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“THE SACRIFICES AND INCONVENIENCES WERE FORGOTTEN:” BAPTIST
MISSIONARY WOMEN TO THE NORTHEASTERN IMMIGRANT TRIBES IN KANSAS,
1833-1853

A Thesis by

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Bachelor of Science, Emporia State University, 2011

Submitted to the Department of History
and the faculty of the Graduate School of
Wichita State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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1833-1853

The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in History.

Robin Henry, Committee Chair

Jean Griffith, Committee Member

Jay Price, Committee Member

DEDICATION

For the women of the Kansas Indian missions

He must increase, but I must decrease.

John 3:30

ABSTRACT

Women who worked at the Baptist missions to northeastern Indian Immigrant tribes in Kansas were missionaries. Not simply missionary wives, or schoolteachers, both married and unmarried females and their male colleagues considered these women assistant missionaries. By examining first the context in which the women lived, their actions on the field, and finally evaluating their own letters and diaries on the subject, as well as those of men involved in some capacity with them, it becomes clear that while their labor and thought patterns were very different from those of most twenty-first century ministry workers, in their own minds they were missionaries. Female labor patterns ran the gamut from laundry to prayer meetings to medical work. Their writings are full of spiritual references and a hope that their labor will prove beneficial to both this world and the next.

In addition to women's identity as missionaries, the findings also conclude that while these females lived extremely religious lives centered around their culture's interpretation of Christianity, some larger, human themes emerge. Overwork, illness, isolation, and loneliness are all themes a careful examiner can find within their writings. Persistence, moments of happiness, and perseverance in the face of hardship also appear. While different in many ways, in these qualities readers can find items which relate to broader studies of western life, as well as women's history. Simply because they are different does not give historians a right to dismiss them. The Baptist missionary women of pre-territorial Kansas contributed to its history, and therefore deserve a place in the history of Kansas, as well as the history of women, and Church history.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The sacrifices and inconveniences were forgotten by us when we considered the great object for which we lived and labored - the conversion of the Indians and their advancement to civilization.¹

Olivia Pratt knew something of sacrifice. Of her seven children, only one survived to adulthood. While her parents lived comfortably in New England, her feet froze in a frontier cabin. And yet she stated that, “sacrifices and inconveniences were forgotten.” Not literally forgotten, but figuratively. Olivia Pratt spent most of her adult life in Kansas, as a wife, a mother, and for many years, a missionary. Something made her life worth the sacrifice. While her calling led her through pain, it also gave her the will to continue.

Not just workers at a mission, or missionaries’ wives, the women whose stories speak through these pages were missionaries in their own right. They chose to come—no one forced them. They encountered situations they never imagined, met people and dwelt in places as few others of their class and rank. They worked hard, sacrificing time, strength, and health for “the great object,” the conversion and “civilization” of Native Americans. They were missionaries. This identity did not exclude them from other roles, but it did impact how they perceived life. By examining the reasoning behind their actions, both before and during their years of service, it becomes clear that these women lived sincere Victorian Christian lifestyles that impacted practically every nook of their existence.

¹ Olivia Pratt, quoted in Clara Gowing, “Life among the Delaware Indians,” *Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1911-1912*, Vol. XII., ed. Geo.W. Martin, (Topeka: State Printing Office, 1912): fn. 4, 184.

This work focuses on Baptist women who worked as missionaries to northeastern immigrant Indian tribes in Kansas. In 1833, the first female Baptist missionary settled near the Westport, Missouri, river crossing, but on the west side of the Missouri River. By 1853, white encroachment and land and railroad speculation were poised to change this area drastically. The remaining twenty-year interval, 1833-1853, comprises this study's timeframe. During those years, northeast Kansas was Indian Territory. The area filled with Native American Immigrant tribes, such as the Shawnee, Delaware, Pottawatomie, and Ottawa. These peoples lived on reservations scattered with a few tiny islands of Anglo-American culture: Indian Agencies, Military Outposts, and Christian Missions.²

To place this work in scholarly context requires using a range of sources from multiple fields of interest. Church history, western frontier history, and women's history all come into play. While the time frame and geography place it on the outer fringes of the western frontier, the main focus is women's history in a missionary context. The historiography varies from histories on women in foreign missions to male-focused analyses on Christian missions and Native Americans. A few examples will serve to show the trends: Robert F. Berkhofer's book, *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1781-1862* first published in 1965, draws out common themes in the ways that Protestants of many denominations executed missionary work between 1781 and 1861. While Berkhofer does not focus on women, he recognizes four different stages of missionary work among tribal peoples, and examines the way missionaries and North American tribal peoples interacted. He

² As an aside, the area also included its share of trading posts. These are not included among the list of American cultural centers, as multiple scholars now agree with Richard White that these places usually created their own culture, made with both Euro-American and Native American elements, and then combined to create a new, third culture. This "third way" would have been well known to Eastern Immigrant Tribes, most of whom had interacted with European-Americans for centuries. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

insists that when studying history, the balance of power and level of acculturation between cultural groups should be taken into account when discussing cultural acquisitions. He also discusses Protestant evangelization methods and their effectiveness. He offers a comprehensive overview, not specific to tribe or denomination, and certainly does not involve a women's perspective. Still, it remains an important foundational study for those interested in antebellum Protestant missionary work among Native Americans.³

Published just a few years later in 1968, R. Pierce Beaver's book, *American Protestant Women in World Mission: A History of the First Feminist Movement in North America*, emphasizes women's outward agency in Protestant missionary work. Beaver places these women in the roles of early feminists, women who used Christian missionary work as an avenue to increase their own power. Like Berkhofer, Beaver also covers a wide geographic region and array of native peoples, and missions, but she does not explain American Indian missions in any kind of detail. The focus is on overseas mission stations, and the ways women expanded their sphere of influence through that work.⁴

A later book on a similar topic deserves its own mention. Dana Lee Robert's *American Women in Mission: A Social History of their Thought and Practice*, published in 1996, specifically mentions it lacks information on those women sent to American Indian Missions. Robert states this omission is not because women did not participate in "foreign" missions to Native Americans, but because necessary secondary material for her compilation and study does

³ Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1965).

⁴ R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission: A History of the First Feminist Movement in North America*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980 [1968]), 59-61, 68.

not exist. In this thesis I help fill in that pronounced gap in the scholarship.⁵ While the sources for this work are different, focusing more on women's personal writings and less on the larger organizational schemes, I borrow and expand on concepts of women's thoughts and how they affected their lives, such as how experience changed their concepts of missionary life. Building something more than a laundry-list of work habits, I use principles of identity and ambition to delve into missionaries' (especially female missionaries') mindsets, and implicitly confirm that Baptist women missionaries in Indian Territory held similar beliefs as their overseas counterparts.

My larger arguments and themes fit into the New West history established by such historians as Patricia Limerick, Richard White, and Elliot West. These authors see history more as a whole and less as distinct categories. For instance, in Limerick's book *A Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*, she narrates a history of the American West. For that book, she presents different aspects of western history, then, "Reconceived as a running story, a fragmented and discontinuous past becomes whole again." The words of many brought together can help create a single, more complete history. In my own work, each woman studied had spiritual, familial, social, and work-oriented portions of her life. While helpful at times to dissect the various parts of their lives and study each aspect individually, in the end it makes sense to work as New West historians do, and bring the varied, yet, almost inextricably interconnected, pieces together as a whole.⁶

⁵ Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of their Thought and Process*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1996).

⁶ Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Sept. 1978):319-343. Elliot West, "A Story of Three Families," *Kansas History*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer, 1996): 112-123. Direct quote taken from Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1987), 27.

Before now, work on women's identity as female missionaries in Kansas Indian Territory has not been attempted. A number of theses have been written on individual missions or aspects of missions, but not on a group of Kansas missionary women.⁷ Homer E. Socolofsky and Huber Self's 1972 reference work, *Historical Atlas of Kansas* shows where the missions and reservations were, but does not give details.⁸ A single dissertation, "Missionary Women Among the American Indians, 1815-1865" by Lydia Huffman Hoyle, uses Baptist and Presbyterian archives to "paint a broader portrait," using national archives, but tends to focus on females' place and power, and neglects many married women.⁹ Perhaps the scholarly work that comes closest in historical methodology on the subject is Stephen Joy's dissertation, "'Into the Wilderness': Protestant Missions Among the Emigrant Indians of Kansas, 1830-1854," in which Joy analyzes the activities and motives of male missionaries at the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian Kansas Indian missions.¹⁰

From such scholarship it is clear that academic literature on Kansas missionary women is lacking. This thesis, by emphasizing these women, their work, and identity, as central topics, begins to fill a previously empty corner. The subject matter not only uses to Kansas archives to study women who worked at "foreign" Indian missions rather than the overseas ones described in Beaver's and Robert's work, it also attempts to view the women themselves not as feminists or anti-feminists but as human beings who wanted to do something with their lives, something they thought would matter and help society in this life and in that to come. Space and time

⁷ For example, Lorna Batterson, "The Pottawatomie Baptist Manual Labor School," Master's Thesis, (Wichita State University, 1995); Rhonda Jean Hiebert, "The Baptist Mission to the Delaware Indians," Master's Thesis, (Emporia State University, 1986).

⁸ Homer E. Socolofsky and Huber Self, *Historical Atlas of Kansas*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).

⁹ Lydia Huffman Hoyle, "Missionary Women Among the American Indians, 1815-1865," Ph.D. Diss., (University of North Carolina, 1992), 7.

¹⁰ Mark Stephen Joy, "'Into the Wilderness': Protestant Missions Among the Emigrant Indians of Kansas, 1830-1854." Ph.D. Diss. (Kansas State University, 1992). Joy believes that Indian Missions can be compared with other frontier missions, and uses men's methods and means of mission structure and propagation to prove it.

constraints limit this thesis to a single denomination and geo-area, but rather than focusing on a single tribe or school, it includes multiple tribal groupings and several mission stations, enabling a larger sampling of women. A geographically-specific but denomination-wide approach allows in-depth research while maintaining the breadth necessary to demonstrate cross-station commonalities. The findings largely agree with Robert, who concluded that missionary women chose to be missionaries without understanding what it would involve, but then decided to stay anyway. However, it also goes beyond that conclusion by explaining how the women perceived themselves and the world around them, and how their male colleagues viewed female co-laborers. Ultimately, it adds another layer to western history, exploring not just what these missionary women did, but also how and why they chose to do it.

This work is divided into four chapters. Chapter One introduces the topic, situates it in the larger historiography, and outlines the main body of text. Chapter Two provides necessary background information on the larger religious, political, and economic situation of the time. While these topics are peripheral in themselves, a brief overview demonstrates how the American antebellum atmosphere helped shape potential female missionary candidates. It discusses the importance of the Second Great Awakening, women's benevolence in the first half of the nineteenth century, and how women used Christian ministry as a way of serving a larger community than immediate household members. It also presents enough information on United States and northeastern tribal relations to understand when and why they moved to Kansas, how Baptists became involved with that process, and explains the process of becoming a woman missionary.

After a woman met the qualifications, she applied for and sometimes was accepted as an assistant missionary. Chapter Three dives into women's roles in the field; what sort of work they did, the similarities and differences between married and single women's work, and comparison to men's work. Ultimately, women –both married and single– filled a void in mission structure. Without them, the various mission stations would not have been able to operate as they did. Female missionaries were vital to successful stations, and both men and women involved with missionary service realized it keenly. While women may not have held outward positions of authority, they served in a multitude of ways both within and without traditional early Victorian norms.

While Chapter Three examines actions, Chapter Four explores identity and philosophy. Consequently, it relies heavily on personal letters and diary entries. It seeks to discover how these women viewed themselves and those around them, what they thought of their work, and why they persevered year after year, even when missionary life did not meet their original expectations. Women's thoughts on service, family, community, and life in general comprise the majority of this section. By becoming missionaries, they committed themselves unreservedly to an ideology of usefulness, played out in sacrificial giving of every personal resource, sometimes even life itself.

A myriad of sources help make this work a reality. Collections at the Kansas State Historical Society form a large part of it. The Jotham Meeker Collection, John G. Pratt Papers, and Robert Simerwell Collection, among others, hold letters and diaries written from, to, and sometimes about these Kansas women missionaries.¹¹ Organized under the title of the male

¹¹ Major collections utilized from the Kansas State Historical Society include the Jotham Meeker Collection, the John G. Pratt Papers, the Francis Barker Collection, and the Robert Simerwell Collection. The Isaac McCoy Papers

missionary responsible for that particular station, letters from women and men connected with that station often ended up in these collections. These letters are invaluable to this present study. Contemporary sources such as the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* and works published by or about missionaries, such as *The Memoir of Miss Eliza McCoy* also aid in understanding and give a feel for current events and emotions of the time.¹² Sometimes the written record is frustratingly silent, leaving one to wonder what a particular woman did or thought of her life. For instance, I found nothing written in the hand of Jane Kelly Jones, a missionary school teacher who married a mixed heritage Chippewa and continued acting as a missionary after her marriage. Other times written words give exactly the kind of detail a researcher desires, such as the courtship letters of Olivia Evans Pratt. A mix of joy and frustration often accompanies the research process. However, by examining what is available, some conclusions can be reached.

First and foremost these women, both married and unmarried, were missionaries. Rarely claiming the spotlight, they occupied foundational roles in their chosen profession. Both sexes realized this. Men knew they needed missionary women as wives, and they eventually realized the importance of single women missionaries as well. Most women missionaries in Kansas actively chose this path, seeking it out from their other, albeit somewhat limited, options of the time. Even when they married and found

constitute another significant source available at KSHS for those doing research on McCoy and the eastern immigrant tribes, but holds less on Kansas missionary women. All these collections are hereafter referred to by surname, e.g. Pratt Papers.

¹² Originally a monthly magazine, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine* was later bound into volumes. Each volume covers 1-2 years. e.g. The Board of Managers of the Baptist General Convention, *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. XX. (Boston: Press of Puntam and Hewes, 1840); contains the issues for 1840. Hereafter this source will be cited by title and year, e.g. *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1840.

Calvin McCormick, *The Memoir of Miss Eliza McCoy*, (Dallas: Calvin McCormick, 1892). Publications like memoirs and the magazine were written for Americans at home, as ways to keep informed and encouraged about Christian missions.

themselves doing much that might seem unrelated, such as housework and childcare, their mindsets remained mission-oriented.

Secondly, being a missionary did not stop women from fulfilling multiple roles. A woman could be a missionary while also acting as a federally funded schoolteacher. She could administer medical aid to tribeswomen, care for her own children, offer support for her husband, and through those tasks consider herself an active participant of a mission station. Similar to many other career women, one role did not necessarily exclude all others.

Lastly, while these women struggled with their pre-conceived notions of missionary life and the realities they faced, their personal convictions gave them strength to continue on in their labors. Their work overwhelmed them and often severely taxed them physically, mentally, emotionally, and even spiritually. Their sense of religious calling and duty kept encouraged these missionaries to stay. They devoutly believed that nothing in life was worth more than serving God, and they did their best to fulfil that command and desire by using whatever means lay at their disposal. Simply put, the reason they came was often the reason they stayed.¹³

¹³ Whether or not the missionaries' beliefs were accurate is not argued here. For this thesis, their validity as truth is a moot point. The point here is not whether the women were right, but that they clung to their faith so strongly that it drew them into their work and continued its pull - even after romantic notions of mass conversions and American Indians flocking in droves to "civilization" were replaced with the realities of ramshackle cabins, yearly sickness, and even childbirth and mortality.

CHAPTER TWO

FOUNDATIONS

How interesting to contemplate this expansive benevolence of the gospel.¹⁴

This chapter provides a brief overview on the religious and social climates that molded the mission workers. It begins with a general look at the Second Great Awakening and Jacksonian American society, and then focuses on the development of Protestant religious societies, women's role within them, and finally provides more detailed information on the process of becoming a female missionary. The purpose of this chapter is to present the appropriate context necessary to understand the world of female missionaries.

Following the War of 1812, the United States –especially the north-eastern states– began to grow and change in ways unknown to earlier generations. During the 1820s and 1830s, the economy began to shift to a more industrial base. Textile mills and early factories developed. Immigration from western and central European countries rose. An urban working class made up of factory workers developed, and a respectable, native-born American middle-class, characterized by a certain amount of expendable income and free time, emerged. While their business practices often encouraged the rise of industrialism, this middle-class would also spur many of the initiatives, political, social, and spiritual of the nineteenth century.

The American dream of independence through land ownership and political rights, the idea that all Americans (or at least all American white males over the age of twenty-one) are

¹⁴ Francis Barker, quoted from an undated copy of the *Christian Watchman*, Barker Collection.

equal, and the belief that everyone can better their condition through hard work and diligence, all became extremely popular between the 1820s and the 1840s. Themes of equality (in varied forms and intensity) and hoped-for social, spiritual, and economic betterment impacted urban and rural working classes, as well as the up-and-coming middle-class. As commercialism grew, many saw land ownership and settlement expansion as ways to further the new American ideology. Eventually, notions of Manifest Destiny, the idea that American destiny involved owning and settling land on both the eastern and western sides of the continent, also helped increase travel and settlement.¹⁵

The Second Great Awakening

While American political and economic dynamics pressed the working classes farther west, a socio-religious phenomenon drew many Americans into active religious and charitable work. Over the years, historians have approached this phenomenon from a variety of perspectives. In his book *Protestantism in America: A Narrative History*, 1950s historian Jerald C. Brauer presents a good overview of the topic, with details enough to make it useful for scholarly study.¹⁶ More recently, Curtis D. Johnson approached it through a lens focused on how the Second Great Awakening reflects nineteenth-century American diversity in his “‘Sectarian Nation’: Religious Diversity in Antebellum America.”¹⁷ Even with secondary resources, such wide-spread religious fervor is something a twenty-first century mind may find difficult, if not impossible, to fully comprehend. While any purely spiritual aspect cannot be explained away, one reason for the common people’s enthusiasm includes the final break from federalism and

¹⁵ Richard White, *It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1991), 57, 72-73.

