

**Maria Grant, 1854 - 1937:**  
**The Life and Times of an Early**  
**Twentieth Century Christian**  
GLORIA WHELEN

No more than four foot ten inches in height, Maria Grant was a small woman possessed of a large force of character which was energized by good health, stimulated by an organized, clever mind, and challenged by the religious beliefs and social codes to which she conformed.<sup>1</sup> Born into a Protestant enclave in pre-Confederation Quebec, she was exposed from her birth in 1854 to the fervid enthusiasm of a dedicated missionary family, the emotional ardour of the Wesleyan Methodism, and the moral tone and work ethic of the Victorian Age. Frightened, as well, with an indomitable personality, she was programmed for active leadership in the social gospel movement with which so many evangelical Protestants were enamored in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>2</sup> She obviously believed that the assumption of an activist role in the reformation of the pioneer society in which she lived was merely an acceptance of her missionary responsibility to her fellow man.<sup>3</sup> This acceptance was central to her duty to God. In her declining years she gained other religious perspectives. A reformation of faith through the teachings of the Unity School of Christianity gave her new strength and redirected her mission in life to leading others to find their spiritual natures and individual relationship to God. With less faith and conformity, more ego and education, Maria Grant might have become a brilliant writer, lawyer, or consummate actress. That none of these forces were at work on her mind has been the good fortune of the citizens of British Columbia who have benefitted from the reforms which she helped to initiate.

In her physique, personality, and energy,<sup>4</sup> Maria Grant bore an extraordinary resemblance to her father, the Reverend William Pollard, an English convert to Wesleyan Methodism. The colourful journalism of 1860 described him:

Though thy person is small there are beauties in thy mind; though thy body is diminutive, the heart of a Christian glows in thy breast; though thy face be plain and beardless, thy high expansive forehead shows intellectual power; and thy large expressive eyes, prominent nose, and wide mouth, show thee to be a man of character and eloquence. The soul of eloquence is in thee.<sup>5</sup>

Albeit unflattering to her outward appearance, this sketch of the father could be a description of the daughter, as can be seen in her photograph printed elsewhere in this book. The missionary zeal with which Maria attacked her many causes stemmed, no doubt, from her father of whom she was immensely fond and proud. Before assuming the superintendency of the Methodist Church in British Columbia, the Reverend William Pollard had moved his family in and out of parsonages on the average of once every two years.<sup>6</sup> His skill as a missionary was watched by the Methodist Conference, and, combined with his ability to preach and administer, his rise in Church ranks was notable in one with so little formal education.<sup>7</sup> On reaching British Columbia in 1871, and taking

up residence in the comfortable parsonage<sup>8</sup> attached to the Pandora Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Reverend Pollard's first concern was to shore up the work already done in the Indian missions.<sup>9</sup> He lost little time in making an arduous journey to Port Simpson where it was reported there was backsliding into "paganism". At Metlakahtla he

preached three times in four days, visited 105 families, married 7 couples, baptized 125 children and 18 adults....The last service...held was attended by 500.<sup>10</sup>

The sheer, hard work of a fervent religious life as practised in the Pollard parsonages left little time for introspection, or the search for truths other than those preached in a doctrine of sin and salvation. The evangelistic way she had known from birth was to be Maria Grant's way for almost fifty years.

Maria Grant inherited the temperance cause from her parents. A long-time advocate of prohibition, her mother, Mrs. Maria Heathfield Pollard, invited Miss Frances Willard, a former Dean of Women at Northwestern University and American President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, to come and assist her in establishing the movement in Victoria. At the initial meeting, Maria Grant was registered as a charter member, while her mother assumed the first chairmanship of the organization which was to profoundly affect the campaign for woman's suffrage in British Columbia.

Many of the women who supported woman's suffrage in British Columbia did so because they believed that the possession of the vote could enable them to campaign more effectively for the prohibition of the sale of liquor. For most of her eighty-three years Maria wore pinned to her dress the small, white ribbon of the pledged abstainer and she was seen to confiscate bottles of spirits and to pour the contents down the nearest drain.<sup>11</sup> She undoubtedly thought that the right to vote would enable women to exert pressure for the enactment of laws which would control vice, punish brutality and eliminate many social evils. In this belief she thought prohibition played an essential part. Nevertheless, her advocacy of woman's rights was founded on a broader and more altruistic base than the temperance argument.<sup>12</sup> She believed that women, in their natural role as mothers, ruled the world through the cradles they rocked. Enfranchised women would rock these cradles with an enlightenment which would benefit everyone.<sup>13</sup>

It is unlikely, therefore, that the contemporary concept of self-fulfillment was, in any way, an aspect of Maria Grant's first steps into the championship lists of equality of the sexes. According to her religious beliefs, all men and women were required to forget self, and devote their lives to the service of others. In this way, the less fortunate could be rescued, rehabilitated, and brought within the folds of a conforming Christian life.<sup>14</sup> Love of mankind was inherent in the social gospeller's vision of a perfect society; self love, an anathema, was not relevant.

