

**AMERICA'S FIRST FEMALE FOREIGN MISSIONARY:  
ANN JUDSON IN BURMA**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

In 1812, Ann Hasseltine Judson was one of the first two American women to go abroad as missionary wives. Despite general opposition to foreign missions as well as to women's involvement in the missionary movement, Judson believed it was her duty to God to sacrifice her home, friends, and family forever in order to evangelize "heathens." Despite being confined by tradition to the domestic sphere as a woman, Judson was able to carry out her traditional duties as well as to serve as a missionary although she was not officially recognized as one. Especially after her death, the American Protestant community published works with the intention of depicting Judson as an icon of evangelical femininity as well as a heroine of the American foreign missionary movement, using vivid descriptions of what many in the nineteenth century considered remarkable and exemplary experiences and characteristics. This project explores Judson's significant role in the founding of the American missionary movement through the various agendas in nineteenth-century written works that told her story as a means to promote the missionary effort in general and women's place in the movement as well as woman's place in nineteenth-century society.

## INTRODUCTION

In the early nineteenth-century, religion played a significant role in American society, and the missionary movement became a main focus within the American Protestant community. However, the foreign missionary movement was built initially on a shaky foundation, and as a result, many members of the American Protestant community who supported the movement attempted to promote the cause in order to increase awareness and support for missionary work. A woman named Ann Hasseltine Judson was a primary player in this effort. Judson was one of the first two women to go abroad as missionary wives.

Judson's extraordinary story of service as a missionary wife was told through written works throughout the nineteenth century, and the authors of many of these publications intended their works to serve as promotion for the foreign missionary movement. As a result, many authors carefully chose to describe certain events or ideas related to Judson but often disregarded or only briefly mentioned her work as a missionary, in order to concentrate on what the authors believed would inspire people without depicting her as pushing the social boundaries too far beyond convention. For example, the remarkable story of Judson's experiences during the Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826) was told in almost every nineteenth-century written work about her. Authors used Judson's experiences during the war to present her as an ideal example for others to follow, to produce certain reactions from readers, and to inspire readers by describing certain characteristics and ideas about her. Such elements in the works suggest various agendas behind the works about Judson. In order to motivate readers to participate in the missionary effort, the American Protestant community gave Judson the

title of first heroine of the American foreign missionary movement and the image of an icon of evangelical femininity. Her story was used not only to promote the missionary cause in general but also to encourage other women to participate. Many works defended and supported women's involvement as a necessary part of the foreign missionary effort. The growth of Judson's reputation and the ubiquity of her story demonstrate how powerful agendas in nineteenth-century works were.

## Chapter 1

### THE BEGINNING

The hot, steaming, wild jungle of Burma—now Myanmar—was no place for a white woman, especially for a woman alone. Westerners' safety was threatened by the onset of war with the British, and the Burmese imprisoned foreigners in death camps as suspected spies for their British enemies. With little to eat and with forced marches of up to ten miles in one day during the hottest part of the day of the hottest time of the year, disease and death ran rampant among the prisoners, giving them little hope of survival. Ann Hasseltine Judson (b. December 22, 1789 – d. October 24, 1826) faced this world alone for two years. On June 8, 1824 she watched helplessly as Burmese guards arrested her husband, Adoniram Judson, as a suspected spy for the British, seizing him and viciously throwing him to the floor to tie his hands behind his back. Ann Judson was put under house arrest, and out of fear that her journals and letters would suggest communication with the British, certainly guaranteeing her husband's execution, she burned most of them. To escape her own imprisonment and to visit Adoniram in prison, she bribed officers with the little money or valuables that had not already been confiscated by the soldiers. Matters became worse with each new illness for Judson, her husband, and their daughter Maria, whom Judson gave birth to during Adoniram's imprisonment as well as the two Burmese girls she was caring for. When the prisoners were moved to new locations, Judson followed them only to arrive in a new place where she had no home and no friends. Fearing for her own safety as a Westerner, Judson

dressed in traditional Burmese fashion in order to visit her husband in prison. Despite appealing to a member of the government or of the royal family every day for seven months for the release of husband, she was not able to obtain his freedom. Then, she bribed government officials with the few possessions she had left to instigate improvements in the conditions of the prisons. It was only after the British victory that Adoniram was released from prison and Ann Judson was released from this perilous, sorrowful life.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Second Great Awakening and Missionary Work**