¹⁶ Jerald C. Brauer, *Protestantism in America: A Narrative History*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953).

¹⁷ Curtis D. Johnson, “‘Sectarian Nation’: Religious Diversity in Antebellum America” *OAH Magazine of History*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Jan. 2008): 14-18.

move to a nationalized democratic-republic. With larger numbers formally participating in politics, many parishioners believed they should also participate actively in their religion. This movement impacted thousands of people, both individually and collectively. Sermons by men such as the Reverend Charles Finney inspired thousands to make changes in their daily routines. A dissatisfaction with the reserved, formal style of worship also contributed to the development of a more personally active Christianity. There were new hymns to sing while going about one's work, new organizations to join and support. Many eagerly anticipated their weekly prayer meetings, the new Sunday Schools, and religious publications one could read and share with friends.

The Christian revivals of the nineteenth century helped change the American social climate. This Second Awakening gave order and purpose to a multitude of individuals. To society as a whole it gave a new sense of stability and morality, but the Christianity of the Second Great Awakening, unlike that of previous generations, also carried prominent elements of passion and individuality. It was an active Christianity, infused with a culture of new American democracy, expansionism, and strong emotion. Each person was responsible for their own spiritual destiny. Unlike the Great Awakening of the 1730s, the theology of the Second Great Awakening quietly neglected the doctrine of pre-destination (the idea that God decided everyone's spiritual fate before they are ever born) and elevated the doctrine of free-will (the idea that each person decides their own spiritual fate). In the social climate of the time this meant that if Christians wanted it enough, they could, theoretically, achieve perfection.¹⁸

¹⁸ Donald G. Matthews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: A Hypothesis," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Spring, 1969): 27.

This theological transformation did not affect every Protestant denomination equally. The three denominations most affected by it included the Presbyterians, the Methodists, and the Baptists. Not only did these groups incur interior alterations, they also created a marked impact on nineteenth-century America. Up until the early nineteenth century, the Methodists and the Baptists were small, relatively insignificant groups, but the Second Great Awakening changed that. The Methodist and Baptist focus on “bottom-up” change suited the political and social environment of the 1820s through 1840s. Their doctrines focused more on free will than pre-destination, giving people the individual hope that they could be saved and one day enter Heaven. Rather than the Calvinistic belief that eternal destiny was already pre-determined by heavenly Providence, the sermons and literature of the Second Great Awakening focused on individual choice. Baptist and Methodist organizational structure also appealed to the middle and working classes. These two denominations rejected the formal hierarchical structure used by more established denominations, such as the Episcopalians, for a much looser, more egalitarian format. Unlike the Baptists and Methodists, the Presbyterians entered this era already well established. However, while they retained a more formal organizational structure, they changed the nuances of their theology to more closely align with the tenants described above, and adopted new methods that encouraged proselytization. While the Presbyterian structure remained intact, the beliefs and everyday activities fell in line with the social climate of the time, and keeping their traditional governance arguably enabled them more efficient in their new evangelizing goals.¹⁹

All three denominations presented an important problem: If human beings could, and did, have the ability to choose their eternal fate, then the masses should have the opportunity to make

¹⁹Brauer, *Protestantism in America*, 99-112. Also Johnson, “Sectarian Nation,” 15, 17.

informed decisions. The emerging middle class who lived in towns and cities, especially in the Northeast and Middle Atlantic states, channeled their resources into action. If Christ came to seek and save that which was lost, then they would do what they could to emulate Him. Hundreds, even thousands, affected by this awakening wanted to change the world through benevolence and moral suasion. They felt called to share their faith and morality by reaching and helping reform their neighbors near and far, whether in the slums of New York, the backcountry of Tennessee, across the oceans to the Far East, or in the Indian Territory out west. Circuit-riding preachers, men who travelled horseback, preaching around a backcountry loop, worked to convince as many rural Americans as possible of their terrible spiritual condition, and show them what they perceived as the only way out of that condition: repentance that would lead to life-altering changes in their day-to-day existence. Societies were formed to benefit the poor in urban areas and convince those living in squalor that hard work and morality through Christianity would be their ticket to a better life.²⁰

Those affected by this movement took to heart the words of St. James, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this; to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep thyself unspotted from the world.”²¹ This active evangelical Christianity impacted not just the spiritual realm but also the material. It successfully encouraged others, especially women, to pursue benevolent action in many forms.²² One of these forms came in the way of Christian missions. Proselytizing both Americans of European ancestry (especially those living on the fringes of “civilized” society) and the foreign “heathen” became a burden willingly

²⁰ Brauer, *Protestantism in America*, 100-101; Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600-1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 131-32, 136-39.

²¹ *The Bible* James 1:27.

²² Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). Chapters Two and Three go into great detail on the various ways women in the first half of the nineteenth century carried out the practice of Christian/moral benevolence other than entering full-time missionary service.

shouldered by these women. It became for them an impassioned duty. In the eyes of many mission-minded individuals, all the fortunate hearer needed to do was recognize his or her wretched condition, cry to Jesus for salvation, and then live a grateful life pleasing to Him. This appreciative Christian life would, in the eyes of the carriers of Christianity, mimic that life preached and attempted by the moral middle class. It involved creating and maintaining serially monogamous patriarchal family groups, and practicing all of the assumed morality of Euro-American Protestantism without conceding to any of its participants' vices.²³

Viewing this phenomenon from an outsider's perspective can be difficult. Europeans visiting the United States during this era also found it strange. American religiosity and moral clergy often surprised them, especially when compared with their own spiritual leaders. They noticed that the "bottom up" method of filling ministerial positions the evangelical denominations used, along with popular spiritual devotion, led American parishioners to expect nothing but the highest moral conduct from their clergy. One traveler remarked that Americans held more respect for their ministers than the English did for their lords.²⁴

It was apparent to these outsiders that men and women most affected by the movement took the words in St. Mark quite seriously, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."²⁵ For, they believed, once everyone had heard, Jesus Christ would return. This school of thought, known as millennialism, proved quite prevalent during the nineteenth century. Many Christians held to the belief that they could help the spiritual kingdom and speed its

²³ Brauer, *Protestantism in America*, 136, 148-150.

²⁴ Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism & Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War*. (New York: Harper & Row 1965 [1957]), 34-44. The nineteenth century French traveler De Tocquville also commented extensively on American religion and democracy. His book, *Democracy in America*, can be found at, http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/toc_indx.html. Accessed July 11, 2014.

²⁵ *The Bible*, Mark 16:15.

coming through actively spreading the “good news” of humankind’s sinful condition and Jesus Christ’s atonement for that sin through his death and resurrection.²⁶

Beginning the Baptist Indian Missions

In order to facilitate and hopefully hasten His return, those denominations that had previously worked from the ground up, with fairly independent local congregations and little to no central authority, now established centralized organizations, created for the furtherance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. With their proselytizing efforts in mind, the Baptists, along with the Methodists and Presbyterians, organized missionary societies. Beginning in 1814 the Baptist domination formed the “General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America, for Foreign Missions.” Their first foray into American Indian Missions came in 1817, when Isaac McCoy, himself raised on the Kentucky frontier, received an appointment to work among American Indian tribes, such as the Wea, who were living in what is now Indiana and Michigan. In 1818, McCoy became the first Baptist convention-appointed missionary to American Indians. During the next several years, Baptist missionary work in the Old Northwest increased, with McCoy heading the establishment of missions at both Fort Wayne and Carey Station. The latter, located on Michigan’s St. Joseph River, would eventually provide some of Kansas’s first Baptist missionaries.²⁷

While the largest number of Protestant missionaries during this era came from New England, Baptist missionaries to northeastern Indian tribes hailed from various states, including Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Indiana. During the early 1840s most of the southern-born

²⁶ For more on nineteenth century Millennialism see James H. Moorhead, “Between Progress and Apocalypse: A Reassessment of Millennialism in American Religious Thought: 1800-1880,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (Dec. 1984): 524-542.

²⁷Robert M. Drury, “The Life of Isaac McCoy: Minister, Missionary, Explorer, Surveyor, Lobbyist, Administrator, and ‘Apostle to the Indians,’” *The Trail Guide*, Vol. X, No. 2 (June 1965): 2; Joy, “Into the Wilderness,” 59.

missionaries followed Isaac McCoy as he began his own mission board, based out of Louisville, Kentucky, while those who identified with the northern states remained under the Baptist convention (then commonly referred to as the “Boston board”). The split was due mainly to strong differences of opinion between McCoy and the main Baptist board in Boston. Outwardly, their differences regarded American Indian Mission policy and funding, but may also have had an undercurrent in the growing sectional tensions between northerners and southerners. While this change in management resulted in differences in funding and record keeping, both organizations continued to promote the propagation of the gospel among the “heathen” American Indians. In addition, while the governing bodies changed, women’s status in these organizations remained much the same, regardless of the board she served under or the state she called home. Because of this commonality, little attention will be given to the political shifts within the denomination. Differences in boards will be discussed only if such differences affected the women serving under them.²⁸

Even while workers raised mission buildings in Michigan, outside forces, especially American expansionism, placed increasing pressure on the displaced tribes both in the South and in the Northwest. While northern tribes, such as the Delaware, may have received less publicity than the southeastern tribes, such as the Cherokee, many of the same factors that led to southern removal, especially Americans’ ideas of land ownership and rightful dominion, pressured the native peoples who resided in the Old Northwest. While the details might vary, American vices such as liquor and drunkenness, as well as unscrupulous land dealings and encroachment, made missionary work in the Old Northwest a rather dubious affair. These pressures would soon lead McCoy to join General-turned-President Andrew Jackson, along with a number of other

²⁸ For more regarding the politics, see Joy, “Into the Wilderness,” 214-215.

westerners, to press for the removal of eastern tribes. Their idea was to relocate Native Americans living in areas desired by U. S. citizens to a “permanent” home beyond the Missouri River, far west of Euro-American frontier areas.²⁹

McCoy, along with Lewis Cass, a governor of Michigan and Jackson’s Secretary of War, William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the West, and others involved in Indian Affairs, believed that west of the Missouri River native peoples would be out of the reach of liquor dealers and land speculators. Both of these influential men agreed with McCoy that west of the Missouri River Euro-American missionaries could better exemplify, teach, and cultivate what they believed to be the moral elements of American society without its negative features. McCoy and many eastern Christians took the idea even farther. They envisioned that in the West, native peoples would gladly hear, receive, and act on the teachings of missionaries. Together, missionaries and Native Americans would create an Indian Territory teeming with Christian morality. As generations passed the Indian nations, which would now be exemplary models of Victorian Christianity and American democratic-republican government, would recognize the great advantages of joining the United States and merge their last vestiges of American Indian likeness into the “greater” American nation. Although this utopian event never occurred, the idea constituted the Christian reformers’ purpose for joining the other citizens and statesmen who pushed for Indian removal.³⁰

To achieve his idealistic goal of presenting a vice-free version of American Christianity, McCoy worked for the government. He surveyed lands west of the Missouri River for settlement

²⁹ Drury, “Life of Isaac McCoy,” 7-8.

³⁰Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970 [1962]), 225, 271-273. In 1834, after many of the treaty signings, an act providing for the eventual creation of an Indian state was hotly debated in Congress, but never passed.

by the eastern tribes, and took tribal leaders on excursions to view the lands in the hopes that they would agree to move there. In McCoy's vision, missionaries would settle with these tribes and show them how to create an "Indian Canaan."³¹

The debate on whether or not removal was the best option became obsolete when the Indian Removal Acts became law during the 1830s. While much of the action focused on the Cherokee in the south, this law soon affected the displaced northeastern tribes as well. Tribes such as the Delaware, Wea, and Shawnee had already endured multiple removals and were rightly concerned that this would be just one more in the series. However, McCoy and the federal government assured them they would own the new lands for perpetuity, and as their current lands were already being usurped in the East, slowly, throughout the late 1820s and 1830s, the remnants of multiple northeastern nations once again journeyed west.³²

As northeastern tribes signed away their lands for new ones in the West, part of the treaty obligations generally included plans to help "civilize" the signatory tribes. Provisions for blacksmith shops, gristmills, and schools were common accessions. In order to keep federal costs as low as possible, the government often partnered with missionary societies. By providing a limited amount of funding to religious agencies, for the purpose of bringing Anglo civilization to the tribes who originally lived east of the Mississippi River, the federal government could provide both cultural and academic education without creating too many new staff positions and consequent salaries. They also assumed strongly devout people employed by missionary societies would be less likely to embezzle funds or otherwise cheat the U. S. government and/or

³¹ Details on Isaac McCoy and his plans to create an American Indian State can be found in chapters five through nine of George A. Schultz's, *An Indian Canaan: Isaac McCoy and the Vision of an Indian State*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973). For those less inclined in the minutia of his plans, a short biographical narrative on McCoy can be found in Drury, "Life of Isaac McCoy," 1-16. For McCoy's own words on the matter, see McCoy, *Baptist Indian Missions*, especially pp. 350-351.

³² Joy, "Into the Wilderness," 105-6.

the tribes. While this “act making provision for the civilization of the Indian tribes adjoining the frontier settlements” became law March 3, 1819, such aid continued in various forms long after that date. The “civilization fund,” as it was termed, was made available to benevolent societies and used mainly to assist in furthering formal education among American tribespeople.³³

Women and Christian Benevolence

Middle-class women also helped establish this system of education for Native Americans while advancing the message of the Second Great Awakening through their attentions to moral benevolence and Christian missionary work. The qualities transposed on early Victorian women melded quite well with many standard concepts of religion for the masses, such as those that the Baptists preached. Emotional conversion experiences, active work for the betterment of others, and generally moral living were all well-known aspects of this Awakening. Coincidentally, they were also all things the larger society was apt to perceive as womanly.³⁴

For while the Second Great Awakening helped shape American culture, the Awakening itself cannot take all the credit for the ideology between women’s perceived social and moral obligations. The beginnings of industrialism and decline of women’s measurable economic input helped convince many middle-class Americans that women’s natural place was in the home, shielded from the masculine vices of industrializing towns and cities.³⁵ As historians have discovered, however this phenomena does not apply equally to all geographic areas, ethnicities, or classes. That being said, the women who chose to become Baptist missionaries generally were

³³ Prucha, *American Indian Policy*, 220. Pages 219-224 go into more detail on the Civilization Fund.

³⁴ Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 128-30. See also, Westerkamp, *Women and Religion*, 132-35.

³⁵ Jeanne Boydston, “The Pastoralization of Housework,” in *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*, ed. Linda K. Kerber, Jane Sherron De Hart, and Cornelia Hughes Dayton, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 176-77, 180-184.

of the white middle class, and therefore most likely to believe that women possessed high levels of self-control and were more moral than men; they adhered to notions of female piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity.³⁶ These were the women who were financially and socially able to stay outside of the newly rising commercial areas, but also willing and able to partake in charitable activities outside the home. This work required some expendable time and income. A Missouri farmwife or a girl working in Massachusetts' textile industry would rarely be able to concentrate on any long term project other than survival, but a middle-class woman in Salem, Massachusetts could, and often did, participate in work that took her beyond the physical boundaries of subsistence, hearth, and home. Still, middle-class women held enough home responsibilities and financial limitations to make spending all of their time in social or religious work a commitment in need of serious pondering.³⁷

An example of the work such women did and its underpublicized status can be found in the writings of Reverend Elias Cornelius, of Salem, Massachusetts. The sermon he gave to celebrate a local religious society's anniversary did not mention the work ladies contributed, but when published as a pamphlet, he included their contributions in a footnote:

[We] have been greatly assisted by the exertions of benevolent females. Not only have they rendered very important personal services, by visiting the poor, by instructing a large part of the Sabbath scholars, and taking the entire charge of the female adult school, but they have formed themselves into an Auxiliary Society, which affords annually a valuable addition to the funds.³⁸

This quote epitomizes both the way men viewed women's benevolent activities, and the way scholars happen upon them. Buried in a footnote, yet vital to charitable endeavors, women

³⁶ These four qualities were put out in in the now well-known article by Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Part 1 (Summer, 1966): 151-174.

³⁷ Westerkamp, *Women and Religion*, 131-2.