It is also unlikely that the concept of sexually-liberated women had seriously occurred to Maria Grant, who in the first nineteen years of her married life was to bear nine children. In her thesis, "The British Columbia Woman's Suffrage Movement, 1890 - 1917", Linda Hale says of Maria Grant and other suffragists that "...they did not regard marriage and the family as obstacles to women's equality. Rather they argued that both private and public life should represent an equal partnership between the sexes, a

situation which they alleged would occur automatically once women were accorded equal political rights with men.<sup>15</sup>

In 1871 Maria Grant supported a series of lectures in Victoria given by the American feminist, Susan B. Anthony. As far as the eighteen-year-old Maria Pollard was concerned, Miss Anthony was preaching to the converted in her first lecture on the power of the ballot. *The Colonist* quite likely reflected Maria Grant's own reaction the next day when it reported that Miss Anthony was one of the best speakers to visit the city.<sup>16</sup> Whether Maria Grant's reaction to the followup lectures was in agreement with the newspaper's negative reports is, of course, unknown.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps she also found the feminist's admonishment of men a little over-salted with connotative words dealing with serfs, chains, slaves, and wifebeatings, but, undoubtedly, she would have resented the jocular tone of the press which was tinged with barely concealed scorn, and she would have deeply resented the publication of the letter to the editor entitled, "Women as Nature has (Not) Designed Her". Signed, "A Male Biped", it said,

Let us suppose woman is the peer of man intellectually, what about her physical disabilities and weaknesses? How would she get on with legislative or political duties while in the condition in which ladies who love their lords are said to delight to be? Jurors, soldiering, etc. No, Miss A. [,] Nature's God has wisely rendered women physically unfit to perform the avocations of man and has made her gentle, confiding, loving and trusting. Such is my beau ideal of a woman!<sup>18</sup>

The letter rants on in its ill-reasoned, execrable language to claim that the working women of Europe neglected their homes and that London's "50,000 prostitutes", the evils of divorce, and "foeticide" were the direct result of the demands for woman's rights. While abhorring such bigotry, Maria Grant may have believed that Miss Anthony's platform style would not easily win converts to her cause. Maria's style in the future would be reasoned argument, persistent petition, and unfailing courtesy rather than confrontation, open condemnation and militancy.

When Maria Pollard married Gordon Fraser Grant in mid-summer of 1874, her father gave her an acre of land adjoining his property on the northern outskirts of Victoria, and thus provided the couple with the site on which they built their house, Ferndale.<sup>19</sup> This gift also established the property qualification required to cast a ballot in a Victoria municipal election. Some months after her marriage, Maria attained her majority and was then equipped with the prerequisites necessary to vote in the mayoralty elections of 1875. That women taxpayers were not expected to vote, although municipally enfranchised at that time, was evident from these shocked reaction of the town to the action taken by young Mrs. Grant and the two friends who accompanied her to exercise their franchise.<sup>20</sup>

With this first overt entry into the fight for woman's suffrage, she began a life of paradox and struggle which was to last for forty-two years.

Maria Grant as *At Home* at Ferndale every second Friday of the month to as many as thirty callers. For those who wished to prolong their call, there was a simple tea prepared by the Grants' five growing daughters and plenty of relaxed conversation

related to community volunteer work and church affairs. The guests, however, were not those with bazaar mentalities. They were instead the female executives of most of the significant, social reform groups of the day. The occasion served as a clearing-house for progress reports on the visitors' shared vision of universal prohibition, woman's franchise, and, more idealistically, the role women should, could, and would play in a better world. In pre-telephone days, these afternoons acted as a communication network. Ferndale was a comfortable plain house, roomy enough to accommodate the seven Grant children, several dogs, and, at times, a Chinese servant. It drew its guests from a surprisingly wide range: Victoria's non-conformist middle-class as well as some members of the Anglican ascendancy who were stimulated by the energy and quality of the women with whom Maria Grant associated. Among the regular callers were Mrs. Cecelia Spofford and Mrs. Helen Mary Grant who later were to be acknowledged, with Maria Grant, as three of the nine principal movers for the successful enfranchisement of women in British Columbia. Their linked hands can be continuously discovered in the early, progressive, social movements of the province.

