and horn-rimmed glasses of her early and mid teens only reinforced the serious role. She was 'Allie Hog' and she was very brainy. Only *she* knew that underneath there was a Party Girl waiting to break out.

But there were winds of change. The Hogbens, her father's family, had been bastions of the Baptist Church in South Australia. But her mother and youngest aunt gravitated towards St Theodore's Church of England, Toorak Gardens, and when Alison and her sisters were confirmed, her mother's employer, Guy Makin, a staunch Anglican (and sidesman of this Cathedral)

became Alison's godfather. A few years later, after he was widowed, he became her stepfather.

So a second life developed for Alison. Makin was President of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, a highly cultured man and a bon vivant. He was also a man of very decided and forcibly expressed opinions who revelled in arguments. He was clearly proud of his accomplished and spirited goddaughter. So came stays at the Strangways Terrace mansion with her own bedroom, fashionable clothes, trips to the theatre, days at the races, singing lessons, horse-riding, golf, dinner with professional and business figures, discussion of art and literature and politics.

She began to attend this cathedral, coming under the musical and spiritual guidance of Canon Finniss, and at the same time she was thriving in the university environment, achieving double First Class Honours in French and English under Professors J. Cornell, C. Jury and J. I. M Stewart. She joined in amateur dramatics, she was a member of the Student Union, she was active in the university Anglican Society.

With the war, there came a shortage of male academics and male choristers. At J. I. M. Stewart's suggestion Alison gave a series of well-regarded lectures on the metaphysical poets in place of a Masters thesis and did part-time tutoring in English; and she became the first woman to sing in the cathedral choir, even though as a woman she was not permitted to process with the rest of the choir – she 'nipped in' to the stalls from the back.

Life at Rose Park was more stable and less crowded, her sisters leaving to work and travel and marry. Her mother was now married to Guy Makin and so the door at Strangways Terrace was always open and welcome. Here, as you see from the photograph on the service order, was a young woman of glamour and intellectual brilliance, poised on the brink of …

Who knows? Better managed, conventionally directed, she might have been more productive and distinguished and comfortable in a worldly sense – but it would have been a more cloistered life, hard to imagine her in. And anyway, in the Anglican Society was a young man, a handsome and charming and witty and learned, if not particularly providential or practical, young man, destined for the Anglican priesthood, with whom she fell irretrievably in love and who introduced her to the heady mix which is Anglo-Catholicism. And whom she married I suspect in the teeth of certain influential opposition, spoken and unspoken, after a five-year engagement. Our brother Timothy was born 41 weeks later. For a while they lived in a cottage, now demolished, just across the road from here. And then our father was appointed priest in charge of St Clement's Enfield. At that time St Clement's had no rectory. A place was rented down the hill nearly a mile away. They had no car; well, not one that worked.

And this is where the story really starts. This is the bluestocking in the tailored dress pushing the luxury perambulator up the steep, dusty, unsealed road to early morning Mass. This is the beautiful cultured lecturer's voice pleading meat-scraps from the butcher to feed a burgeoning pet cat population. This is the Walford girl coming to grips with stray dogs, disapproving parishioners, unpaid bills, violent neighbours, piles of ironing, hungry children, 6 o'clock closing, geographical, social and institutional isolation – life in a red-brick semi-detached housing-trust house, 7 Moorang St, Kilburn. She was still in

touch with, but oh so far from, life at either Alexandra Avenue or Strangways Terrace.

There must have been times when things looked heartbreakingly bleak, but her friends and her family and her faith and her own romantic determination kept her on her feet: and here began the process, the habit of an intense and almost daily revival through self reinvention and reinterpretation, which went right through to the end of her life, often signalled by the early morning phone call to one or other of her children, which would start usually without any introduction, 'Dear, I've been THINKING…'; and then would follow that day's fresh revelation of self and the world.

In conversation, Alison always cut to the chase of some personal mental association which struck her, if not anyone else, often resulting in rather startling introductions to complete strangers like, 'Do you have a particular devotion to Saint so-and-so?' There was usually a logical connection which could be traced, but to the Alison-uninitiated or the unwary, her thoughts and utterances often seemed to come startlingly from deep left field.

Alison was a manic communicator, always seeking others' company by telephone and visiting widely and unexpectedly in the succession of small cars, which, from the late 1950s, gave her the freedom and independence and access to people that she needed. Life was a series of dichotomies and conflicts to be discovered, wrestled with and resolved, and there was no satisfaction doing that on your own. She loved companionship, even (sometimes, it seemed, especially) when it involved conflict and argument, and she naturally gravitated to conferences, synods, religious retreats, membership of religious societies, the Parsonettes, the Mothers' Union, alumni, committees, book clubs, the beloved Charles Jury poetry circle, coffee mornings, prayer meetings, and importantly feminist groups both religious and secular. And there was her near daily attendance at Mass – that at least was her intention, although her legendary unpunctuality often defeated her good intentions.