³⁸ Elias Cornelius, *Sermon before the Salem Society for the Moral and Religious Instruction of the Poor* (Salem: Whipple and Lawrence, 1824), 19-20; quoted in Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 36.

provided the fuel for the bright lights of nineteenth-century evangelicalism and the social work that grew from it. Although these women often accepted their role as supportive and relatively unseen, that fact does not give today's historians leave to forget them. Well-behaved women, such as those that make up this study, provided vital resources necessary to the furtherance of Victorian culture and Christianity. As the quote shows, women and men of the time realized that well-behaved women performed crucial functions in religious work. According to church historian Jerald C. Brauer, small-scale and mid-scale social reform organizations (the type women most commonly organized and operated) acted as "the unofficial arms of the Protestant Churches... a vital part of the American church life."³⁹ Whether or not the larger society publically acknowledged it is a matter scholars have and likely will continue to discuss.

One tenant of Christianity worked to women's favor, the idea that all human souls –no matter their exterior ethnicity or sex– stand equal before God. The evangelical Christianity proclaimed during this era considered women intrinsically equal with men. This is not to say they believed in female pastors or were for women's political rights. It simply meant that the souls of men and women of all ethnicities held equal importance to God, and therefore should be equally valued by mankind. Those involved in foreign missions (including missions to American Indians) often carried the idea a bit further. To them, a man or woman of a different culture could, by changing his or her entire lifestyle to meet missionary standards, eventually become extrinsically equal to the men or women raised in American society.

In reality, there were only a few non-missionary Americans who agreed that Africans, Polynesians, and Native Americans should ever be accepted as equals. This did not stop the missionaries' opinions on the subject, but it did make the actual fulfilment impossible. Equality

³⁹ Brauer, *Protestantism in America*, 149.

between men and women in the modern sense did not occur to these missionaries. They considered men's work and women's work equally important, but distinctly different, and women's work most certainly did not include formal leadership positions over adult white males. In spite of this seemingly obvious inequality, in their own way missionaries in general (and the larger society as a whole) believed women's distinct societal contributions mattered every bit as much as men's –possibly more. In fact, the historian Mary Kelley believes that while early nineteenth-century policy excluded women from formal politics, “it left civil society fully open as a public sphere in which ... women were able to flourish as never before.”⁴⁰

It was here, during the early part of the nineteenth century, that the concepts historian Linda Kerber calls “Republican Motherhood” first met and eventually assimilated into what the scholar Barbara Welter calls “True Womanhood.”⁴¹ Girls who would eventually become Kansas missionaries spent their formative, growing-up years in this transition space. Their own beliefs on women's roles and purpose contained elements from both, although it appears that they ended up living in the latter.

For by the 1830s, the idea of women as moral beings, both identified and named in “The Cult of True Womanhood,” influenced the social and religious climate of the time. In this theory, women, at least the respectable ones, held virtues men found difficult to obtain. Pure hearts, pious spirits, submission, grace, and forgiveness developed naturally in the female sex. Women were also considered to be both more capable of self-control and at the same time more

⁴⁰ Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 7; Leonard I. Sweet, “The Female Seminary Movement and Woman's Mission in Antebellum America,” *Church History*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (March, 1985): 52-55. Sweet does a very good job of explaining how this spiritual and intellectual equality could exist without full equality. For American Indians, social equality through acculturation is exemplified in officially sanctioned Native American missionaries. See Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage*, 67-69.

⁴¹ Linda K. Kerber, “The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment – An American Perspective,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Summer, 1976): 187-205; Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” 151-174.

emotional, making them good candidates for the conversion during the Second Great Awakening. In fact, nineteenth-century churches often contained more adult female members than male. Many ordained ministers utilized these women and their ministries. They realized their own work would lose much of its power if stripped of the assistance women provided.⁴²

In Jacksonian America, where the middle classes preferred to place wives and daughters safely away from the newly developing industrial settings and farther still from the common vices the ministers preached against, Christian benevolent work gave them a way to attempt positive change in those very areas. Many of these early Victorian women craved to do something with their lives, something more tangible, with visible effects not provided by their household domestic endeavors. Many conservative women turned their semi-sequestered but highly esteemed reputations into something they could use to impact the very places from which they were being sheltered. If women were superior moral beings, so the thought carried, then they bore the responsibility to spread that morality to others. While agreeing that this responsibility occurred first in their families, and second to close friends and neighbors, women also carried this idea of moral suasion beyond their own threshold. If Jesus called the world His neighbor, then they, too, would follow His example and spread the blessings of righteousness near and far. The “Cult of True Womanhood” with its tenants of piety, purity, and domesticity, would be used to give many middle class women’s lives the feeling of importance and purpose.⁴³

In a relatively short period of time, women became essential to all sorts of religious and social welfare efforts. They founded cent societies, saving a penny a week for missions. They ran

⁴² Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 130-135. For much more on the transition and differences between antebellum and later nineteenth century women’s missionary/reform work, see Kendal P. Mobley, *Helen Barrett Montgomery: The Global Mission of Domestic Feminism*, (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009).

⁴³ Ginzburg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 16; Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 139.

sewing circles, where groups of women would meet together on a regular basis to sew for the needy and pray for them. “Shew me thy faith without thy works and I will shew thee my faith by my works.”⁴⁴ The words of St. James could have come out of their own mouths, as they instituted orphanages, joined temperance societies, and organized and funded reputable places of employment for repentant prostitutes.⁴⁵

Men did not often interfere with this work, even though it technically fell outside the physical environment of the home. Different reasons for male non-interference have been discussed by other scholars. Two of these explanations may be helpful in this examination of missionary women. First, women merged Christian principles of equality with Victorian notions of female moral authority to create a philosophical tool that allowed them to engage in activities that otherwise would have been considered outside the boundaries of propriety.⁴⁶ Second, men only gave up that authority when it suited their own purposes.⁴⁷ For example, men allowed women to organize and fundraise because they themselves did not wish to do it. This study operates under the assumption that both positions have merit. But what is most important, however, is that they achieved the opportunity; women could and often did use their Christian faith as a means to reach those outside of it. They utilized religion in ways that attempted to create what they envisioned as a better society. Men, for whatever reasons, tacitly agreed to this.

However, women’s authority was not endless. Historian Lori Ginzburg believes that at times it was not so much women’s involvement outside her home that caused concern as it was women’s participation in the controversial. The reformer Dorothea Dix provides an excellent

⁴⁴ *The Bible* James 2:18.

⁴⁵ Ginzburg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, Chapter Two, “The Business of Benevolence,” goes into detail on various religious/moral organizations antebellum women served.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁷ Barbara Welter, “She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women’s Missionary Careers in Nineteenth Century America,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 5, (Winter 1978): 624.

example of the limits some men and women attempted to place on female benevolent work. She began her famous crusade for humane prisons and mental health facilities as a simple Christian woman visiting a female prison in the hopes of beginning a Sunday School. She did not face serious opposition to this goal. But when she turned from holding a Bible class to pressing male authority to better the conditions inmates lived in, she encountered resistance. Dorothea Dix the Sunday School teacher did not stir up strife. Dorothea Dix the human rights activist, calling on political powers to reform prisons and create state-sponsored mental health facilities, that is who is remembered as an outspoken reformer. Women who worked for very controversial or overtly political causes risked being accused of leaving their proper place. The conservative woman who wished to work toward creating a better world and maintain her good reputation usually chose less debatable causes. Charitable assistance for the “worthy poor,” the moral uplift of “degenerate souls,” and the support of missionary societies all seemed like much less divisive topics. By focusing on women and children, steering clear of the glaringly controversial, and raising much needed funds for benevolent societies both at home and abroad, women entered the public sphere without ever appearing to leave the private. This point will prove essential in chapters three and four, when discussing and assessing women’s activities on the mission field.⁴⁸

While a great many women participated in some form of religious work, the foreign missionary movement catered to a specialized group of females. Foreign missionary work was not something just anyone could do. It took a certain kind of woman to fulfill all of the expectations a mission board and her religious society required of her. Unlike a sewing circle or cent society, which could be done within the local community as a supplement to housekeeping and motherly nurturing, foreign missionary work usually required a lifetime commitment.

⁴⁸ Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, 28-34 gives multiple examples of this point.

Considered a calling, a deep and often abiding calling, women who wished to engage in this specific type of religious benevolence had to fill a stringent list of qualifications. The successful female candidate was held to a higher standard than other moral reformers. Pious, pure, submissive, and domestic, these women encapsulated the pinnacle of female virtue.⁴⁹

This crème-de-la-crème philosophy expanded to multiple areas, including education. Female missionaries were often among the most highly educated women of the day. Some studied classical languages, read religious discourses in Latin and the New Testament in Greek.⁵⁰ Many also had courses in modern languages, proving their capabilities to master a foreign tongue before ever being accepted by a mission board. Ladies' academies, seminaries, and other places of higher learning teamed with missionary fervor. The best example of this is Mount Holyoke, a female seminary that trained young women for life as ministers' wives and missionaries.⁵¹ Girls and young women who attended these institutions lived lives steeped in evangelical Christianity and doused in middle class Victorian cultural norms. They truly desired to become the women discussed by Dr. Rufus Anderson when he said, "well selected with respect to health, education, and piety, [missionary] wives endure 'hardness' quite as well as their husbands, and sometimes with more faith and patience."⁵²

A good school was no guarantee. Female missionaries must prove themselves not only intelligent and pious but also exemplary in housekeeping. A woman missionary had to be thrifty, economical, willing to make do and do without eastern luxuries. In addition, a prospective

⁴⁹ Westerkamp, *Women and Religion*, 146-47. Many women at female seminaries also expressed interest in becoming minister's wives. The qualifications and sense of calling and career-mindedness in their decisions appears extremely similar to those who married male missionaries. See Leonard I. Sweet, *The Minister's Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelicalism*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 7-9.

⁵⁰ Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 17.

⁵¹ The story of Mount Holyoke can be found in Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁵² Rufus Anderson, quoted in Beaver, *Women in World Mission*, 52.

missionary had to have excellent health, eager and capable of adapting to whatever physical climate in which she might be placed. In short, prospective female candidates were top examples of strong, healthy, educated, and devout Americans, capable of physical as well as mental labor, who maintained a deep, abiding desire to use their training, both practical and academic, to further the cause of Christ.

As might be expected, very few women could meet these extensive qualifications, and even those who did meet them did not always achieve the goal of missionary appointment. Mount Holyoke can demonstrate this. Between 1838 and 1850, the era this study centers around, approximately eighty percent of Mount Holyoke students joined the teaching profession; others became minister's wives. Only about forty managed to join the ranks of the foreign missionaries.⁵³ Women applying for mission work walked a tight-rope. They attempted to show their mission board that they met the qualifications academically and theologically, while emphasizing their domesticity and submissive spirit. These women needed to appear physically and mentally strong, yet desirous to remain beneath authority. A successful candidate proved health, education, religious affection, and a willingness to submit to the structural authority of the board and complete whatever tasks might be assigned her. Yet while maintaining her gentle, domestic spirit, she had to be driven enough to actively pursue the application process, secure multiple references and write her own letter of application. If she somehow managed to achieve all this, the board might still refuse. Between the 1820s and early 1850s, mission boards preferred women who were willing to marry male missionaries, or candidates for mission work. Roberts states that "Regardless of their personal qualifications, most [females] could live out a

⁵³ Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 105-106.

missionary vocation only if they married male missionaries.”⁵⁴ While hesitant to accept single women, exemplary wives on the other hand, were considered essential. Generally speaking, mission boards believed male missionaries would not succeed without first marrying “well-educated and pious females, who have formed all their habits and modes of thinking in a Christian country.”⁵⁵ Due to this emphasis on missionary marriages, most antebellum missionary women also spent their lives as wives.

Another possible reason for the boards’ predisposition to married couples may have been financial. They, like most other organizations, attempted to get the maximum amount of return for a minimum amount of cash outlay. Baptists and Methodists especially did not benefit from a plethora of wealthy patrons. These denominations mainly served the lower and middle classes, and in the 1830s and 1840s it seemed nearly every religious society propelled a worthy cause. During the 1830s events surrounding Indian removal kept Native Americans in the news, but as seen earlier, women and men who wished to evangelize the lost and/or become involved in charity work had a multitude of causes from which to choose. According to Brauer, “There was hardly an evil that did not have a society to combat it”⁵⁶ and limited funds for nearly all of them. While a single male and single female missionary would require separate salaries and accommodations, married couples shared all of these things. Ideally, married missionaries saved on expenses and provided women a safer atmosphere in which to fulfil their callings.

Still, women who seemed especially desirable candidates but who preferred to keep their celibacy would sometimes be offered a position as school teacher at a North American mission to American Indians. Such positions required overland travel rather than sea voyages and

⁵⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁵ Beaver, *Women in World Mission*, 50.

⁵⁶ Brauer, *Protestantism in America*, 148.

therefore appeared safer and more acceptable for women traveling without a designated protector. However, those who actually took that route could make the argument that life west of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers was just as difficult as life in India or a boat ride to Africa.⁵⁷ This predisposition to send single women to Native American missions rather than overseas increased the ratio of single-to-married women in North American Missions.⁵⁸

Whatever the methods and means of appointment, the passion for mission work often came directly or indirectly from the larger religious climate. These people, even more than most affected by the Second Great Awakening, lived incredibly devout lives. Their writings are full of scripture references, prayer requests, and expressed desires to be more useful in Christian ministry. While they could not possibly know the reality that awaited them, before their arrival on the mission field, those few who gained access to full-time mission work exhibited an eagerness and excitement that might make scholars today smile at their naivety. These women would find life at a Kansas Indian mission full of hardship, yet many chose to persevere.

Conclusion

The Second Great Awakening brought changes to denominational demographics, altered some of the older, more puritanical doctrines, and brought an emotionalism, individualism, and spiritual equality well received by the common American people in general and women in particular. The change from a Christian faith based on predestination to one based on free will encouraged and uplifted many. Notions of spiritual and intellectual equality encouraged many middle-class girls to pursue education that could lead to missionary service, although fewer actually achieved missionary status.

⁵⁷ Beaver, *Women in World Mission*, 60.

⁵⁸ Westerkamp, *Women and Religion*, 142. Westerkamp states that the Presbyterians alone appointed over 100 single women missionaries during this era, mostly to American Indians.

A larger number of women participated in Christian benevolence work closer to home. Early Victorian culture, family economics, as well as personal inclination contributed to the development of women's charity work. While the rising northern industrial economy began encouraging established families to live outside new industrial areas, women activated the concepts in True Womanhood to increase their sphere of influence. While they might begin their reforming work at home, they encouraged an outward expansion that could influence large numbers of people.

Finally, and in large part because of these changes, evangelism, benevolence, and women's involvement in those endeavors grew. The social, political, and religious climate of the time worked together to create the environment which produced a number of willing female missionaries. Now that the reader can see how the culture shaped these women, it is time to see how the women worked to impact other cultures. The following chapter discusses how women influenced by these socio-religious surroundings and fortunate enough to secure a place in the Indian Missions in turn influenced those around them.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WOMEN OF THE MISSIONS

Dear Sister: [T]he Board [has] appointed you a missionary, to labor among the Putawatomie Indians within the Indian Territory. You will be expected to teach a school, and in every way in which you may have opportunity to impart religious instruction... be assured your calling is high, honorable, and involving great responsibilities.⁵⁹

The previous chapter described the foundations upon which missionary women built their aspirations. This chapter will show that those Baptist women missionaries who worked among northeastern Indian immigrant tribes in Kansas performed essential tasks for those missions. Women, whether married or unmarried, acted as missionaries in their own right. Their work sometimes mirrored that done by benevolent societies in the East, calling on the sick, and ministering to the needy. Married women especially found themselves tasked with creating oases of western Christian culture in a foreign land. Even the most basic chores, such as laundry and food preparation, became missionary work when viewed through antebellum women's eyes. Married women missionaries soon realized they were nearly incapable of completing all their assigned tasks. One woman could not run a household and a boarding school, conduct women's Bible studies and prayer meetings, and birth and raise the nearly inevitable supply of children that came with marriage. In short, she could not give everything and everyone the attention needed.

There was so much women's-sphere work in a missionary home and community that married couples realized single women could become an important asset in the field. Therefore,

⁵⁹ Isaac McCoy to Eliza McCoy, July 22, 1844, in McCormick, *Memoir*, 38-39.

missionaries on the field requested single women to join the missions as assistant missionaries. A theoretical partnership developed between married and single women. Single women taught schools and assisted with housework, while married women maintained the household, cared for children, lead women's prayer meetings, and assisted in the schools, especially with food preparation and clothing construction for boarded students. As discussed later in the chapter, while hesitant to send single women overseas, the Baptist Boards did not seem to mind sending them to Indian reservations. The proclivity for married and single women to serve at the same stations provides this study with an excellent opportunity to observe these single/married partnerships. This division of labor may make it seem as if married women in the field were not as active in religious pursuits, but in the parlance of the day, they were engaging in women's benevolent work. While this general model holds true for most of the foreign missionary associations and missions, adjustments could and did occur. The rest of this chapter will show how the system played out amongst the Baptist Missions to the Northeastern immigrant Indian tribes in Kansas, beginning with the married women.⁶⁰

It is important to remember that women who journeyed west as missionaries came because they chose to, not because they were forced. For example, Olivia Evans, who studied at the Charleston Female Seminary, engaged herself to John Pratt, a student at Andover Seminary who told her of his plans to become a missionary. The women discussed in this work married missionary men either because they wanted to become missionaries and thought the best way to do that lay through marrying a male missionary, or because they already held missionary-minded positions and thought the best way to continue the work involved marriage. In the words of

⁶⁰ Beaver, *Women in World Mission*, 59-61, 68.

historian Dana Roberts, “marriage to a missionary meant that a woman could work as a missionary.”⁶¹

Some examples will demonstrate this point. As discussed in chapter two, many of the women who became missionaries during this era began with formal educational training at a ladies’ seminary. Olivia Evans’s career illustrates this track. She attended the Charleston Female Seminary in South Carolina from 1835 to 1836. On a visit home to her family in Massachusetts, she called in at a printing shop, where her father introduced her to a young theological student named John Gill Pratt. Although a printer by trade, Pratt desired to become an ordained minister and journey to a mission field. He thought he could use his skills to both print and teach works related to Christianity. Olivia found herself both intrigued and attracted to this man and his goals. “The [other] young ladies of the seminary ... frequently say ‘O, I wish I was going with you.’ Yes, [said] one yesterday, ‘My soul exults for your happy fate thus to give all to Christ. ...though nature frowns and foes surround, yet it will be sweet to suffer for Christ.’”⁶² Eventually, Olivia left seminary to marry John. During their engagement it became clear they would be sent to Indian Territory. Immediately following their marriage the two of them were appointed as missionary and assistant missionary under the Baptist Board and were assigned the Shawnee Mission in Indian Territory, to replace Rev. and Mrs. Meeker, who desired to transfer over to the Ottawa tribe.⁶³

While some women, like Olivia Evans Pratt, spent their entire missionary lives inside matrimony, others, like Elizabeth Churchill, began alone and later married. Elizabeth Churchill

⁶¹ Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 18.