There was little evening entertainment at the Grants'. Gordon Grant, a marine engineer, was away from home for weeks at a time - weeks in which Maria was free to organize her household and children and to accommodate her busy schedule of meetings, report writing and church commitments. When not at sea, her husband, a non-temperance man in their earlier married years, found interest in his Masonic Lodge. In July and August, Gordon Grant would move the whole family by dray to the shores of View Royal or Sidney Harbour where he would have a crew of workmen erect their summer residence, a compartmented tent with kitchen, sitting room, dormitories, and verandah. Maria joined her children in swimming and canoeing, but would slip back to Victoria by the interurban railway or the streetcar. At Ferndale, there was a matriarchal family unit; under canvas, Gordon Grant directed the household.

My mother definitely made a private life for herself, quite separate from the life with my father and the children. She managed, somehow, to keep her thinking in compartments and I never remember seeing her frustrated by household demands. She was too good an organizer not to order her work, and our work, properly.<sup>21</sup>

Maria Grant's public service, church, and domestic commitments in the 1890's would have exhausted most of her energetic, Victorian peers. As she was said to be an indomitable, cheerful and happy woman, it can only be surmised that she had complete faith in what she wished to do and that her projects were sacred to what she felt to be her purpose on earth. Her confidence and lack of doubt would surely have given her more energy than her very healthy body could. She taught her children in their early years that they could become ill if they were guilty of unkindness. She herself was rarely sick. In later years, in her Unity work, she taught people to forgive themselves for wrong actions and to forego the belief in personal guilt.<sup>22</sup>

Of the nine children born to the Grants between 1874 and 1893, two died in infancy. The seven children who grew up at Ferndale all married, and produced a total of five grandchildren. Maria's two sons, William and Gordon, were called to the Bar; two daughters became registered nurses, and one daughter was given the thorough



*Mrs. (Reverend) William Pollard and  
daughter Maria (1854 Brady Ambrotype  
Courtesy Robert G. Butler)*



*Maria and Gordon Fraser Grant with 6 of their 7  
children: Lillian, Gordon Monro, Georgia, Bessie,  
Anna "Birdie", William Pollard  
(Mrs. R. Maynard Photo)*

commercial training of the day and became an innovative executive secretary of a welfare organization. Maria had hoped that one or more of her daughters would train as a teacher or musician, but in this wish she was frustrated, especially as an early elopement put an end to her plans for one of her daughters. She never dwelt on the frustrations she had but would press harder for her other schemes and interests saying, "What's done cannot be undone. It's no use looking back. Life is ahead."<sup>23</sup>

Maria Grant was not a good cook, but with her ability to delegate, she turned the meals over to the children. In addition, each child was given specific household chores. The chores of the day included carrying coal, chopping wood, blackleading stoves and fireplaces, maintaining earthclosets, and emptying chamber pots. The shopping was done by Maria herself in the interests of economy. All grocers who sold liquor were boycotted. She splurged on iced cakes at Clay's bakery, but kept a careful watch on her food expenditures. The vegetables which she grew in the garden were bottled and stored for the winter. Cutting the grass, gathering fruit in the orchard, and rolling and marking the tennis court was left to the children and her husband.

Mealtimes were sacrosanct. As with a good deal of the furniture in the house, Gordon Grant built the large dining room table which was set in the formal manner of the age. Grace was said before the meal was eaten, and more prayers, readings from the Bible, and uplifting literature followed after dinner. Money was not plentiful and the food was severely plain. Mrs. Hezekiah Hall, Maria's sister, who lived on the adjacent property, kept a cow with which she provided the Grants with milk and butter. Mr. Hall was the Police Magistrate and comparatively "better off" than Gordon Grant.

Mrs. Hall openly disapproved to Maria's busy life and the public niche she had begun to carve out for herself.<sup>24</sup> While the parsonage had succeeded in narrowing her horizons, Maria had benefited in other ways from the influences of her energetic parents. In allowing her children a degree of freedom which was not given to their cousins, she stressed that they must learn to think for themselves. On the subject of temperance Maria Grant was unyielding, although she chose to ignore infractions of church rules in connection with dancing and playing of cards on Sunday. The Grants' blinds were never drawn on the Sabbath.