Perhaps her only enjoyed solitary occasion was her nighttime retreat, her comforting womb, the bathtub, where she spent an extraordinary proportion of her night hours, as many a water-damaged book can attest. The sound of the tub water being revived in the middle of the night remains as Mother-evocative a sound to her children as does the distant thunder of an approaching Volkswagen.

Life for Alison was stitched together not by rules, structures, processes and the confines of hours and minutes or day and night: it was the recognition of the significance of events and their patterns or alignment or coincidence, and her sharing of that realization with others, which shaped her day. She believed there was destiny and significance in her blood group, B positive.

She became fearless. She marched, she protested, demonstrated, she wrote letters to those on high, she confronted, she dared. How she was never arrested is remarkable but I remember when in the 1960s she remonstrated with a policeman outside the Carrington Hotel. He was trying to force an angry young aboriginal woman into a paddy wagon in a way and on grounds Alison found unjustified, and she told him so. 'Look, Lady', said the policeman, 'if you don't get out of the way I'll arrest you and shove you in the wagon too.' The Hogben jaw firmed, the blue eyes blazed: 'JUST YOU TRY!!!' He didn't.

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Alison was impetuous and impulsive. After an altercation with 4-year old Charles, she discovered the ensuing silence was because he was now a tiny distant figure, running defiantly down Grand Junction Road towards Gepps Cross. Alison successfully pursued and hunted him down simply by thumbing a lift from a passing petrol tanker.

She once came back from an Anzac Day parade with a benign and aged war-veteran, complete with medals. 'This is Percy. I met him at the Anzac parade. He is on the pension and I said I would pay him to do some weeding after a cup of tea. You boys will be very interested in him because he plays the cornet.'

Teenage sons, trying to sneak to bed after a late night out, would often as not be ambushed by Alison, refreshed from her midnight bath, and challenged to a game of scrabble or, if she thought there might be clouds on the hills, to 'a quick drive to Mt Lofty' to see how misty it was. There was always an underlying childlike enthusiasm.

But there was often a deeper impulse. Once there was an accident near our house with a little boy being knocked down by a truck. Alison heard he was from the nearby migrant hostel and went to investigate. She returned carrying a tragically stunned-looking toddler in a grubby nightie. 'Her mother's about to have a baby, there isn't a father around at the moment and there are three other children so I told the district nurse we'd look after this one for a fortnight. One of you boys can change her nappy.'

And that is importantly Alison. In the midst of all her sorrows, troubles and distress she always found time and energy and compassion for others. Despite all her own struggles and disappointments she still inspired and encouraged others, and especially other women. Her contribution, to and via, both the secular and religious women's movements was unique and considerable.

She was a loyal and faithful and constant friend; she might fight you, she might bite your head off, but she never rejected or ostracised you, at least not for long: she knew that pain too well to inflict it on others. She was a warrior who was not herself afraid of flesh wounds and perhaps underestimated the effect of her 'collateral damage' and 'friendly fire' on others. But much of her apparent anger was perhaps more a lifetime habit of contradiction and instinct for contrariness rather than any genuine malice or wrath. It will not surprise many of you that possibly her last coherent sentence, shouted at her children from her bed in the RAH [Royal Adelaide Hospital] emergency area was: 'WHATEVER YOU'RE SAYING, I'M OPPOSED TO IT!!'

Alison loved greatly and widely in her own inimitable way and the world is a less exciting and less colourful place without her.

May she rest in peace

G:3 The sermon preached at Alison's funeral by the Right Reverend Garry Weatherill, [then] bishop of Willochra and longtime family friend

There are many who wanted to be here today who are unable to be here. I bring special greetings from Archbishop Jeffrey [Driver] and also from Bishop Kay Goldsworthy, one of the assistant bishops in Perth and great friend of Alison.

The American nature poet, Mary Oliver, sits in the garden on a summer's day. She enjoys the warmth of the sun and the world around. And as she sits, a praying mantis lands on her lap, she watches the mantis as it cleans its eyes with its paws like a cat; and as it watches the creature, a gust of wind comes and it opens its wings and flies away. She thinks about the day and what she has done. She thinks about her life and what is to come and she asks herself, 'Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one, wild, and precious life?' 'What is it you plan to do with your one, wild, and precious life?'

Well, for those of us familiar with the Christian scriptures there are some easy answers to that question and we heard three possibilities in the gospel, [Luke 10: 25-42]. We are to live with compassion, like the Good Samaritan; we will struggle like Martha and Mary to find the balance between activity and stillness, to find the balance of what is truly important, and like the Good Samaritan and like Martha and Mary in their different ways, we will probably come closer to the answer to Mary Oliver's question if we follow our passion wherever it might lead.

'Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one, wild, and precious life?' There have been many, many stories told in these last few days of this remarkable person, Alison Gent.

I first met Alison in 1974 at St Mary Magdalene's Church. I had just successfully enrolled at the University [of Adelaide] and I knew there was a midday eucharist at St Mary Magdalene's and so I went. There were about three or four people and about halfway through the service another person joined us, bustling and making a racket as she came in. I don't remember the sound of the Volksy and I don't remember whether she dropped her keys but she probably did. After the service, Alison said, 'And what are you doing?' And I explained I had just been to enrol at the university.

She then asked, 'And what are you reading?' I thought it was an odd question. I'd just been reading one of Wilbur Smith's marvellous stories, so I explained that I was reading Wilbur Smith and it was a great yarn about South Africa.

'Oh', said Alison, 'perhaps you should read Nadine Gordimer, she might point you a little bit more towards reality, she's a bit more realistic about colonialism and race and gender issues in South Africa today.[1] But young man, I really want to know what you are planning to study.'

'English literature', I said.

'I have taught sometimes in the English Department at the University', Alison said, 'in fact I sometimes tutor the first year students.'

[1] Gordimer self-identifies as an atheist but has not been active in atheist organizations.

'Oh', I said.

The other memory I want to share with you comes from just last year in the Grand Ballroom in Government House in Perth following the consecration of Kay Goldsworthy as a bishop in the church. Alison was quite feeble and she came in a wheelchair, but she was in her best finery, she had her favourite jewels on and she could not stop smiling. She sat there in that grand place listening to speeches but really she didn't seem to me to be in a wheelchair at all, she seemed somehow to be floating. And she received people, much like a royal personage would, as they came forward to share memories, and to share congratulations and stories of the struggle. It was clear to me then that Alison was a great matriarch to the women of our church.

'What is it you plan to do with your one, wild, and precious life?'

From all the mixture of Alison's life there is a simple answer: to live and to live and to live. From her baptism Alison was committed Christian, and she committed herself from her earliest days to what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls 'that new and living way' to be human. She lived out her whole life, in the struggle with God and the struggle with others, confident that God would always be calling to her and supplying for her what she needed even in the most difficult times. Today we gather to give thanks for that amazing life so well lived. I want to suggest that there are three things about Alison's life that might be helpful for us today as we say farewell to her, as we remember her great Christian faith and as we commend her to the God who was the source of her life.

Firstly Alison tried to live like Jesus, from love. It was not always easy for her, just as it was not easy for Jesus, just as it is not easy for us. But I was always struck by Alison's amazing ability to take a loving position in response to whatever came her way. She had that now, sadly, rare capacity, characteristic of old-fashioned Anglo-Catholics, to disagree most profoundly with people, but never to stop loving them. All that Alison did came from her struggle to love. Her life issued from love, from God, of course, from her family, from the family she created, from the communities of which she was such a vital and important part. And in every one of those communities and every one of her interactions she tried and succeeded mostly, in living from love.

Secondly Alison was somebody who lived in hope. Christians sometimes use the word hope in a very glib way, but at the heart of our whole understanding of our lives is the reality that God can always bring something new and better from what we make of ourselves. Alison had a capacity to see possibilities where others would only see darkness or despair and even when she felt darkness and despair, she grasped intellectually the reality of hope at the heart of her faith.

Thirdly, Alison lived, like Jesus, for justice. And I'm not talking just about the social and moral things to which she was so committed but a deep personal justice that required not only that she understood that God loved her but also that required her to live in love with others, to treat every person with equal regard, to look, as Jesus looks, on the whole world and loves us.

'Tell me. What is it you plan to do with your one, wild, and precious life?'

To live from love, to live in hope, to live for justice, to live for God. Today we are saddened to say farewell to Alison, but as I prayed in the collect we also believe that the grave is for her a gate to a new and richer life, to another new beginning, this new and living way which she has tried to follow all her life, from love, in hope, for justice, now open to a new and wider vista, in a new and more wonderful place where she will answer the question, What is it you plan to do with your one, wild, and precious life, with the same answer: to live and to live and to live.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory. Thanks be to God.

G:4 The Reverend Dawn Colsey expressed her remembrance of Alison in poetry

For Alison Gent: feminist and supporter of women's ordination.

Jacaranda, you choose your moment
to bloom in glory,
with your feet rooted deep in earth,
your firm trunk,
your arms held wide in blessing.

Your bells ring and flourish
in purple abundance.
With ferny green leaves
you draw white from clouds,
to complete the trinity
of feminist colours,
you feisty woman-tree.

You proliferate softness,
a strong, gentle challenge
to overarching harshness
we ascribe as blue.

You Advent herald,
you flag of the now,
not yet eco-system of God.

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