⁶² Olivia Evans to John Pratt, Feb. 8th, 1837, Pratt Papers.

⁶³ Clara Gowing, “Clara Gowing Reminiscence,” Kansas State Historical Society, kansasmemory.org/item/219452, accessed March 3rd, 2014.

and Francis Barker both arrived at the Shawnee Mission in the spring of 1839, she as a school teacher, and he as an ordained minister. October 20, 1839, they chose to marry. Their marriage was not required, but it was approved. The other missionaries agreed that these two individuals could serve better together than they could separately. According to a “Brief History of Rev. Francis Barker,” “Elizabeth F. Churchill ... became an earnest collaborator with her husband.”⁶⁴ Churchill morphed from a schoolteacher mentality to what Barker needed, a life-long coworker, homemaker, appropriate outlet for sexual desire, and encourager in their faith. This practicality does not mean that human emotion played no role. Barker loved Elizabeth. His feelings are clearly evidenced in his private musings to her, including a love poem he wrote her in 1841 entitled “The Albums Rose:”

Sweet soother of my cares, my own dear wife
In tenderest chords around my heart entwined,
I love thee.
I love to think that thou art mine, & that I am pledged to thee,
The dearest portion of myself on earth.
Sure not while life's last lingering taper burns
Would I forget thee; or one moment quench
The kindled alter of my heart's desire. ...
How kind is our Eternal God how wise
How good to scatter in life's rugged path
So bright a gem so sweetly blooming flower
“It is not good for man to be alone.
One like himself I'll make his mutual help.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ “Brief History of Rev. Francis Barker,” Barker Collection.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

For men and women who desired a mate as well as a cause, becoming another single missionary's "mutual help" enabled them to fill both personal longings. Several women followed similar courses of action. Eleanor Richardson Meeker, Fanny Goodridge Simerwell, and Mary Walton Blanchard all began their careers as missionary teachers. Their marriages took place before the Baptists established missions in Kansas, but their situations as mission schoolteachers east of the Missouri River were substantially similar to Churchill's. By marrying missionaries who planned move west with the immigrant tribes, they made the decision to remain in their chosen field.

For these women, and others like them, marriage did not spell an end to mission work, but rather a new phase in its development. They hoped that their household labor would enable their husbands to spend more time preaching, translating, and doing other outwardly focused activities. They also assumed that as married women, they would be better able to minister to married women on the reservations. Finally, they thought they would be able to do these things while continuing many, perhaps even all, of their current duties.⁶⁶

Although space prevents an exhaustive retelling of these courtship narratives, one last example is worthy of note due to its rather atypical nature. Jane Kelly, like Elizabeth Churchill, came to the Kansas Baptist missions as a schoolteacher. She taught at the Stockbridge Baptist Mission beginning in 1843. After two years, she married an assistant working at the Potawatomie Mission, John T. Jones. Like many of the long-term missionaries, he came from Michigan, but his heritage was Ojibwa. His life began near the Canadian border. Abused by whites as a young child, he eventually happened upon no other than Isaac McCoy. Isaac and his wife Christina took

⁶⁶ Esther Clark Hill, "Some Background of Early Baptist Missions in Kansas: Based on Letters in the Pratt Collection of Manuscripts and Documents," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 1 (February 1932): fn. 4-6, 103.

the boy in, treated him as decently as they knew how, and guided him into a different life. While his mother named him Tecumseh after the great Shawnee leader, the McCoy's gave him the name "John Jones" and enrolled him in a mission school. He proved himself bright and they rewarded him by moving him farther along in his studies until eventually he became a Baptist minister in his own right.

By the time John Jones arrived in Kansas he had spent more of his life absorbing Anglo-American culture than Native American. The mission board employed him as a "native assistant," an American Indian preacher. Jane Kelly was his second wife. During the first year of their marriage, they were listed separately in the mission books. John Jones received his salary as a native assistant, and Jane Jones collected hers as a mission school teacher. This situation meant she actually received higher wages than her husband. After the first year, John Jones's title changed from "native assistant" to plain "missionary," the same title given to married white male missionaries, and Jane, like other married females, began being listed as his wife, a "female assistant." The combination pleased both John and Jane, the mission board, and the other missionaries in the area. It brought the couple into compliance with accepted social norms. They now received one salary identical to every other married couple's salary under that board. Their interracial marriage now fell under the exact same status as a Euro-American couple. It increased their wages, elevated his position, situated hers as equal to the other married women's, and simplified bookkeeping.⁶⁷

While two single missionaries might unite and continue their work regardless of race, marriage to a non-missionary could drastically change a woman's course. During the 1850s

⁶⁷ "Rev. John Tecumseh Jones. – (Ottawa Jones)," <http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/eraop/era-of-peace-p44.html>, accessed March 10th, 2014; Financial accounts, 1844, 1849, *Pratt Papers*; *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1849.

Gertrude Doty at the Shawnee Mission decided to marry a Dr. Stone, from Westport, Missouri. Her marriage to a dentist who lived in another area spelled the end of her Indian mission career. She did what was expected of her; as Stone’s wife she moved to Westport and began her new role as helpmate to a dentist. By choosing a mate who worked off-site she automatically signaled the end of her daily involvement with that mission. If she had wished to continue her career as a missionary, she would have had to marry one.⁶⁸

The word “career” is used deliberately. While there were a few single women who chose to devote only months or a year or two, most stayed much longer. Missionaries, both male and female, often devoted significant amounts of their lives to their work in Kansas. All of the women listed above worked many years, and some worked multiple decades in the field. A few numbers may help illustrate this point:

Chart of Some Key Married Missionaries and their Years of Kansas-Based Service⁶⁹

Name	Years of Service at Kansas Missions
Francis and Elizabeth Barker	1839-1854
Ira and Mary Blanchard	1834-1847
Jane Kelly Jones*	1843-1853
Jotham and Eleanor Meeker	1833-1853
John and Olivia Pratt	1837-1867

⁶⁸ Mrs. Milton Titterington, “Statement Made By Mrs. Milton Titterington,” Barker Collection, KSHS. Mrs. Titterington was one of the Barker’s daughters.

⁶⁹ Information pieced together from corresponding issues of the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*. The chart does not subtract months missionaries spent on furlough in the East, as during that time they were still considered missionaries to the Indians.

*Jane Jones’ married missionary life did not begin until 1845, but she herself was an active missionary in Kansas beginning in 1843.

It is important to remember that for some of the married teams, such as the Blanchards and Meekers, their service began as single missionaries during the 1820s, working when the tribes lived east of the Missouri River. While nearly all of these listed took time off to return to the states, make reports to the board, visit relatives, and recover their health, they all exhibited interest in remaining involved with the work as much as practicable.⁷⁰

Most of the missionaries' time was spent on the field, and married women contributed to the work in very practical ways. Wives cooked, sewed, did laundry, and all the other household tasks. They visited families on the reservations, encouraging them to come to church or send their children to school. They attempted to help the especially poor and sick. Some married women spent time in the schoolroom, teaching academics to tribal children. They also spent time teaching the female students Anglo-American styled sewing and cookery skills. To all these tasks were added the common household chores of women in rural settings; laundry, gardening, sewing and cooking for immediate family members, acting as a moral support beam for her husband to lean on, birthing and rearing young children. Their work involved much the twenty-first century reader would perceive as housework, but the perception of those same tasks by the women missionaries (and their husbands and other fellow missionaries and board members) is actually much more mission-minded.

To better understand this, recall women's benevolent work as discussed in chapter two. Eastern charity work often included many of the activities listed above, such as sewing, visiting/calling on the underprivileged, and participating in prayer groups. Women's work at Kansas missions often came in much the same vein, but was completed under more trying

⁷⁰ For an introduction to the Baptist missions in Michigan, see Thomas J. Alexander, "Baptist Indian Missions," *The American Philatelist*, Vol. 95, No. 2, (Feb. 1981): 121-130.

circumstances and with a much smaller support network. While some of the Baptist women came with experience gained in Michigan, others were fresh from the East. Middle-class life in Reading, Massachusetts or Charleston, South Carolina could hardly have prepared these women for the rudiments of day-to-day living in the West.

For instance, Olivia Pratt's female seminary schooled her in theology, history, languages, music, and needlework, but it likely did not include lessons on how to start an early morning fire with wet wood while strong breezes impeded her progress. This twenty-one year old young woman arrived at the Shawnee mission station in 1837 fresh from the middle-class comforts of the East Coast. She traded her family's Massachusetts residence and Charleston school dormitory for a one room cabin with wide cracks between the logs. She and her husband were soaked in bed multiple times when the notorious Kansas wind blew spring rains through their dwelling. She found herself entertaining native peoples in this home. Four or five Shawnee would come without warning, and expected her to serve them. During winter, the coffee she poured froze in the cups. At this time she was also sick and pregnant with her first child.⁷¹

The strain on his wife and their living conditions concerned them so much that John Pratt wrote to their mission board about it. In their reply they state,

My DEAR BROTHER-We are concerned to hear of the sickness of your amiable companion & hope you will take measures without delay to afford her some relief. If no faithful assistant can be obtained for her for a time, she must decline serving others than her own family, as I perceive from her letters to the friends in Reading she has accustomed herself to do. Strangers have no claim to crowd themselves on your hospitality, when your wife is actually too feeble to serve them, nor shd. you hesitate under such circumstances to excuse her, & request them to seek accommodations elsewhere. The house which you occupy must be made tight & comfortable, & we wish, if it has not been done, that you will take immediate measures to make it so, when this reaches you. You will exercise a

⁷¹Gowing, "Life among the Delaware," 184; Hill, "Some Background," 96-8, 102.

sound discretion as to the amount of repairs, & see that they are obtained on the best terms & report the same to us. For the expense so incurred, presuming it will not be large, you will be at liberty to draw on our Treasurer.⁷²

The heads of the Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, sitting in their Boston offices, do not seem to fully comprehend the situation. They write as if the Pratts could simply hire a trained maid for household work, and compare prices for house repairs as if they lived in a New Hampshire village rather than on a distant reservation. They also do not seem to grasp the importance of Olivia's own activities. To the Shawnee, refusing to give hospitality, such as a cup of coffee or sharing a meal, could be considered an offence. Her service was needed to better amicable relations with the tribe.

At times, the physical hardships resulted in increased mortality rates. Only one of Olivia Pratt's seven children reached adulthood. Missionary David Lykins, supervisor of the Wea mission station, lost his wife in January of 1852. Less than two weeks later, the Wea mission's female school teacher, Sarah Ann Osgood, succumbed to illness and followed Mrs. Lykins in death.⁷³

Even those who worked in Michigan found Kansas life challenging. Before moving to Kansas in 1836, Fanny Simerwell managed more than her own young children while her husband was away for a year in the east. While Robert travelled east to recover from illness and prepared to move the family farther west, she ran a small school and took charge of a limited number of Native American boys. But during the second half of the 1840s and into the early 1850s, Robert and Fanny discovered it was nearly impossible to run the government blacksmith shop, keep up an appropriate Victorian lifestyle, and run a boarding school with just one other

⁷² Dr. Bolles to John Pratt, Nov. 20th, 1837, Pratt Papers.

⁷³ McCormick, *Memoir*, 77.

female assistant. While Eliza McCoy taught the academic subjects and helped keep the students dressed in western attire, Fanny found she needed one to two of her daughters to stay at the mission with her. This arrangement both lowered the family's private educational expenses and gave Fanny Simerwell much needed assistance with household responsibilities, especially the family and school laundry.⁷⁴

Most Baptist missions developed boarding schools, and missionary wives were commonly expected to execute such tasks as those described by Fanny Simerwell and her daughters. Olivia Pratt was originally in charge of all the sewing for boarding scholars, as well as that of her own family.⁷⁵ This is not an isolated phenomenon. Missionary wives often contributed sewing skills not only to immediate family members but also for those the mission schools served. Male missionaries and mission boards viewed women's labor cooking, washing, and sewing for both their families and the schools as part of their contributions to missionary work. While practicing domestic arts might not look like religious activity today, it is the motivation behind such work that places it within the evangelical. Chapter Four will discuss the concept of women's motivations in detail, for now suffice it to say that these women sewed and cooked and cleaned as missionaries.

While the household labor held merit in its own right, through it married women contributed more. They often used their skills to inculcate traits of Victorian domesticity into female students. The skill sets employed by married women fashioned islands of eastern culture in a western world. Elizabeth Barker created such a home environment at the Shawnee Mission that her daughter later recalled that by the early 1850s the Barkers had succeeded in changing the

⁷⁴Fanny Simerwell to Robert Simerwell, Jan. 12th, 1833; Simerwell Collection, Fanny Simerwell to Sarah Simerwell, May 12th, 1845, Simerwell Collection.

⁷⁵ Gowing, "Reminiscence."

1830s cabins into a proper, eastern-styled building, whose furnishings “resembled the house keeping of Eastern home’s[,] book’s, [sic] pictures etc.”⁷⁶

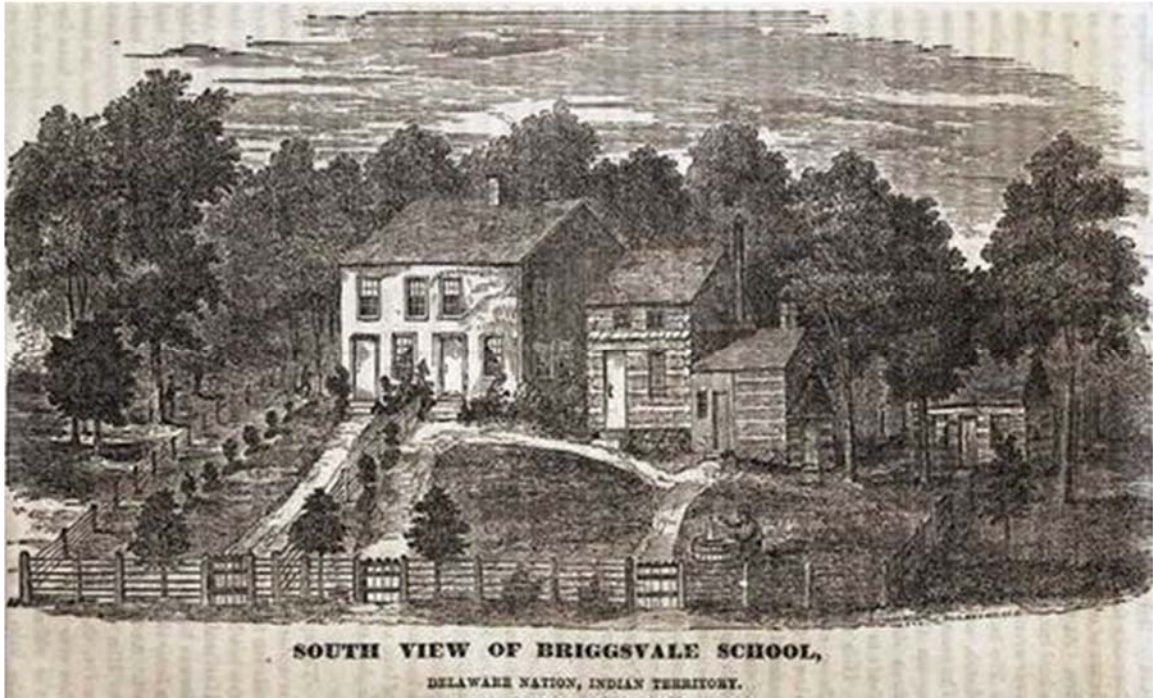
To the east was the parlor with a winding stairway in the north-east corner. This room opened into the school room, fitted up with benches and long tables or desks. My mother’s room came next with a hall cut off of its length on the south, with a door on the south opening on the front yard. The dining room came next with a stairway on the south side. Our teacher Miss Doty took great interest along with my mother in teaching the children manners & etc. at table ... My mother was an excellent housekeeper, and everything had its place, and was kept there. The Indian children were kept very orderly, everything went on in a quiet way.⁷⁷

It took years, decades even, to transform a mission from a drafty, leaky cabin into a “proper” home, but these women did it. Elizabeth Barker managed it better than some, as she had more resources than most of the other women. For some years she had the assistance not only of a single female missionary, but also a female slave from Missouri called Harriet. Although all the missionaries tried to keep their personal politics in check, the Barkers appear to have been anti-slavery. They purchased slaves on at least two separate occasions, allowed them to work off their purchase price, and then freed them. This form of extra labor is rather irregular, but did help the Barkers further the goal of the mission by providing assistance to the needy and freeing more time for Francis and Elizabeth to work on missionary goals, such as Victorian accommodations.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ “Brief History of Rev. Francis Barker,” Barker Collection.