Her children's eventual falling away from temperance hurt her deeply, but she believed that each person was individually responsible to God for his actions, and that she, herself, had failed in moral guidance. Punishment and acrimony were not her way. Lured by the more congenial social atmosphere at St. Mark's Anglican Church, the children one by one were confirmed in its faith. That this break with Methodism did not cause the pain that might be expected in one whose church had exerted such early influence can, perhaps, be attributed to her own growing disbelief in that particular brand of salvation. Ultimately, Ferndale was a religious house, singularly free of jeremiading and sanctimony.<sup>25</sup>

In 1894 when her youngest child, Frances Willard Grant, was less than a year old, Maria became a charter member of the Victoria Local Council of Women, an offshoot of the Friendly Help Society, which concerned itself with the improvement of the condition of women and children and the moral tone of the rapidly growing provincial capital.<sup>26</sup> The following year, Maria Grant took on the duties of recording secretary, in which capacity she continued for eight years. At the 1907 annual meeting the resolutions presented by the representatives of member organizations revealed the

continuing scope and aims of this influential body. Presented by the Ladies' Guild of the Metropolitan Church was a resolution to approach the government to draft legislation to establish a Juvenile Court in which juvenile delinquents might be tried "without the publicity and stigma at present attached to such proceedings". Other resolutions included proposals to secure the interest of Victoria citizens in the establishment of a university in the city, and a request that the law relating to boys' use of arms be enforced. Other groups also made presentations on the need for a Women's Building and the demand for prohibition of the sale of liquor on the fairgrounds and race track, and of smoking under the age of sixteen.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, as she was organizing the Local Council of Women, forty-year-old Maria Grant was completing her seventh year as supervisor of the difficult and highly organized work of the Women's Christian Temperance Union's Department of Petition, Legislation and Franchise - a work she would continue to inspire for an additional seven years.

The newly-formed Local Council of Women was quick to seize the chance to nominate a woman candidate to run in the by-election which had been called to fill an unexpired term on the Victoria School Board. No woman had previously served. Maria Grant with her firm understanding of the political process was the Council's obvious choice. Her candidacy was so well organized that an unprecedented three thousand people turned up at the ill-manned pool. A majority of the eligible voters, and in this instance women voters, had to be turned away without casting their ballot. Maria Grant only won the election by eighty-three votes, but the *Victoria Daily Colonist* of March 12, 1895, admitted that "the presence at the polls of the lady candidate and her supporters certainly gave a new colour to the election and gave Mrs. Grant many votes. She was undoubtedly the favorite candidate with the speculative, and none regret more than she and her friends that the full vote offering could not be recorded." The fact that Maria Grant did not try for re-election at the end of her first year in office can probably be explained by the added responsibilities she shouldered during the illness and death of her mother in 1896. It might also be conjectured that she would consider it unseemly to seek public office so soon after her mother had died. However, Mrs. Frances Barr recalls that her mother did not countenance grief nor mourning in her family, but rather counselled her children "that death was a part of life's experience and led to another state of being which was more intelligent",<sup>28</sup> and, therefore, happier for the person who had died.

During the Queen's birthday celebration of that same year, the Point Ellice Bridge collapsed and plunged the largest car of the B.C. Electric Railway Company into the waters below. Fifty-five of the 124 passengers died and many more were injured. Mrs. Helen M. Grant who lived at the eastern foot of the bridge immediately opened her house and grounds as a temporary mortuary and first-aid post.<sup>29</sup> She then sent a message to Maria Grant to come and organize the grisly operation. These two women had always worked well in tandem and never more so than on that dreadful day.<sup>30</sup> A happier partnership was their joint candidacy for trustees of the School Board in 1898.<sup>31</sup>

October and November 1897, were probably very exciting months for Maria Grant as she prepared for and represented British Columbia at the Dominion and World's Conventions of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Toronto. Each day she telegraphed reports on the progress of the meetings to the *Victoria Daily Colonist*. On November 24, the newspaper noted:

Since arriving back in B.C. Mrs. Grant has been present at and addressed a number of 'Convention Echo' meetings held during the past week at North Arm, Chilliwack, Sardis, Westminster and Vancouver, with large attendances everywhere.<sup>32</sup>

The years of back-room organization which had gone into the cause was paying off in increased abstinence pledges. The temperance advocates, however, were to be challenged again, as the 18,000 citizens of Victoria geared themselves and their saloons for the rowdy boom of yet another gold rush which this time was based on findings in the Klondike and Cassiar districts.<sup>33</sup> Always ready to do one more practical thing to further her causes, Maria Grant helped organize a Mission Hall under the aegis of the Willard W.C.T.U. which was, in her own words,

located in the midst of saloons as a counter attraction to the dens of drunkenness and vice all around, [where] men often wander into the Mission, when in search of somewhere to go.<sup>34</sup>

The rooms under the supervision of Mrs. Spofford were open daily from 9 a.m. until 11 p.m. On Wednesday and Sunday evenings gospel services were held:

The room is filled every Sunday to its utmost capacity, many persons frequently being compelled to go away or remain standing on the sidewalk listening through the open door to the message of Salvation.... Besides these meetings a free concert, at which a cup of good coffee and cake is served, is held every Saturday night, the program for which is undertaken by the various Young People's Societies of the Churches.<sup>35</sup>

Mrs. Grant also stressed in her report to the *Methodist Recorder* that the Hall was a place "...where men would come in touch, and be, to a certain extent, under the influence of a kind Christian woman who would take a real personal interest in them."<sup>36</sup>

Her vision of the Mission Hall as a place of warmth and kindness for many lonely and despairing men receives a sort of contorted credence from a story originally told by her son Gordon, who, while at a Saturday night Mission Hall concert, slipped out to the nearest public washroom and found graffitied on the wall, "If you're down and out, there's an old girl called Maria Grant over in the Mission Hall who's good for 50 cents."<sup>37</sup>

Mrs. Frances Barr who claims to a tin ear said she often sang duets and spoke her elocution pieces at the concerts. "We all loved going down town and staying up late on Saturday night and watching all the people." Although her claim to the "many conversion of souls"<sup>38</sup> in the Mission Hall may be questioned, Maria Grant's enthusiasm and dedication may not.

Throughout much of this decade of crushing volunteer work, the members of the Grant family were not only on the member rolls and regular attendants at the Gorge Road Wesleyan Methodist Church, but also they were listed in the leader-training Bible classes held each week in the Church. Although she is not recorded as holding a particularly high office in church circles, there is some evidence that in her position on the Local Council of Women Mrs. Grant was able to elicit resolutions from the Women's Missionary Society by informing them of areas for concern.<sup>39</sup>



The incumbent of the Gorge Road Church between 1893 and 1895 was the Reverend Joseph Hall. Through marriage to a Pollard sister, and as brother of Hezekiah Hall, he was twice connected by marriage to Maria Grant. As the spokesman of Church policy, Reverend Hall supported woman's suffrage, but he did not care for the active role taken by his sister-in-law. Christmas dinner at the Grants' always included the Hall clan until the Grant children rebelled:

We told mother that they were a 'dull lot' and we didn't want our Christmases spoilt by their gloomy faces. So mother stopped inviting them to please us even though it caused bad blood amongst the families. She was like that. She didn't lecture us on brotherly love. She saw no use in continuing something that obviously wasn't working.<sup>40</sup>

The pastorate of the Reverend Joseph Hall was plagued with problems of Church finance and it is interesting that the church history records "that not one item of Christian service, worship or teaching is mentioned in any minutes" of the Board's meetings held during his tenure.<sup>41</sup>

In her great admiration for Queen Victoria who disapproved of the idea of woman's rights, Maria Grant was exercising the kind of blind reverence for the monarchy which pervades most traditionalists. The Queen had written that she was "most anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write to join in checking this mad wicked folly of Woman's Rights, with all its attendant horrors, on which her poor, feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety."<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, the Methodist Church had given lip service to the cause of woman's suffrage for generations. However, it appeared that its advocacy related only to its concern for the preservation of a Christian, familial society in which enfranchised church women would have a greater role to play in reforming society along accepted religious and moral lines. The wider issue of equality of the sexes did not seem to be a concern. This blinkered approach to the franchise goal is no more sycophantly expressed than in the eulogy to the Queen which appeared in the *Western Methodist Recorder*:

The universal tribute to her womanly virtues emphasizes the power of a womanly woman. The only features of 'Woman's rights' which she gave expression to, were the rights of all women to protection, to freedom and to honour. Seven out of ten great men of the day, who were asked to name that they considered the greatest thing in the Victorian era, spoke directly of the position which women had achieved through the example set by England's Queen.<sup>43</sup>

As a regular subscriber to the *Recorder* and as a declared monarchist, Maria Grant undoubtedly read this editorial which, in its entirety, reveals a nervousness, if not actual repugnance, to the principle of equality of the sexes - a principle which was fundamental to her own support of the suffrage movement. She herself did not seem to suffer moral tension in her dual role as a woman and a suffragist.

After the death of the Queen at the beginning of the new century, the idea of “woman’s rights” gained respectability and acceptance among people who, unlike the social gospellers, saw suffrage as an issue separate from a vision of a perfectible, faith-driven society. Sensing that there were converts of a different order now to be had, Maria Grant began to channel her energy into a secular aspect of the suffrage campaign.<sup>44</sup> As this phase began to gather momentum, her involvement with the organized church became less visible.