⁷⁷ Titterington, “Statement by Mrs. Milton Titterington,” Barker Collection.

⁷⁸ Ibid.



The Delaware Baptist Mission, school dormitory, and home to the Pratt family, circa 1851⁷⁹

While not everyone had the benefit of such additional help, all of the married women missionaries attempted to create a home environment that promoted the elements of Euro-American civilization, which they believed conducive to Christian life. Not only would the students absorb this lifestyle, but the general tribe would observe and, theoretically, emulate it. Their work mixed with religion created a house on a hill, if not the proverbial city. The women sometimes became rather like pseudo-mothers or grandmothers to younger tribal children, a bit like Isaac McCoy's relationship with John Jones. Fanny Simerwell wrote that she "mothered" the youngest girls at the Potawatomie school. Her daughter Sarah even writes of bringing tribal children into the family circle, rather than maintaining a strict teacher-student relationship.⁸⁰ A letter from Fanny to her daughter Ann exemplifies this practice. She writes, "This morning I was

⁷⁹ "South View of Briggsvale School, Delaware Nation, Indian Territory," <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/208525> Accessed June 12th, 2014.

⁸⁰ Sarah to Sisters Feb., 1850, Simerwell Collection.

up before daylight I went to the kitchen and made up biscuit for breakfast then the little girls came into my room I combed their hair and they washed and got ready for breakfast ... The little girls appear very affectionate and they call me Grandma I hope that I may be of some little use to them[.]”⁸¹ While not every woman took such an approach, they all operated under the impression that Christianity and western civilization were inseparable, and taught their methods in light of this belief.

Still, female missionary duties did not end with home cultivation. Baptist women in Kansas could also lead prayer meetings. For example, Fanny Simerwell and Eliza McCoy held a weekly women’s prayer meeting open to attendance from tribal women who professed a serious interest in Christianity.⁸² Most women also spent time visiting members of the larger reservation community. Eleanor Meeker frequently accompanied her husband on visits to minister to the sick on the Ottawa Reservation.⁸³ These activities, calling on reservation families and holding prayer meetings, are two tasks that transcended gender roles. Lead missionaries, female assistants, and native assistants could all lead prayer meetings and make religious visits in the community. They all attempted to exemplify Christ through their daily tasks.

Yes, sometimes it was “just housework.” The dishes needed to be washed, a daughter’s dress needed to be lengthened or a husband’s shirt to be mended, but it is important to remember that traditional manual labor occupied both genders. Male missionaries also had tasks they must complete to support the family. For a time Robert Simerwell gave up his entire teaching salary in the hopes of putting it toward paying an ordained Baptist minister for the Potawatomie. In order

⁸¹ Mother to Daughter Ann, early 1850s, quoted in, Thomas P. Barr, “The Pottawatomie Baptist Manual Labor Training School,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 43 (Winter, 1977):418-9.

⁸² Batterson, “Potawatomi Baptist Manual Labor School,”

⁸³ Meeker’s journal contains multiple references of he and his wife providing services together, that of Sept. 12th, 1847, is typical. Sept. 12th – “Lord’s Day. [After preaching] go, in company with Mrs. M. and Doct. Spaulding, to visit Sisters Sally, Seceel, and Wossayoh, who are sick.” – “Jotham Meeker Journal,” Meeker Collection.

to do this, however, he drastically scaled back his teaching and took a government post as blacksmith for the Potawatomie.⁸⁴ Additional examples could be shared, but the point is that neither men nor women were able to spend all their time engaged in direct missionary activity, they also had to provide for their families.

The American Indian Mission Board especially encouraged its members to pursue resources of their own. They expected missionaries to provide some of their own support, or work for government Indian agencies that would help fund them. Post-1830s, antebellum American Indian missions took a back seat to overseas missions in Africa and Asia. After Jackson's Indian Removal Policy left mainstream news, special donations above the board's allocated minimum did not pour in, but slowly trickled. Eliza McCoy confided in Fanny Simerwell that the men were required to do so much physical labor that not enough time remained for spiritual work.⁸⁵ While most mission staff considered themselves primarily missionaries, their manual labor and government related tasks did cut down on the amount of time both genders were able to spend on direct evangelization. That did not exclude them from missionary service, nor was it a gender-specific phenomenon. Even for the most committed, the material interfered with the spiritual.⁸⁶

From the many examples given above, one can begin to see that not only did married women act as missionaries, they provided key foundational support for the mission effort. Women such as Olivia Evans Pratt, Elizabeth Churchill Barker, and Jane Kelly Jones form the base of our imaginative tower. They played a crucial foundational role in the establishment and

⁸⁴ Joy, "Into the Wilderness," 232-4.

⁸⁵ Eliza McCoy to Fanny Simerwell, May 22nd, 1850, Simerwell Collection.

⁸⁶ An exception to this is Johnston Lykins, who stayed on record as a missionary, but acknowledged a preference for government work. A perceived preoccupation with his own affairs grew to be a source of conflict between the missionaries in Kansas. For more on this conflict see Joy, "Into the Wilderness," 221-3, 232-4.

development of Protestant Kansas missions. As assistant missionaries it was their job to assist their husbands, the lead missionaries. In practicality, this meant that each one would take over the responsibilities of home and hearth so that her husband could go out and fulfill a more public role. He did not have to concern himself with what he would eat for supper that night, whether he would have time to do laundry, or the fact that the spring peas in the garden needed harvesting. All these were tasks his wife, the assistant missionary, would see accomplished. Without any luxuries and very few conveniences even by nineteenth-century standards, this work kept married women very occupied. Do not be deceived by the “just a housewife” myth or the seemingly inferior title “female assistant;” married women missionaries had their hands full.⁸⁷

However, this domestic position did not exist in isolation. The examples also show that married women did impact the tribes they worked among, in both indirect and direct ways. Mission buildings existed on reservations. An eastern woman’s mere presence, occupying a Euro-American structure, dressing, cooking, cleaning, and generally living in a western style would be extremely obvious to the people around her. Tribal people passed by these stations frequently and often stepped in – invited or uninvited. Olivia Pratt, who in the late 1830s was at stationed with the Shawnee, later recalled that often in winter four or five Shawnee would gather around her fireplace early in the mornings. She would feed them breakfast before sending them on their way.⁸⁸

Husbands and male administrators considered married women’s work ministering to their own families just as if not more important than married women missionaries’ work with the tribes. The Baptist board’s instructions to the John Pratt concerning his sick wife Olivia shows

⁸⁷ Dana Robert found this scenario acted out in overseas missions. Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 19, 23, 35-36, 88.

⁸⁸ Gowing, “Life among the Delaware,” 184.

this well, “We are concerned to hear of the sickness of your amiable companion & hope you will take measures without delay to afford her some relief. ...she must decline serving others than her own family, as [s]trangers have no claim... when your wife is actually too feeble to serve[.]”⁸⁹ Men expected women to give work that served immediate family members priority. By implication, work that personally aided their husbands (such as cooking meals and keeping fires lit) should continue when at all possible. Acting in her accepted role as wife allowed her husband to demonstrate patriarchal family leadership, provided him with needed companionship, and enabled him to take business related trips without closing the mission. Nearly all the male missionaries found it necessary to make frequent trips around northeast Kansas, journeys which usually required anywhere from one to seven days away from the mission station. Many also traveled to the eastern states, and although such an occasion required much more planning, a man could often arrange to keep his “other half” in Indian Territory, thus leaving the mission operating.⁹⁰

Without the assistance of women in support roles, male missionaries would have had a much more difficult time accomplishing their work. As it was, almost every male Baptist missionary assigned to the Kansas Indian missions had a wife. Those who did not come with a wife often found it necessary to acquire one. Much like small-scale farming, missionary life required much of both genders and neither the culture nor the practical issue of fulfilling both private home labor and public work responsibilities lent itself to life alone. The lead husband-wife missionary team aspect is an adaptation of the Jeffersonian yeoman farm marriage model. For minister’s wives, this model dates back to the Protestant Reformation. Wives offered both

⁸⁹ Dr. Bolles to John Pratt, Nov. 20th, 1837, Pratt Papers.

⁹⁰ Alexander, “Baptist Indian Missions,” 124. Alexander shows that missionary wives and teachers experienced this phenomenon even during their stay in Michigan.

companionship and assistance, often complementing their husbands' activities.⁹¹ This relationship was central to a married woman missionary's concept of identity and security. She needed his help and he needed hers. They relied on one another. Eleanor even refers to husbands as "life companions."⁹²

While one may be tempted to compare missionary women with other women in the area, especially traders' wives, the similarities quickly come to an end. Trading was not really an attempt to transform Native American culture into a perfect Euro-American culture, or an attempt to save souls. Rather, traders attempted to occupy a middle place, one where they could benefit economically. In the process they actually ended up creating a third culture – neither Native nor Euro-American. Women of mixed heritage were especially desirable in this cultural bridge-building.⁹³ Creating middle ground stands in direct contrast to the Baptist missionaries. They desired complete transformation from Native to Euro-American styled culture. Marriage helped them in that goal through providing examples of an "ideal" family structure, and in the more practical ways discussed earlier.

That being said, married life also carried definite drawbacks for missionaries. Their life circumstances often involved caring for ill family members, enduring pregnancy and childbirth, and coping with the increased daily workload common in creating an eastern life situated on a western reserve. Married staff members, both male and female, needed additional assistance.

Even while the Kansas missions were still in the initial stages, it became apparent to these

⁹¹ Sweet, *The Minister's Wife*, 13-15.

⁹² June 10th, 1844, EDM to Emeline, Meeker Collection; Clifford Merrill Drury, *First white women over the Rockies: diaries, letters, and biographical sketches of the six women of the Oregon Mission who made the overland journey in 1836 and 1838*. (Glendale: A. H. Clark Co., 1963). Drury has done extensive research on early Presbyterian missionaries in the Northwest Rocky Mountains. By utilizing the men's and women's letters and personal diaries, he found that some couples, such as Narcissa and Marcus Whitman, had companionate marriages. Others, like Elkanah and Mary Walker, did not, much to the woman's disappointment.

⁹³ White, *Middle Ground*.

workers that more labor for domestic and school-related duties would be needed if the missions were to accomplish their educational and cultural goals without running the wives into early graves.⁹⁴

The solution appeared in the form of single female missionaries. They could act as attachés to the stations most in need of additional labor. As they were unmarried, they would not be encumbered with the needs of a husband and children, but could use that time to help fulfill the mission stations' needs. As women, they could easily move between domestic and school-related functions in ways men missionaries would not consider. While married women arguably still shouldered a heavier load, caring for their families as well as contributing to their communities, single women relieved some of the burden through their participation in domestic arts. Even more than assisting with household work, single female missionaries often taught schools for both the missions and the federal government. In the 1830s and 1840s, American women increasingly operated as primary-school educators. Placing these women in similar roles on the reservations seemed practicable, especially when former teachers who married realized the near impossibility of continuing to fill both their new roles and their previous one on a continuous basis.⁹⁵

But first, how and why would a single woman wish to become a missionary? For the most part, single women chose this life for the same reasons as those who married. It was a way for conservative, religious women to engage in what they thought would be meaningful, fulfilling work with everlasting consequences. The mission board held them to the same high

⁹⁴ Married women's illness and even death caused at least in part by overwork was fairly common in 1830s overseas missions. All male mission boards were hesitant to send single females overseas during the antebellum era. Sending them to the Indian missions appeared to involve less danger, although some historians argue the hardships were just as great, see Beaver, *Women in World Mission*, 59-60.

⁹⁵ Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, 33-35.

standards of religiosity, health, and education to which married women adhered. Generally speaking, mission board acceptance and placement of a single woman could be more difficult to achieve than that of married couples. As it was deemed most acceptable for a single woman to join a mission family group rather than live on her own, single women sometimes utilized personal connections to aid in their appointments.⁹⁶

Eliza McCoy is a good example of such an arrangement. She was the niece of Isaac McCoy, who spear-headed Indian removal on moral grounds. When he and several missionaries split from the general Baptist Foreign Missionary Society and formed a new American Indian Mission association, the Kansas missions staffed largely by southerners became part of the new group. Eliza was then accepted for service at the Potawatomie Mission. While qualified as a teacher, in good health, and devoutly religious, her uncle's connections sealed her acceptance. For the majority of her tenure she worked with close family friends with the McCoys', the Simerwells', where she assisted the married women with household responsibilities and taught the Pottawatomie Mission's boarding school.⁹⁷

While personal connections with a station family could certainly help the process, they were not always needed. Although not intimate friends with those in the field, Elizabeth Morse came with excellent credentials. A Vermont native, she, like Olivia, trained at the Charleston Female Seminary and she too found herself falling in love with both a man and mission work. Elizabeth Morse and a Mr. McWhinnie were scheduled to marry and then travel to an overseas mission. That event, however, never occurred. He died in a tragic accident. After her period of

⁹⁶ The Presbyterians were stricter about this than the Baptists, but the philosophy held with all three main evangelical denominations of the time (Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian). Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 93-101, 106-7, 115-6. See also Beaver, *Women in World Mission*, 60-62.

⁹⁷ For details on Eliza McCoy's responsibilities, as well as details on antebellum mission school life in general, see Batterson, "Potawatomi Baptist Manual Labor School," Chapter III.

mourning, Elizabeth Morse applied to the board as a single female missionary. Around 1844 she received an appointment as a missionary teacher in Kansas. After a few initial years of traveling amongst the Ottawa and Cherokee, in 1848 the Board transferred her to the Delaware Station to replace Sylvia Case. Elizabeth Morse would remain at the Delaware Station until the tribe's removal and mission closure in 1867.⁹⁸

Morse's first appointments also deviated from the expected path. Rather than serving as an assistant to a husband and wife team, the Meekers placed her at an outstation run by a native assistant. She lived with his family, under the same conditions. When the snow blew through the cabin cracks in the night and covered their beds, it covered hers, too. Eventually the local community built her a small cabin of her own, where she lived and conducted a day school. When negotiations began about perhaps expanding and turning it into a boarding school, she was an active voice in that process. It would be her school, and therefore she felt it important that the male missionaries and tribal leaders know her opinion. She desired it to become a boarding school staffed by the mission but with children supported by tribal funds. Failing that, she wished to be reassigned. In the end the tribe decided not to fund a boarding school, and the Kansas missionaries approved Morse's request for reassignment to another station.⁹⁹

Eventually, Elizabeth Morse became invaluable to the Pratts at the Delaware station. Her work included the usual domestic chores, such as helping Olivia Pratt with the inevitable cooking and sewing, but the niche she claimed as her own involved the boarding school. Although Pratt was formally listed as "Superintendent," Morse ran the school. She chose curricula, even ordering a set of large alphabet cards designed by her especially for her primer

⁹⁸ "Grace Meeker's Reminiscence," Pratt Papers.

⁹⁹ *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1847-48.

classes and printed by Jotham Meeker. She accommodated student interests by including lessons in geography and astronomy. These lessons focused on the inherent “rightness” of the missionaries’ worldview, but students considered the subject matter very interesting.¹⁰⁰ In addition to classroom teaching, Morse co-authored the mission school reports. The school paperwork involved sending one set of records to the mission board and another, differently constructed set to the Indian agency. This dual system developed because student expenses were paid mainly through annuity funds, while staff salaries came from the missionary society. Elizabeth Morse’s management and record keeping skills saved Pratt much time and effort. He occasionally referred to her as “very capable” and “efficient.”¹⁰¹ While it might not have been the original intent of the Baptist Board to give a single woman any sort of administrative role beyond that of children’s teacher, practical execution included variation.

Sylvia Case served a similar function at Delaware before Morse’s transfer. While Blanchard was a capable teacher, putting Case in that position allowed him to focus more on Delaware translation work, something years of experience with the language equipped him to perform better than any other area white missionary. It is likely Case’s domestic skills also gave Mary Blanchard some assistance with her responsibilities, undoubtedly helpful as Ira and Mary created five daughters during their stay in Kansas.¹⁰²

Although these examples could continue, I will list just one more at present, the relationship at the Shawnee Mission between Elizabeth Barker and Gertrude Doty. Like Eliza McCoy and the Simerwell family, Elizabeth and Doty appear to have been friends as well as

¹⁰⁰ Gowing, “Reminiscence.”

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1851-53.