In 1908, after a long illness, Maria’s husband of thirty-four years died. “One of the most popular and efficient officers of the Dominion Marine Service”, Gordon Grant, who was twelve years senior to his wife, had been forced in the previous year to retire without pension. Always hard-pressed for money,<sup>45</sup> Maria Grant found it necessary by 1912 to sell Ferndale, and at the age of fifty-four, start looking for a paid job. Even with her proven executive skills and her vast, volunteer experience, she was not considered for the vacant positions for which she was, except for sex, qualified.<sup>46</sup>

It was in this despairing period that Maria must have seriously questioned the operation of her faith. It is said that one Sunday as she was headed for her Church, on impulse she turned and walked to Beacon Hill Park where she picked up a Unity pamphlet from a bench. Having read it she shortly experienced a “revelation” of a faith which differed in every way from any experience in her previous life. It has not been possible to attribute a date to this even which may, in any case, be an apocryphal story. Certainly it is true that she became interested enough in the Unity teachings to contact the movement’s headquarters in Missouri and to begin an intensive study of their teachings. Whether this conversion took place before or after her husband’s death is not clear. It is known that by the mid-war years she was holding meetings in the Campbell Building with like-minded people.<sup>47</sup>

It is also about this time that a number of Maria Grant’s friends, including the faithful Mrs. Helen Grant, banded together to form the Victoria Club, which was incorporated under the Societies Act “for the purpose of social intercourse, mutual helpfulness, mental and moral improvements and rational recreation.”<sup>48</sup> Mrs. Maria Grant was listed as Treasurer. The Club operated from the sixth floor of the Campbell Building, located at the corner of Douglas and Fort Streets. While principally functioning as a boarding residence for approximately ten or twelve working girls, the Club rented rooms for meetings and private parties. As a “mutually helpful” adjunct, it provided a hope for Maria and Frances Grant who recalls that her mother was

totally in charge of the operation; hired the cook who catered the everyday meals and the social functions, the maids and other maintenance help; she was responsible for the ordering of supplies, the bookings of rooms and the bookkeeping. It was a very popular place.

During her patriotic lecture tour in 1916, Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst was housed in the Victoria Club by the Political Equality League. As hostess of the Club, Maria Grant gave a large, afternoon reception for Mrs. Pankhurst which included musical entertainment. As president of the League, she presented Mrs. Pankhurst to the crowded evening audience in the Victoria Theatre.

Having made her final break with the Methodist Church and the doctrine of sin and salvation, Maria Grant used the clubrooms to give talks, lectures, and ultimately, healing treatments based on the Unity philosophy of non-personal guild. It is perhaps, a sign of the power she exercised in her ministerial role<sup>49</sup> that none of the survivors of those early meetings remember the multiple purposes of the Club, but only the compelling quality of Maria Grant's words and the joy with which she, through her own visible faith, was able to endow them.<sup>50</sup> The Victoria Club was struck off the list of societies by the Registrar of Companies in 1933, but the incorporation documents relating to the first Unity Church, as operated by Maria Grant appear never to have existed or to have been destroyed in the process of microfilming.

Between 1912 and 1918 Maria Grant was also secretary of the Victoria (City) Children's Aid Society, a pioneer welfare organization which operated the children's rescue home and was funded by regular, monthly donations from all Victoria's established churches. As it was her responsibility to oversee the day-to-day functioning of the Home, it is thought that Maria Grant may have received a stipend for this work. However, the minutes of the December, 1917, meeting which are written in her easy-flowing script, do not confirm that she was paid but do make clear that the entire re-organization of the welfare services in the post-war years led to her precipitate resignation from the Society.

While undertaking the operations of the Victoria Club and the rescue home, she continued at the forefront of the woman's suffrage movement. In 1912 she was the president of the highly committed Political Equality League which had adopted as "the fundamental principle of its Constitution the establishment of the Political, Social and Industrial Rights of Women and Men."<sup>51</sup> With Miss Dorothy Davis, she assumed the production of the League's new, monthly paper, *The Champion*. The paper is at once an example of Maria Grant's editorial, journalistic, and promotional skills, as well as clear evidence of a new determination and thrust toward the enfranchisement of British Columbia women. There were 10,000 signatures to the 1913 petition circulated by the League.<sup>52</sup> The wording to the preamble is given here to indicate the suffragists' expedient use of the public's fear of the "Yellow Peril":

The Petition of the Undersigned women of the Province of British Columbia humbly sheweth: Whereas 'Taxation without Representation is Tyranny' and Whereas 'All Just government rests on the Consent of the Governed'

And Whereas, in view of the rapid influx into this country of a large Foreign Element, endangering, through the vote, the Ideals and Standards, political and social, which have made our Empire what it is today, there is Urgent need of an Immediate Increase in the British born Electorate:

And Whereas, Women bear the responsibilities and fulfill all the essential conditions of Citizenship on which the Right and Privilege of the Vote are granted, yet have hereto been denied that Right and that Privilege

Therefore your Petitioners humbly pray that your Honorable Body pass and Act during the coming Session granting the Vote to Women on the same terms as it is or may be given to men.

When the annual petitions were presented by the delegates to the Government, Maria Grant would carry a large reproduction of a sailing ship which, it is remembered, was crafted from a three-foot square section of sheet metal. Representing Longfellow's Ship of State, the symbol, after "sailing on" to the Legislature, would be packed away in Maria Grant's cloak-cupboard from which it would fall with depressing regularity to damage itself and its unfortunate victim.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps its final sorry condition was symbolic of the above specious argument that the suffragists employed to attract their petitioners and of the tarnish that argument gave to their brilliant and sustained, non-militant battle.

Maria Grant lived for twenty years after the franchise was granted to women in 1917. In this period she continued to draw many people to the Unity movement. In order to function without funds raised from social affairs, she arranged a merger with another philosophical group, the New Thought Temple, which was introduced to Victoria in the 1890's but he architect Frances Mawson Rattenbury. In turn, these two founding bodies established the Victoria Truth Centre, which today has a large tithing membership but no formal connection with the Unity School.<sup>54</sup> Though she failed rapidly toward the end of her life, she continued almost to her death to visit her office to arrange the roster of speakers which she brought to the city and to see the people who needed the counselling that she appeared to be able to give. Her last words, "Is it time for me to go now?", are the words of the dedicated Christian whose work is never done.

Throughout her active years Maria Grant fervently believed that the Kingdom of God could and would be established on earth, if and when social conditions were perfected to permit true brotherly love. Towards this goal she dedicated her eighty-three years with all the considerable strength of her diminutive body and clever mind. She was a dominating figure in the organizations and councils to which she gave her superb executive ability. In her belief in the perfectibility of Man by Faith through Works, she was a woman of a particular time and a product of a particular culture. A moving tribute to her comes from Frances Barr, who said, "I liked my mother very much and I was proud of her always."

#### Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas*, Toronto, George J. McLeod Ltd., 1973.

<sup>2</sup> S.P. Mosher, "Social Gospel in British Columbia: Social Reform as a Dimension of Religion, 1900 - 1920", thesis, University of Victoria, 1974.

<sup>3</sup> Editors' Note: Gender-charged words (mankind, *et. al*) have been left unaltered as they represent the language of the period described in this essay.

<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Kenneth Barr (nee Frances Willard Grant), taped interview, Comox, B.C., July, 1980.

<sup>5</sup> Canadian Methodist Conference, "Crayon Eighteenth", *Canadian Methodism for the Last Forty Years*. Toronto, 1860, pp. 268 - 270.

<sup>6</sup> Canadian Methodist Conference, "Rev. W. Pollard", *Western Methodist Recorder* (December, 1900), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Canadian Methodist Conference, "Crayon Eighteenth", *Canadian Methodism for the Last Forty Years*, p. 269.

<sup>8</sup> James Nesbitt, "Old Homes and Families", *Daily Colonist*, The Islander, February 11, 1951, p. 11

<sup>9</sup> Canadian Methodist Conference, "Rev. W. Pollard", p. 4.

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<sup>10</sup> F.C. Stephenson, *One Hundred Years of Canadian Methodist Missions*, Toronto, Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, The Young People's Forward Movement, 1925, pp. 164 - 165.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Butler (grandson of Maria Grant), telephone interview, Boston Mass., July, 1980.

<sup>12</sup> Maria Grant, Dorothy Davis, eds., *The Champion*, vol. 1 (August, 1912), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> McLangburgh Wilson, "The Coming Child", *The Champion*, vol. 1, no. 1 (August, 1912), p. 11:

#### THE COMING CHILD

A mother sews for her coming child	The world is making his garments, too;
Shapes tiny and soft and undefiled.	Has fashioned the same the ages through.
With many a stitch of love and care,	With many a stitch of law and greed,
With many a dream of all things fair,	With many a thread of sin and need,
She sews his covering to prepare.	It makes him an early shroud, indeed.
The world is strong in the ballot's might;	
Unarmed the mother to wage a fight.	
Mere hope is futile and trusting vain,	
For not till she helps to rule and reign	
Shall ever the babe his own attain.	