¹⁰² Solomon Peck, “History of the Mission of the Baptist General Convention,” *History of American Missions to the Heathen, from their Commencement to the Present Time*, (Worcester: Spooner & Howland, 1840), 544-545.

coworkers. Doty centered her efforts on the school, while Elizabeth focused her energies more on creating Anglo-American Christian atmosphere. Unlike Elizabeth Morse and John Pratt at Delaware, the Shawnee mission better exemplified the ideal relationship between single and married missionaries. Their work complemented each other's. Elizabeth Barker did do some classroom teaching when needed, but her main work involved creating a quiet, religious home atmosphere, bearing and training eight children (two of whom died before age three), visiting the women in the community, and teaching etiquette and discipline skills to the children in boarding school. The single missionary teacher also concerned herself with Shawnee children's table manners and other behavior, but did more with life skills and academic lessons.¹⁰³ Single women filled these multiple roles, and while the examples above show that each mission station utilized unmarried women in ways that suited the situation (and perhaps personalities) present, nearly all single "female assistants" filled key roles in mission schools. They did what a married woman often could not accomplish; act as full-time teachers in academic and domestic arts.¹⁰⁴

As far as academics, they usually included reading and writing in English, basic arithmetic, and often geography. A few occasionally taught reading in the children's native languages.¹⁰⁵ This last occurred mostly in the early years, when Isaac McCoy's idea of a separate American Indian state still appeared feasible. Throughout the era, a major part of both married and single women's work involved teaching Anglo-American gender roles and social norms. One of the ways missionary teachers attempted to accomplish this was by requiring a western classroom setting whenever possible, and through training male and female students in skills

¹⁰³ Titterington, "Statement by Mrs. Milton Titterington," Barker Collection.

¹⁰⁴ Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 107, 115-6.

¹⁰⁵ The missionaries encouraged native language literacy during the 1830s and 1840s. See William Gammell, *A History of American Baptist Missions in Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America*, (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1849), 337-8.

related to their sex's western gender role. Over time, women realized the on-reservation boarding school better suited these needs than the day schools. Elizabeth Morse realized this within the first year or two of her tenure, and the other missions reached the same conclusions. Boarding schools taught by single missionaries allowed more direct control over both religious and social settings, and keeping the schools on the reservation meant that parents would often visit the missions. Missionaries hoped that their schools would entice not only children but entire families to attend church and become Christians. To the missionaries, schools acted as gateways to Christian converts, gateways presided over most often by women. While the success of this plan has been debated for over a century, the goal of Christian converts never wavered.¹⁰⁶

This is different from the boarding schools of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which focused on civilizing for civilization's sake, and often held mandatory attendance policies. The antebellum Baptist boarding schools were smaller, on-reservation affairs. Attendance was voluntary, and parents could take their children home whenever they wished. Even language-learning was done differently. In the early years, teaching in the local language was common. Later, English became the language of the classroom, but sermons were often preached in students' and parents' native tongue.¹⁰⁷

In spite of these differences, and those listed earlier, some scholars, such as Patricia Horner, believe that married women who journeyed west as missionaries had their dreams thwarted by the reality of their lives as simple housewives.¹⁰⁸ However, when one looks at the gender roles of antebellum America and places married women missionaries inside that context,

¹⁰⁶ Joy, "Into the Wilderness," 245. Joy believes the missionaries thought schools secondary.

¹⁰⁷ Gowing, "Reminiscence."

¹⁰⁸ Patricia V. Horner, "Mary Richardson Walker: The Shattered Dreams of a Missionary Woman," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 32, No. 3, (Summer, 1982): 20.

it becomes readily apparent that what looks like basic housewifery to a modern reader was in actuality an essential component of antebellum women's missionary work. In fact, the early mission boards of the day believed women crucial to missionary work, both for raising support at home and for work on the field. Women were considered the best people for ministering to other women and beginning children's ministries. The growth of women in the teaching profession also transferred over into missions, with the early expectation that female missionaries would provide instruction to other women and children not only on religious but also cultural academic subjects.

Practically speaking, depending on the circumstances missionary women could provide help in ways the mission boards might or might not so heartily approve. They could take leadership roles in prayer meetings and school administration. While they might not have received official sanction for these roles, some women filled them nonetheless. Single women, such as Elizabeth Morse and Eliza McCoy, often carried out tasks that appeal to a more modern sense of career. Unmarried women's work teaching and sometimes administrating the on-site boarding schools provided valuable access to tribal families through their children. The schools provided a way to provide a service (academic education) some members of the reservation community valued while also providing a way to teach Christianity in an American conservative cultural setting.

The partnership and sometimes enduring friendship between married and single women at these sites worked to fulfill their perceived responsibilities to family, mission board, Indian agency, school children, and other tribal members. In addition to leading Bible classes and teaching schools, married women missionaries shouldered the challenging task of recreating an early Victorian Era American Christian home in the midst of whatever foreign setting they might

find themselves. By modeling good Christian behavior, which for these missionaries included the cultural norms of their conservative social group, the women hoped to impress on their potential converts the blessings and enlightenment of a “modern” family. Their thoughts and feelings about themselves and this work of women missionaries make up a large portion of the next chapter.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 22-24, 37-38.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERCEPTIONS

To throw in my little mite, for I could see where a little would be something here. Should I be the means in the hands of God, of bringing one poor ignorant Indian out of darkness into his marvelous light, it would more than recompense for all the privations that I shall ever endure let them be more or less.¹¹⁰

The above quotation epitomizes the spirit of new missionaries. To be useful, to act as God's instrument and thereby live a life Christian women could see as meaningful, that is why female missionaries chose to labor, and in some sense, why many continued. By now readers can see how religious culture influenced the development of the missionary movement, how women became missionaries, and what their life looked like after they arrived in Kansas. What this chapter shows is twofold. One, how men and women's writings complement each other, giving scholars a fuller picture of missions and missionary work, and two, how women saw themselves and their work. That is, what they personally thought of their lives and their surroundings.

In order to do that, this chapter relies heavily on the writings of one man and woman, Jotham and Eleanor Meeker. While other missionaries' letters and diary entries supplement and support the chapter, these two's missives give an excellent window-frame view into the life of women missionaries. In addition to keeping a journal, Jotham dutifully sent many written reports back to their missionary society, detailing finances, personnel issues, and even humanitarian tribal needs. Eleanor kept up an enduring relationship with her sister Emoline through written correspondence, allowing a reader to glimpse the personal world of a wife, mother, and missionary through the years. Eleanor also sent customary reports designed for women in various

¹¹⁰ Eleanor David Richardson to Mother, April 20th, 1829, Meeker Collection.

eastern churches. The comparison between her writing style and her husband's not only gives readers a more rounded impression of how Baptist missionaries perceived women and their work, it also exemplifies the gendered differences of early Victorian missionary writings.

To begin, lengthy excerpts from a single letter, with analysis, will aid in understanding both the missionary outlook itself and the process of analysis used in determining conclusions about women's identity and thought patterns. Eleanor Meeker wrote this letter about a year after arriving in Kansas.

Shawnee Mission June 12th 1834

My ever dear Emoline,

It would be useless for me to attempt to express my feelings when I received your short but gladly accepted letter after waiting more than eight months in great anxiety to see one from you or some other person whom I supposed would inform me whether you were dead or alive. I have written five or six letters to you and was completely at a loss to know what the reason could be of my not getting an answer, but I learn from your letter that you have experienced the same, we are therefore better prepared to sympathize with each other.¹¹¹

The opening paragraph clearly demonstrates Eleanor's loneliness. She longs for news from home, her friends, and her family. This may not be very different from the loneliness experienced by Missouri frontier women, but here she is even farther removed than they from news of home. No communication arrived for eight months. The letter indicates that multiple letters may have been lost, mislaid, or slow in transit, and yet both attempted to maintain some contact. The next portion of the letter deals largely with her sister's living situation, then delves into that of Eleanor's. It is evident that though separated by distance, concern for her sister takes up a portion of Eleanor Meeker's thoughts.

¹¹¹ Eleanor David (Richardson) Meeker (hereafter EDM) to Emoline Richardson, June 12th, 1834, Meeker Collection.

I am very much gratified to learn that you were at Wheeling. I think you had better remain there provided you are pleasantly situated and especially if Sis. R. would be pleased to have you with her. ...I want you my dear Sister to bear in mind while writing to me, that I feel the deepest interest in your welfare, and that I want to know all the particulars, whether prosperous or adverse. I have in my former letters endeavoured to write everything which I thought would be interesting to you. All my letters except one were lengthy but I fear that I shall be obliged to cut this one short or put off sending it until the next mail. Sister Simerwell is severely afflicted with sore eyes. I therefore have the charge of their family which are nine in number besides my own work. We all live in the same house but in separate rooms.¹¹²

At this early stage the Meekers and Simerwells shared the same dwelling, but even in 1834 they made an attempt at middle class privacy by establishing each family in their own room. (This may also have been for sanity's sake.) The second to last sentence gives a demonstration of the shared work of female missionaries and the number of their "family." The term family often included all members of a mission staff, and sometimes included boarding students or Christian tribal members who contributed substantially to the work. It is unlikely all members of the Simerwell family were immediate blood relations. Eleanor mentions a heavy workload but denies the reader details of what that entails. Housework, certainly, but perhaps also other tasks Emoline (and the historian) might never know. The same letter picks up the next week.

June 17th, I was obliged to lay my letter by last week and things are but little better now. Sis. Simerwell still remains almost blind and I feel quite unwell, but I feel determined if possible to [send] it by this mail if I have to fold it as it is. I should be glad to tell you how I spend my time, but it will not do to enter into particulars at present... We are still living at Shawnee Mission in much the same situation as when I wrote you last. I wrote that Mr. Meeker was busily engaged in printing Indian books in his new Indian Orthoraphy [orthography]. He has printed books in Delaware, Shawnee, and Putawatomie [sic], about three hundred of each, and expects to be constantly employed in printing and teaching. The Methodist and Presbyterian Missionaries are pleased with the plan and will probably want books printed soon. One of the Methodist Missionaries was here yesterday to know if a book could be printed for them. It is probable that all the Missionaries

¹¹² Ibid.

will adopt this mode of teaching the perishing heathen to read in their own language. There are many of the Delawares and Shawnees who can read and write tolerable well. It is only three months since the first books were introduced among them, we have had schools three days in a week it is quite interesting to see men and women with their slates and books learning to read and write the same as little children. The Indians are highly pleased with the idea of being able to read and write in their own language.¹¹³

Once again, Emoline will not receive all the “particulars” of Eleanor’s work. However she does find time to narrate, in detail, her husband’s activities, especially the missionary printing work. While she gives no indication that she herself worked in the print shop, the fact that she mentions “it is quite interesting to see men and women . . . learning to read and write the same as little children.” And that “The Indians are highly pleased with the idea of being able to read and write in their own language.” May indicate she assisted in the teaching process. This would make sense, as both she and Fanny Simerwell taught at Indian mission schools before coming to Kansas. Fanny’s illness and the consequent overwork Eleanor attempted to compensate for it likely impacted her own health, as seen in lines two and three, “I feel quite unwell.” The fact she could not finish a letter in one sitting insinuates a rapid level of work, and intimates her equally high desire for contact. Even though “things are a little better now” instead of resting she feels “quite determined” to write and send the letter.¹¹⁴

Finally, the overtly religious writing develops. This letter is somewhat atypical in that the reader can make it half way through without happening upon such phrasing. The wording and information on the Ottawa contains more insights into Eleanor’s thought process.

The few Ottawas that are here are very friendly, they live some twelve or fourteen miles from here. Mr. M. expects to be engaged a part of his time in teaching them, but it is very uncertain when we shall be settled down among them as this is the most suitable place for the Press at present. We have more reason to hope that a blessing will follow this plan of teaching than any other that has ever

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

been adopted, as they will soon have the work of life printed and be enabled to read for themselves that word which is able to make them wise unto salvation. We have many things to discourage us, but we must believe from what has already been done, that more can be accomplished if those who profess to feel the love of Christ in their own breasts will only feel more interested for the souls of their fellow beings. If we could only feel that one man's soul is as precious as another's it appears to me that we should all be more engaged than we are in doing whatever our hands shall find to do, knowing that eternity is near and that [we] will be rewarded for what we do in time.¹¹⁵

Notice the pronoun "we." She does not say that Mr. M. believes a blessing will follow *his* plan, but rather "*We* ... hope that a blessing will follow *this* plan."¹¹⁶ She saw herself and her husband as a team, very similar to the yeoman farm family model Thomas Jefferson promoted decades earlier. In her mind, Jotham and Eleanor worked together for the kingdom. Such a position coincides with Sweet's findings that many nineteenth century minister's wives extended the traditional concept of wife-as-helpmeet to a role that allowed them to assist their husbands in active ministry.¹¹⁷ Sweet mentions (and this author agrees) that such a role depended on the willingness of both partners to accept and cultivate such a relationship.

Another, perhaps more easily apparent, deduction in the above excerpt is the Meekers' earnest desire for Ottawa conversions, as well as the more general missionary belief that all human souls hold equal value. Both these thoughts shine through clearly in Eleanor's writings. She continues with a picture of current events around the mission:

We have come some distance into the western wiles but have [not?] got far enough to be [out] of the reach of the poor degraded whites, who are in many respects much worse than the heathen. – The people in Jackson county [Missouri] are busy tearing and burning down Mormon houses and building whiskey-shops in their place using every stratagem in their power to get the Indians to drink. Three Indians passed by just now who have been drinking of the deadly poison. I long for the time to come when the white man shall let the scales of darkness fall from his eyes and be made to feel the weight of this lamentable sin. It is no better

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Leonard I. Sweet, *The Minister's Wife*, 76.

in my view than to kill their fellow mortals, by inches, in any other way. Many of the Indians will drink when persuaded as they express themselves, we take little and that makes us want more. The most of the Indians here are very industrious, many have comfortable houses and plenty to eat and to wear, they are improving perhaps as fast considering their opportunity as could be expected.

Again, the continued religious tone, perhaps with an early predisposition to teetotalism.

Eleanor Meeker writes as a woman who is aware of her surroundings, both in the larger vicinity and inside her own yard. The phrase, “Three Indians passed by just now who have been drinking”¹¹⁸ paints a picture of an early missionary wife’s living situation. She truly lived among the people, far from eastern seclusion. The next paragraph mostly consists of information on the Mormon Wars, deleted here because it has little bearing on this project. However, the end does give some geographic and emotional content, “we are situated in the Indian Territory only one mile from the State line, however we do not feel danger here at present ...you must not be uneasy about us. I would give the particulars but cannot at this time.”¹¹⁹

Once again, she is either disinclined or too busy to write in detail. The letter ends much as it began, with family matters. Note the slightly more subtle Christian metaphors near the end of the longer paragraph:

I want you to write all the particulars, what you are doing, and what you expect to do. Where Uncle Caleb is living and how they all do. I should be pleased to receive a letter from Aunt Eliza and sister Ruth if they would be kind enough to write me. Dear Sister try to live in such a manner as to have friends, let your situation be what it may through this unfriendly life. I spend many anxious moments on your account knowing that you are left alone in a wide unfriendly life. I do not mean by this that you are destitute of friends; but I know that we are all liable [to] be led astray by the many snares which hedge up our way, as we pass along. I think I should be greatly releaved to know that you are with Sis. R. for I think she must seem more like a mother than a sister.

Thursday 19th. ...the mail is ready to start. Give my best wishes to all my dear friends.

¹¹⁸ EDM to Emoline Richardson, June 12th, 1834, Meeker Collection.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

I remain as ever yours

Eleanor D. Meeker¹²⁰

And so opens the door into a thought process and identity far different from most today.

As the opening epigraph shows, one thing a missionary's vocation gave was a sense of purpose. Missionary life, to these women, meant their existence counted for something beyond the everyday. Their work mattered eternally and also in the present world. However, even with this sense of purpose, after women had been in the field for a time, a season of questioning their calling commonly followed. Natives did not usually convert en masse, children often took up much more time than their mothers planned, and the isolation these intelligent, educated individuals faced did not help their spirits. Married as a missionary in Michigan, Eleanor Richardson Meeker faced this season before arriving in Kansas. She admitted as much in this missionary update letter, penned a few months after their arrival west of the Missouri River.

[F]or the last two years, I have at times been left to doubt whether it was our duty to live among the Indians or not. [When] I look forward to the time when the Indians both young and old shall be able to read in that book which is able to make men wise unto salvation. And consider that Mr. M. had doubtless been the means of commencing it, I can look back on all the changes and trials through which we have passed and feel it is nothing compared with what good may be done for poor perishing souls which are daily sinking into eternity without a knowledge of the Gospel or the love of a crucified and risen Savior.¹²¹

These women did not lose their focus. As human beings they doubted, grew weary, and longed for home, but in the end most chose to stay.

Men and women's writings complement each other in scholarly study. Man's business-like approach balances woman's emotional/personal response. Both often wrote for the public,

¹²⁰ The excerpts given in the above pages come from the same letter, EDM to Emoline Richardson, June 12th, 1834, Meeker Collection.