<sup>14</sup> S.P. Mosher, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Linda Louise Hale, "The British Columbia Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890 - 1917", M.A. thesis: University of British Columbia, 1977, p. 122.

<sup>16</sup> *Daily Colonist*, October 24, 1871, p. 3

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, October 25, 1871.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, October 27, 1871.

<sup>19</sup> Mrs. Kenneth Barr, interview.

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Forbes, "A Silent Vow", *Wild Roses at Their Feet: Pioneer Women of British Columbia*.

Vancouver, Evergreen Press Ltd., 1971, pp. 7, 28. N.B.: The other voters were Mrs. Silvestria Smith and Mrs. Helen M. Grant.

<sup>21</sup> Mrs. Kenneth Barr, interview

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Reverend Emma Smiley, Victoria Truth Centre, taped interview, July, 1980.

<sup>24</sup> Mrs. Kenneth Barr, interview.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Daily Colonist*, November 12, 1907, pp. 1, 8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, November 12, 1907, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Mrs. Kenneth Barr, interview.

<sup>29</sup> Miss Sara Spencer, interview, July, 1980, *Daily Colonist*, May 24, 1931.

<sup>30</sup> Mrs. Kenneth Barr, interview.

<sup>31</sup> Louise Baker, postcard addressed to C.C. Pemberton, soliciting support for two candidates, B.C. Archives, vertical files, date obscured.

<sup>32</sup> *Daily Colonist*, November 24, 1897, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Margaret A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*. Vancouver, Evergreen Press, 1958.

<sup>34</sup> Mrs. Gordon Grant, "Mission Hall", *Western Methodist Recorder* (December, 1900), p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Robert Butler, interview.

<sup>38</sup> Mrs. Gordon Grant, "Mission Hall", p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Reverend Dr. S.J.B. Parsons, "Women's Missionary Society, 1895 - 1898", *History of Centennial United Church, 1885 - 1970*. Victoria, Empire Printers, 1972.

<sup>40</sup> Mrs. Kenneth Barr, interview.

<sup>41</sup> Reverend Dr. S.J.B. Parsons, "Rev. Joseph Hall, 1893 - 1895", *History of Centennial United Church, 1885 - 1970*, pp. 7 - 9.

<sup>42</sup> Altick, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>43</sup> *Western Methodist Recorder* (February, 1901), p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> Hale, *op. cit.*, pp. 52 - 87.

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- <sup>45</sup> "Probate of Gordon Grant's Will", *The Province*, April 1, 1927.
- <sup>46</sup> Mrs. Kenneth Barr, interview.
- <sup>47</sup> Unity School Archives in Missouri do not have records of ordination prior to 1918. No records of Maria Grant's connection with the Unity School of Christianity or its adjuncts could be located by the archivist in July, 1980.
- <sup>48</sup> *British Columbia Gazette*, vol. V (1913), p. 5070.
- <sup>49</sup> She was often referred to as the Reverend Mrs. Gordon Grant. See footnote no. 47.
- <sup>50</sup> Mrs. Ethel M. Thompson, Mrs. Mary Baker, Mrs. S.F. Winters, interviewed together, July, 1980.
- <sup>51</sup> *The Champion*, vol. 1 (August, 1912), p. 1
- <sup>52</sup> McBride Papers, Official File 97. British Columbia Provincial Archives.
- <sup>53</sup> Robert Butler, interview.
- <sup>54</sup> Reverend Emma Smiley, interview.

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*Interviews - July 1980.*

Mrs. Kenneth Barr, Comox, B.C.

Mrs. Mary Baker, Mrs. Ethel M. Thompson, Mrs. S.F. Winters, Victoria, B.C.

Reverend Emma M. Smiley, Victoria, B.C.

Robert Butler, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

Mrs. H. Galpin, Comox, B.C.

Mr. A. Helmcken, Victoria, B.C.

Mrs. MacGregor MacIntosh, Sidney, B.C.

Mrs. Gloria Grant Robinson, Seattle, Wash., U.S.A.

Miss Sara Spencer, Victoria, B.C.

Mrs. C.I. Goodwin, Victoria, B.C.

Miss Muriel Laing, Victoria, B.C.

Rev. McMechan, Victoria, B.C.

Mrs. K. Stevenson, Sidney, B.C.