¹²¹ EDM to Emoline, April 11th, 1834, Meeker Collection.

but they usually wrote to slightly difference audiences, and even when writing the same audience, cultural expectations may have influenced their response styles. Eleanor's description of the flood of 1844 demonstrates this point well. The flood heavily damaged multiple mission stations and devastated several tribes' corn harvests. Eleanor writes from her personal experience, as a flood witness and concerned individual:

[The Ottawa] have lost all their corn a great many hogs cattle and horses and nothing to live on for one year and a half to come. They all felt distressed to see us come away some said do not leave us or we will shurely die. O my dear sister you can better imagine the emotions of my heart than I can express when hearing the dear lambs express a fear that they would become weak if left alone and perhaps wound the cause of the dear Savior. Our hearts are sorrowful on their account. Mr. M. is out today trying to arrange to get some corn for them... we do hope that something will be provided...to keep them from starving.¹²²

She wrote this after a frightening experience of flood, fearing for her family's safety, watching from cliffs while the waters ruined property, and then trying to air out what remained and temporarily move the immediate family from Ottawa land to the unharmed Shawnee Mission. Her letter understandably carries emotional and religious overtones. To the missionaries, starving families who lost their crops and farm animals to flood could not be more qualified as the "worthy poor" middle class benevolence attempted to reach.

Jotham Meeker and John Pratt's letters on this subject are action oriented. These Baptist missionaries who worked with tribes affected by the flood spent the next two years pleading with federal bureaucrats and private church groups for funding to help groups such as the Ottawa survive. While compassionate in their own way, the men's writings focus on how much was lost, and then go through the appropriate channels for documentation and distribution purposes. For

¹²² EDM to Emeline, June 10th, 1844, Meeker Collection.

instance, Jotham inventoried what the Ottawa lost (more briefly put, their homes and essentially everything edible), and then writes,

[E]xtreme poverty and starvation seems to stare every one in the face. For three days past I have been working hard for them in the neighborhood of Westport, and have obtained for them four yoke of Oxen, a Waggon, 250 bushels of Corn, some Buckwheat and Turnip seeds. No old Potatoes to be found. ...I have been interceding with the Agent for them, and have to-day written to the Superintendent of Ind. Affrs at St. Louis, hoping that the U. S. Government will do something for them.¹²³

In addition to in-person travel, they wrote letters to their mission board, argued with Indian agencies, and pleaded with eastern benevolent societies. The men explained the situation and requested aid through standard avenues.¹²⁴

Sometimes this down-to-brass-tacks approach used by male missionaries gives scholars insight into women's roles and reality. In October of 1846, the Baptist Board addressed a letter to the Rev. Jotham Meeker which, upon arrival, must have encouraged his wife Eleanor. It stated that while the Board would not be sending as much financial assistance as Meeker expected, they would be sending another female assistant, Miss Morse, appointed as "teacher at the Ottawa Station & as assistant to Mrs. Meeker in taking care of the sick."¹²⁵ It is logical to assume that if the Board agreed she needed assistance caring for the sick, she must have engaged in a substantial amount of ministering to the sick, both within her own family and amongst the Ottawa population.

¹²³ Jotham Meeker to S. Peck, June 26, 1844, Meeker Collection.

¹²⁴ Ibid. To finish the story, the men's tactics were somewhat successful. Aid came from the Indian Superintendence in St. Louis, in the form of livestock and blankets. Meeker's letter to the Boston Board provoked their "extreme sympathy," along with \$300 to rebuild the mission on higher ground and promised an additional \$200 to "help you repair the loss of furniture, stock, labor, etc., & to give to him that is hungry." The \$200 was raised for the mentioned purposes by New England churches. S. Peck to J. Meeker, Aug. 1, 1844; H. Harvey to Meeker, July 3, 1844.

¹²⁵ S. Peck to Jotham Meeker, Oct. 26th, 1846, Meeker Collection. Peck was the corresponding secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Union, headquartered in Boston (often referred to by the missionaries as the "Boston Board").

While Meeker and Peck discussed financial and personnel issues, Eleanor recorded page after page of religious lectures, discussion on what others were doing, and her own drive to useful service. Such findings are much easier to unearth in women's writings than detailed examples of their own work. Often, she simply did not think time permitted a record of her everyday tasks. Other times, it did not seem important enough to discuss. In her own mind, Jotham's printing often took precedence over Eleanor's nursing.

Sometimes men's letters describe this left-out women's work and even women's own initiative. On December 31st, 1846, Jotham Meeker wrote to the Baptist Missionary Union to try and convince them to take on John and Jane Jones as fully funded missionaries. John Jones said he must give up mission work as his salary as a Native Assistant for the American Indian Mission Association did not pay enough to keep his family. He and Jane kept five orphaned Potawatomie and Ottawa children, at their own expense, and Jane taught them as a small school. Meeker writes,

[I]n my opinion no more suitable persons could be found to take charge of a school, and to labour as Missionaries among the Potowatomies, than Br. & Sister Jones. They would be happy to labor under the patronage of the [Baptist Missionary] Union, and devote their whole time to missionary labor or as teachers, if they could... obtain support.¹²⁶

In another letter recommending this plan, he states that John Jones "has one of the best of wives, who is a missionary."¹²⁷ Meeker sees not only John but also Jane as a missionary. The Board must have expressed reservations about financial ability to cover another couple, so Meeker goes on to recommend attempting to tap the Potawatomie school fund (similar to the federal civilization fund, but specifically for the Potawatomie and funded by the tribe) as their means of support.

¹²⁶ Jotham Meeker to Peck, Dec. 31st, 1846, Meeker Collection.

¹²⁷ Jotham Meeker to Peck, April 30th, 1847, Meeker Collection.

On January 15, 1848, Jotham Meeker revisited the Jones's situation. He writes that the Joneses need funds and are considering going to Westport where Jane could teach a white school and John could engage in some sort of business. Or they could get a license from the government to open a trading post, or they could be instructed to become paid missionaries in full (which is what they really want). He also mentions Miss Morse's day school at the Ottawa Station closed for lack of scholars. The distance was too far for the children to travel on a daily basis. Miss Morse wanted to run a boarding school, but Meeker writes, "I think it would be imprudent for Mrs. M[eecker], with her present worn out constitution, to have any connection with a boarding school." Jotham Meeker went on to say he believed Morse would be of no further use at the Ottawa station, as even in poor health his wife could get along with an Ottawa girl for household help.¹²⁸

Before he sent it to the board, he shared this letter with Morse, who promptly asked if she could visit the Joneses. Elizabeth Morse had a plan. Once she returned, Meeker continued his letter, writing that although John Jones was gone to "the state," (probably Missouri),

Miss Morse informs me that Mrs. Jones is not only willing, but anxious to labor as a missionary among the Inds. – that she would be pleased with the idea of Mr. Pratts being the Superintendent of the Delaware Station, that Mr. Jones take charge of the farm, the boys, &c. that she [Mrs. Jones?] be house Keeper, cook, seamstress, &c. and that Miss Morse be the teacher, take charge the girls, &c. and also, that she is certain Mr. Jones would be pleased with such a course. Miss M., too, would enter into such an arrangement cheerfully. Both Mrs. J. and Miss M. think that at least 25 children should be taken, and a sufficiency of help and means furnished to keep up a decent, popular School with all of which we perfectly agree. Miss M. left on the 21st to visit Mr. & Mrs. Pratt with the expectation of returning sometime this week. She or Mr. P. or both will probably write you before her return. As ever most affectionately, your obedient servant,
Jotham Meeker.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Jotham Meeker to S. Peck, Jan. 15th, 1848, Meeker Collection.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Through this straight-forward, detail-oriented approach, more insights about female missionaries and their role with the men in their lives comes to light. Jane Jones and Elizabeth Morse both took very active roles, perhaps even more so than those women who followed the more traditional route involving marriage to white male missionaries. Morse recognized that her desire to teach at a boarding school would not happen at the Ottawa Station. Not one to wait quietly and hope for opportunity to present itself, she took action by going to visit the Joneses. While there, Jane Jones took action of her own. She and Morse planned an entire mission station; the work to undertake, the staff, and the execution of business. They did this without consulting the men involved. When Elizabeth Morse presented the plan one can almost see Jotham Meeker's hesitation, but also Jane Jones's insistence that her husband would agree with it. The fact that Meeker not only listened to their idea, but sent the suggestions to the mission board as a possibility, shows both the determination and skill of the women, and the respect and value Meeker held for them. This plan would have allowed for ample women and men at a single station. The likelihood of overwork for both sexes, but especially females, would have gone down considerably. However, the mission board chose not to follow it in its entirety. Instead, they decided to keep the standard format of one missionary couple and one single woman. John and Olivia Pratt took over the Delaware Station, and Elizabeth Morse transferred there. John and Jane Jones ended up staying at Potawatomie, then eventually transferring to the Ottawa station, but did receive full missionary couple status and pay.¹³⁰

One should not think, however, that women never included detail. They recorded emotional scenes vividly. For instance, on November 24, 1847, Eleanor Meeker wrote to her daughter Maria, who was away at boarding school, including a rather gruesome description of

¹³⁰ *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1848-49, 1853.

Ann Pratt's death. Ann Pratt was Olivia Pratt's eldest child and a friend of Maria Meeker. Ann suffered from poor health for two years, finally succumbing to measles.

[S]he became so much swollen as to brake the skin in several places. her sufferings were excruciating, but she enjoyed that sweet peace of mind which enabled her to bear it all with patience and resignation. A few hours before she died she asked her father to carry her out and let her see the green trees and her once loved playground. after she had been out some time Mr. Pratt brought her in and braced her up as usual [she could not lie down] and left her alone. A short time after she called her mother and told her that she was dying and wanted her father to hold her in his arms she answered questions very clearly and seemed happy she talked until nature failed then gave the parting kiss, threw one arm around her father's neck and the other round her weeping mothers and thus breathed her last. Her grave is in the dooryard near her once loved playground. ... 'Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not for such is the kingdom of heaven.'¹³¹

One can see through this excerpt that women's letters could be not only religious, but often also flowery. While men tended to state more facts, women encapsulated the facts they chose to share in a bevy of spiritual and emotional language. Especially when mentioning scenes of sickness, leave-taking, or death women's letters take on that feminine tone so often remarked upon in nineteenth century middle class writings. This emotional language appears throughout women's writings, but is most apparent in their letters to other women with whom they feel some sort of bond. For example, in the case above, the attachment Eleanor feels toward her daughter.¹³²

Men and women's varying perspectives allow scholars a fuller picture of missionary life in Kansas. Each shows the reader things the other cannot, reflecting complementary interests. Where women's writings share more personal insights and word pictures, men's letters and

¹³¹ EDM to Maria Meeker, Nov. 24th, 1847, Meeker Collection.

¹³² Joanna L. Stratton, *Pioneer Women: Voices from the Kansas Frontier*, (New York: Simon and Schuster) 1981. Stratton uses some middle class women who wrote in a similar style (although less religiously) as some missionary women. The women whose writings she utilized sometimes also suffered from isolation and loneliness, although perhaps not on the same scale as those in this study. Women's descriptive writing and especially emotional ties in letter-writing is discussed in Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1975):1-29.

diaries give more attention to daily work habits and finances. It is not that male missionaries wrote irreligiously – they did not – but their letters place religion in a much more business-like context.

Women also penned reports. Often a letter would be addressed to a specific female, but intended for all those in her religious circle. One example of these missionary newsletter-like missives is Eleanor Meeker writing to a Mrs. Miller in April of 1845. In it, she describes the conversion of a very sick nineteen year old Ottawa woman and then says,

I often feel rebuked and wish I could feel as cheerful in performing the labour which necessarily devolves upon me but my frail nature desponds at the prospect [unintelligible] before me. But I often feel strengthened by the cheering promise that is thy day is so shall they strength be” I feel persuaded that if the labour is for me to perform that I shall have the strength to do it.¹³³

In spite of her resolution, she writes she may need to keep Maria out of school several more months to help with the work.¹³⁴

As seen in the last chapter, missionary women worked themselves into the ground. The above paragraph shows their thoughts on this physical labor. They believed God would either give them strength or lessen or remove the burden through assistance, rest, or death. This does not mean they never felt tired or overworked. As Eleanor wrote on January 17, 1837, “I have not been well for three or four months but I have not been obliged to quit my work one day as of yet. For which I ought to be very thankful to my kind Preserver.”¹³⁵ It sounds as if she did not think herself as grateful as she ought to be for the opportunity to work through poor health. Shortly after moving to the Ottawa Mission in August, 1838, she writes again to her sister, “we have...got things fixed so as to live tolerably comfortable, but pretty rough. [A]s our object is to

¹³³ EDM to Mrs. Miller, April 1845, Meeker Collection.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ EDM to Emeline (previously Richardson) Clough, Jan. 17th, 1837, Meeker Collection.

try to benefit the Indians it is highly important that we live near them[.]”¹³⁶ In addition to setting up housekeeping, the Meekers also ran an Ottawa day school. They dwelled amongst the Ottawa as an example of correct living. This letter also mentions she was sick again. The most likely cause is a combination of exhaustion and malaria.¹³⁷ Both these things were a common part of missionary life for those who lived near rivers or streams. The schoolgirl romanticism of laboring in the foreign field even unto sickness and possible death was one of the few things that actually transferred into reality.¹³⁸

Realism infiltrated other areas of life, as well. Women’s took an active role not only through physical labor but also spiritual and intellectual awareness and understanding. They knew what was going on around them and how it could potentially affect themselves and their work. They were aware of the way in which local politics and tribal example affected mission success. For instance, women often knew who would make influential converts. For example, Eleanor wrote, “David Green’s father ... is the principle chief of the Nation... if he comes out decidedly on the Lord’s side as we hope he will, it will be the means of breaking up the Indian religion among the Ottawa almost entirely.”¹³⁹ She knew which men in the tribe held influence, and like many other Americans of the time, did not hesitate to hope that influence would be used to help perpetrate her chosen cause.

Neither did the influence and consequences of the medical work she and her husband administered escape her. The Ottawa believed Meeker had supernatural healing power. After a

¹³⁶ EDM to Emeline Clough, Aug., 1838, Meeker Collection.

¹³⁷ Charles R. King, "Physician to Body and Soul: Jotham Meeker--Kansas Missionary," *Kansas History* Vol. 17 (Winter 1994-1995): 268. King discusses some of the various ailments the Meekers attempted to treat, including malaria, often called “fever and ague,” or just “the ague.” Those who lived near water, like the Meekers, were more likely to encounter it. This was a regular annual sickness, so much so that the Meekers termed the time of year malaria was most common “the sickly season.”

¹³⁸ Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 35-36.

¹³⁹ EDM to Emeline Clough, June 4th, 1841, Meeker Collection.

season of sickness, many of the Christian Indians appeared healthier “while many of those who were our strongest enemies have sickened and died suddenly.”¹⁴⁰ While the tribespeople related Meeker to medicine men, Eleanor attributed healing to both divine goodness and the “sober and industrious”¹⁴¹ habits of Christian Indians. By 1844 Eleanor sometimes wrote of “Mr. M.’s labour among the Indians”¹⁴² rather than “our” labor. Yet even with these changes in semantics, she still appears in tune with the spiritual climate of the Ottawa tribe. “several... express a desire to become true followers of Jesus, we cherish the hope that this is but the dawn of brighter days in this benighted land.”¹⁴³ These women carried situational awareness and applied it both spiritually and intellectually in their own hearts and minds.

In addition to spiritual health, family life, love, and loneliness also found their way into women’s writings. These concerns existed underneath the overarching umbrella of faith. An example of the strain a missionary lifestyle placed on women’s relationship with their children, read what Mrs. Meeker wrote to her daughter Maria on June 16, 1839. Spiritual, familial, and mission related information, much of which affirms the assertions already made in this paper, are evident, as well as the strain separation placed on the mother-daughter relationship.

Where do you board? How do you spend your time between school hours? Do you attend Sabbath school? Have you a desire to hear the gospel preached? And more than all do you love to pray and ask God to change your heart from the love of sin and enable you, by divine grace, to love Him more than all things else?...O what a privilege it would be if I could only see you as often as once in two or three months so that I might know what advice to give you. ...I have had a hard time since May our family have numbered from six to ten most of the time. The meeting house has been a tedious job on account of disappointments of various kinds. I was very sick two weeks, but have not suffered so much as I did last Fall. I think my health is better, or would be if I could only keep from working beyond

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² EDM to Emeline Clough, Jan. 24th, 1844, Meeker Collection.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

my strength. ...Mr. Simerwell is moving his family to Westport. The Potawatomie Indians are moving about in where the Caw Indians used to live.¹⁴⁴

Further in the letter she relates that girls came to her for medicine, and sometimes were so ill that they stayed with her until recovered. A small window into family life comes from an endnote dictated by Maria's young sister Emoline. "Miss Morse has dressed my doll very neatly. ...it is too cold tonight to snow. Mother says her hand is too stiff to write and so I suppose I must stop, and bid you good night. Emoline Meeker"¹⁴⁵ Even in such a different time and culture, little girls still thought of snow, toys, and goodnight wishes.

Familial separation was just one of many personal hardships these women often faced. Isolation of many sorts caused strain on the individual. Removed from academy life and far from the intellectual stimulation present in women's organizations, many missionaries found themselves intellectually malnourished. No longer in an educational network, they found little time for reading and few people to converse with on an intellectual level. This is especially true of married women. While single women like Elizabeth Morse might quote an early Baptist missionary, which caused John Pratt to confide to Jotham Meeker, "Sister M[orse] has certainly been reading 'Wm. Carey's Memoirs' very recently, and especially remembers his advice to the Mission Society, 'Attempt great things, expect great things.'"¹⁴⁶ Even when they made time to read, women applied it to their own situations. A married women like Fanny Simerwell often sacrificed whatever leisure time she might have had in an attempt to give her own children a boarding school education. As her children grew up, she shared with her son William, "It was but the other day that I was as young and full of hope as you my Son. Then life seemed to lie a

¹⁴⁴ EDM to Maria Meeker, Nov. 24th, 1847, Meeker Collection.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ John G. Pratt to Jotham Meeker, Jan. 26th, 1848, Meeker Collection.

long and flowery path. But I find it is a short journey through a vale of tears.”¹⁴⁷ Over time, a missionary’s life became one of sacrifice, rather than the adventure first expected.

As strange as it might seem at first, given their profession, another form of isolation they suffered from was spiritual. Even in 1844, more than ten years after coming to Kansas, Eleanor Meeker wrote, “I often feel depressed in mind and feel that it would be a great comfort to see some Christian friends, but my desire is to be content.”¹⁴⁸ The women missed the spiritual connections they felt in their eastern churches. No longer in regular fellowship with the women and men of a home church, they greatly missed the privilege of taking communion with close friends, and wrote them, asking for prayers on their own behalf. Sometimes it is as though, through prayer, they hoped for a spiritual connection with fellow believers as well as God, a connection that transcended space.

Eliza McCoy found another way to maintain some sort of connection with her home faith-network. She wrote that she desired to remain on her home church’s membership role. By way of explanation, she intimated that the Potawatomie mission where she resided did not have an actual church, the nearest was fifty miles away at Shawnee. She also mentioned her loneliness and wish to remain connected to her home community through the membership roll “where her affections are centered.”¹⁴⁹

By the 1840s, Eleanor Meeker thought of the Ottawa Mission Station as home. While writing and wishing her sister could go to church with them, Eleanor gives the reader a picture of the Ottawa Mission church services. She explains, “You would not be able to understand anything that was said, but you would rejoice to see and hear the heathen praying and singing as

¹⁴⁷ William to Sarah Simerwell, April 18th, 1846, Simerwell Collection.

¹⁴⁸ EDM to Emeline Clough, Jan. 24th, 1844, Meeker Collection.

¹⁴⁹ Eliza McCoy, quoted McCormick, *Memoir*, 55-56.

if they felt what they were doing. On account of the house being so small we are obliged to meet under a stately oak which stands in the door-yard.”¹⁵⁰ By 1841 Eleanor Meeker felt at home with these services, but still longed for the ability to share her faith experience with her closest friends back east.

While mental and religious sequestration are two of the more difficult to prove, another, physical isolation, is much easier to see. During the majority of this era, Kansas fell beyond the settlement “line.” Cities and towns as known in the East did not exist west of the Missouri River. Mrs. Meeker’s inability to go shopping, meet with friends, and the long stretches without even her husband nearby, caused hardship. She wrote to a friend, “I have as much as I can do before Mr. M. leaves here for Cincinnati. I think I should go with him was it not for the distance and expense of the journey. . . . I want you to assist Mr. M. if you can to buy some of the things that he is to get, as you will be a better judge.”¹⁵¹ Rather than enjoy time with friends and a shopping trip to Cincinnati, Mrs. Meeker bustled about making her husband’s preparations, creating a shopping list, and writing letters to the friends she could not see in person.

This leads to the final type of isolation discussed here, emotional isolation. Evidence of emotional isolation is found in women’s letters to their children, friends, and relatives in the states. While the physical work is part of the reason for wanting a daughter or other female companion about, another reason is loneliness. Jotham expected to travel much over the summer for printing, visiting, medical and translation work. Eleanor would be left at the mission with only her very young child, Emoline, for daily company. In 1841 she wrote, “I could get a little Indian girl to stay, but there are always difficulties in the way. I therefore get along most of the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ EDM to Emoline Cluff [Clough], 1836, Meeker Collection.

time alone.”¹⁵² Many of the quotes earlier in the chapter carry a tone yearning for friends with whom to share thoughts and feelings. Two additional examples come from Eliza McCoy, who after a few years in Kansas began a letter home with these words, “My Dear Father: Once more I address you by letter, but oh, how much more pleasant it would be to speak face to face. If I could only spend this night with you and then return in the morning in time for school.”¹⁵³ That same year, while feeling overwhelmed and unable to share her burdens with those around her, she addressed her mission board,

For the last few days the Indians have so pressed us to take their children that ere we were aware we had promised seventeen. How we are to take care of so many, under so many disadvantages, I can not tell, and felt almost frightened when thinking of it. But when children are brought, and I am told they have no mother, and how they have been treated, and what they have suffered, I can not refuse. [I] trust that His grace will enable me to bear the heavy burden.¹⁵⁴

When Eliza wrote this, she was the main teacher at the Potawatomie mission school. The staff was in the process of building a boarding school, but before it was nearly finished, Eliza found herself with seventeen children from difficult circumstances, no proper resources to care for them, and no one to share the emotional turmoil incurred from the entire situation.

Throughout this chapter, these women’s writings have shown a genuine faith, and sense of purpose which accompanied their beliefs. They also remind readers that these women (and men) were nothing more or less than human beings. Their struggles with isolation and loneliness, times of doubt, sorrow, and joy, transcend place, culture, and time to join as human struggles. Through letters, they communicated their service-oriented mindset, and eventually a sense of self-sacrificial duty. When Eleanor Meeker describes the work she and her husband undertook, one can begin to see more clearly how she felt about her life as a married missionary. Through

¹⁵²EDM to Emeline R. Clough, June 4th, 1841 Meeker Collection.

¹⁵³ Eliza McCoy to Father, Aug. 31st, 1849, quoted in McCoy, *Memoirs*, 72-73.

¹⁵⁴ Eliza McCoy to the American Indian Mission Board [McCoy’s Kentucky Board], in McCormick, *Memoir*, 71.

the sometimes flowery Victorian language, feelings concerning family, old friends, American Indians, the realities of daily life, and even mortality contribute to an understanding of how these women viewed the world and their place in it. And while men's writings differ substantially in style, those variances allow additional material on women's ideas and actions, as well as what the men in their lives thought of their female co-laborers. Whether it's Eliza McCoy pouring her boarding school frustrations into a diary, Eleanor Meeker sharing the devastation of losing property to the flood of 1844, or the way Elizabeth Morse and Jane Jones conceptualized a new mission plan, the writings tell more than what they did, they help critical readers understand how they thought.

While men and women present different aspects of missionary life, each gender valued the other's contributions. They had thoughts and opinions of their own, both influenced by their own culture, and perpetuated by themselves. As shown through these writings, they often grew weary, sick, and lonesome, and even experienced seasons of doubt, but throughout the timeframe studied, they did not give up their belief in Christianization. For better or for worse, through sickness and in health, the women studied here personally committed themselves to missionary service in both personal thoughts and outward actions.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

[With] a singleness of purpose and devotion...they united a high order of capacity and intellectual fitness for their peculiar and most delicate and difficult duties.¹⁵⁵

Throughout the course of this thesis, several things have become apparent about these women missionaries to eastern immigrant tribes in Kansas. Their devotion and drive to succeed in living lives that they thought would please their Lord, their intelligence and mental ability to continue even when work became difficult and tiresome, and finally, the atypical nature of their lives is evidenced throughout this study. These women were different, and their story helps make the historical narrative fuller and richer. It took an unusual person to perform the tasks and fill the roles assigned to her – and to create roles for herself when needed. Whether through marriage, as Olivia Evans Pratt, or creative problem solving, as Elizabeth Morse when Jotham Meeker no longer thought her presence necessary, these women missionaries both found and filled their chosen niches, as well as those thrust upon them.

Through it all, in their hearts remained a singleness of purpose. They did sometimes doubt their effectiveness and wonder at their failings, especially when coming west did not achieve hoped-for conversion and assimilation rates. But even through their doubts, the reasons for coming and the reasons for staying remained the same. Whether leading a prayer meeting,

¹⁵⁵ An unnamed Indian Agent writing upon the deaths of Sarah Osgood and Mrs. Lykins, quoted in McCormick, *Memoir*, 76.

freeing a male missionary for translation work, or teaching a boarding school, their goal remained the same; the “conversion of the Indians and their advancement to civilization.”¹⁵⁶

While many could and have debated nineteenth century missionary methods, one thing more difficult to dispute is their apparent devotion. Whether these women were sincere followers of an almighty being, or just sincerely wrong, missionaries were some of the most devoutly religious Christians of the era. Inculcated from youth in a larger culture which was itself in a fervent spiritual condition, they accepted the teachings of the Second Great Awakening for themselves. They based their entire existence on that faith.

While women such as Fanny Simerwell and Jane Kelly Jones entrenched their lives in their Christian beliefs, they also cultivated their intellects and wielded them into service. Missionary women were some of the most well-educated middle-class females of the day. Their mental aptitude and educational advantages helped open the door to their chosen career. Those same abilities helped them strategically plan and persevere when faced with practical challenges on the field. Their mental aptitude and drive are part of what made them successful in their ability to get a job in their chosen field.

Their success in joining and continuing in their chosen profession illustrates my next point: these women possessed a high level of capacity. They were capable of much, and drove themselves to achieve what they perceived as greatness. They pushed themselves to the limits of their endurance, denied their own meager comforts in order to serve those around them. Nineteenth-century mission boards expected a great deal from those they sent out, and those

¹⁵⁶Olivia Pratt, quoted in Gowing, “Life among the Delaware Indians,” fn. 4, 184.

missionaries who received funds from the federal government had additional accountability. The men and women on the field delivered on these demands to the best of their abilities.

While in some ways different women had differing responsibilities, they all were taxed physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Whether taking on the additional labor of a sick co-worker, as Eleanor Meeker did, running the domestic side of a boarding school, like Fanny Simerwell, or mixing the domestic with the academic, as Jane Kelly Jones, their work was physically demanding. Intellectually, women such as Fanny Simerwell found their lives as missionaries left precious little time for scholarly endeavors, and those who did make time to read, such as Elizabeth Morse, channeled publications that seemed most relevant to their current lives. The loss of emotional support also affected them, as seen in Eliza McCoy's longing for her father, while still desiring to continue at her post, and evidenced in the many physical partings and even deaths these women faced. Isolated from traditional eastern support networks, missionary women sometimes missed the close spiritual connection they felt through religious gatherings with friends and family back east. While they attempted to re-create those sentiments in the West, it was never quite the same.

An Indian agent referred to Delilah Lykins and Sarah Ann Osgood's missionary profession as not only "difficult" but also "delicate" and "peculiar."¹⁵⁷ Each one had to find, or negotiate, her niche. While considered the spiritual and intellectual equals of their male counterparts, female missionaries labored under an officially inferior status – "assistant" missionary. How she served depended both on her personality and her individual situation. For instance, while Eleanor Meeker might assist with medical work, she did not run a boarding school. And where Olivia Pratt kept up with the washing and sewing for Delaware students,

¹⁵⁷ Indian Agent quoted in McCormick, *Memoir*, 76.

there is no indication that she helped her husband in the print shop. Each person had to find a workable balance between equality and submission, thus the “delicate” nature of women’s work.

Life as a full time female missionary, even to many living in a culture permeated by the Second Great Awakening, still appeared a peculiar profession. It likely seems even more so to many modern students of history. Giving up a comfortable home and plethora of socio-religious causes outside one’s own front door, in order to marry a stranger, or go and teach school beyond the limits of western civilization; that really was a rather strange and unusual way for an early Victorian, middle-class woman to spend her life. Perhaps they still would have chosen to be missionaries, but then again, they might have become archeologists or cultural anthropologists. Some might have even gone into politics or worked as Indian rights activists. But in the environment in which they matured and came to adulthood, these driven, devout, and educated females made the decision to pursue careers in missionary service.

Sometimes, historical sources give their readers something unexpected. From time to time, scholars are gripped with the uncomfortable reality that a historical person or group is more difficult to discount than they might desire. Antebellum women missionaries to American Indians are one of those groups. They are underrepresented in our colleges and in mainstream journals. When it comes to demonstrating and understanding the thought processes of sincere individuals who practiced intolerant Christian faith, scholars often hesitate. The fact that understanding their mindsets may be a more difficult task should not make historians shy away from it. It is important for scholars to understand that a current history of such people can be done without overtly agreeing or disagreeing with their personal beliefs or methods. It is important to recognize that these women offer insights into the minds of educated antebellum women, many of whom were strongly affected by the Second Great Awakening. Understanding

this reminds us that they also constituted to an often overlooked part of Kansas History. Pre-territorial Kansas female missionaries, as missionaries, is an underdeveloped field. Today, readers can give a certain respect and admiration for their courage, idealism, and tenacity. They can understand that the world in which these women lived was one that both shaped them and was built by them. Olivia Pratt said her “sacrifices and inconveniences were forgotten,”¹⁵⁸ but history should not allow itself to forget.

¹⁵⁸ Olivia Pratt, quoted in Gowing, “Life among the Delaware Indians,” fn. 4, 184.

EPILOGUE

*I am... the last withered leaf*¹⁵⁹

While the 1854 opening to settlement with the Kansas-Nebraska Act signaled the beginning of the end of “Indian Kansas”¹⁶⁰ it does leave one wondering what became of the missionaries. When Indian Territory became Kansas Territory, reservations first shrunk, and then, one by one, were broken up completely. By the mid to late 1860s, most of the eastern immigrant Indians again lived in “Indian Territory” – this time, Oklahoma.

For example, the Delaware ceded some of their land back to the federal government in 1854. In 1867, each tribal member had to choose – exchange their Delaware citizenship for United States’ citizenship, and accept an allotted amount of their Kansas lands, or leave for present-day Oklahoma.¹⁶¹ Most kept their citizenship and gave up their lands. A few, such as Nannie Journeycake, choose to stay. By this time she and Lucius Pratt (John and Olivia’s only surviving child) had married. She had given birth to three children, lost her husband in 1865, and then ran the Delaware Baptist Mission Station, with John and Olivia Pratt and Elizabeth Morse assisting her. For Nannie, in 1867 home was with her mission family, rather than the family of her birth. With the vast majority of Delaware gone, and John and Olivia Pratt advancing in years, Rev. Pratt turned his ministry to Euro-American settlers, and Olivia became a western minister’s wife, rather than a foreign missionary.¹⁶² Miss Morse worked as a teacher, teaching mainly settlers’ children. Although, for a time, she taught a class of Native American students who had

¹⁵⁹ Gowing, “Reminiscence.” She used this phrase to describe herself as the last of the Kansas Baptist Indian Missionaries.

¹⁶⁰ Craig H. Miner and William E Unrau, *The End of Indian Kansas: A Study of Cultural Revolution, 1854-1871*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 12-13, 40, 111-112. Delaware had little practical relief when it came to squatters.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Gowing, “Life Among the Delaware;” Delaware Indian Agency Records, 1867, Pratt Papers.

traveled from their new reservations back to Ottawa, Kansas, in order to further their education.¹⁶³

One story bears mention for its vivid exception. After over thirteen years with the Delaware, Sylvia Case married a Mr. Tolles, and remained at the mission. Five months later she bore a son. After an investigation, it was discovered that Case and Ira Blanchard, also a long-time missionary, had engaged in a sexual relationship and attempted to cover the evidence with a marriage between Case and Tolles. The rest of the Baptist missionaries could hardly believe it. The word “aghast” best describes their emotions. Missionaries from several Kansas stations wrote a joint letter to the Baptist Board recommending not just dismissal, but revocation of Blanchard’s ordination. Blanchard, his wife Mary, and their five daughters then moved to Iowa. The fate of Case, now Mrs. Tolles, is unknown. This single incident is the only known case of involuntary dismissal recorded for these Kansas Baptist Missions.

By the time the Ottawa left, Jotham and Eleanor Meeker had already passed away. Jotham died in early 1855, concerned about the liquor dealers settling on the fringes of the Ottawa reservation. His wife Eleanor, who knew missions longer than she knew her husband, remained nearly two years before following him in death. She was only in her forties.¹⁶⁴ Most missionaries discussed in these pages followed similar patterns, serving until required to stop due to poor health, death, or tribal relocation.

Today, one can still visit the old Ottawa Indian Mission cemetery. Many smaller tombstones lie broken on the earth, or have disappeared completely. Some left standing call for a remembrance of Nathaniel Wolf, or Sally Wind. In the very center of the graveyard, between the

¹⁶³ “Grace Meeker’s Reminiscence,” Pratt Papers.

¹⁶⁴Douglas C. McMurtrie, *Jotham Meeker, Pioneer Printer of Kansas*, (Chicago: Eyncourt Press, 1930.) 125-127.

older tribal stones and those of early settlers, towers a monument to John Tecumseh Jones, and his wife, Jane Kelly Jones. It is the grand centerpiece of the cemetery. Also on the center line, but placed off to one side, lie Jotham and Eleanor. Their remains rest in a plot raised a little above the others. The epitaph reads, "Servants of the Lord."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ The cemetery lies a few miles outside of present-day Ottawa, Kansas. As of June 2014, the local library's reference room could provide a map with the Ottawa Mission Cemetery's location, as well as the location of other local cemeteries. It is open to the public, but visitors should be prepared to park by the road and walk roughly half a mile.

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