Nineteenth-century Protestant writers told Ann Judson's story over and over again as the romantic tale of the life as a missionary woman in Burma with the hopes of encouraging readers to contribute to the missionary cause. The harsh treatment of Judson and her husband, vividly told in countless written works, horrified readers and motivated many to imitate Judson's example. If Judson was so willing to risk her life and face hardships for God, any committed Christian man—or woman—could do the same.

Such positive attention from the American religious community was a complete shift from the almost total opposition Judson faced in 1812. After Judson decided to marry Adoniram and accompany him on a mission trip to India as he was already planning, becoming the first American woman to participate in a foreign mission, she faced great public opposition to missionary work and to women's involvement. Judson grew up during the Second Great Awakening, a movement that brought a resurgence primarily of Protestant faith. Spanning approximately 1790 to 1830, it is considered to be the largest and most enduring religious revival in the history of the

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<sup>1</sup> Knowles, James. *Memoir of Mrs. Ann H. Judson, late missionary to Burma* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1831), pp. 281-323.

United States.<sup>2</sup> The goal of the revival was to spread the Gospel throughout the nation, ultimately to make America an example of a true Protestant republic.<sup>3</sup> In order to spread the gospel, itinerant preachers traveled throughout the nation, holding outdoor revivals called “camp meetings.”<sup>4</sup> Doctrine in the Second Great Awakening also placed great importance on individual action, particularly in “disinterested benevolence,” the act of doing good deeds for others without expecting something in return.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, many people established voluntary societies to work for moral or humanitarian efforts including temperance, abolition of slavery, Sunday schools, and missionary work.<sup>6</sup> Many believed that those who had already found Christ should be devoted to reforming the world by saving “pagan” peoples through the Gospel. As a result, foreign missionary work became a major focus for many people, and many missionary societies were established to fund, support, and aid missionary efforts in order to continue the spread of Christianity outside the United States.<sup>7</sup>

Another significant effect of the Awakening was the expansion of women’s role in religion. Traditionally, women were restricted to the domestic sphere, meaning that their place in society was the home and their roles were to serve as wives and mothers. However, women argued that religion was within the boundaries of their social sphere. In the nineteenth century, women were considered more virtuous than men, and as a result, many people accepted women’s extensive involvement in religion, arguing it

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<sup>2</sup> Henretta, James A., David Brody, Elliot Brownlee, and Susan Ware. *America’s History to 1877*(Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1987), p. 298.

<sup>3</sup> Ahlstrom, Sydney E. *A Religious History of the American People, Second edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 387.

<sup>4</sup> “camp meeting.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2009. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. <http://search.eb.com/eb/articel-9019832> (accessed January 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Pruitt, Lisa Joy. “*A Looking-Glass for Ladies*,” *American Protestant Women and the Orient, in the Nineteenth Century* (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2005), p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Ahlstrom, op. cit, p. 387.

<sup>7</sup> Henretta, op. cit, p. 300.

fell within their designated place in society. (See the section in Chapter 2 on Women in Society on pages 34-35 for further details). With such qualities, women were given the responsibility of raising their own children to become good Christians as part of their domestic duties. In extension of this role, many believed women could help teach other women as well as children about God through women's prayer meetings and Sunday schools respectively. Because women were generally considered more moral and nurturing, many people believed that women were naturally qualified to connect with people and try to evangelize them.<sup>8</sup>

### **Missionary Women**

These arguments were used to defend women's prominent role not only in the American Protestant community and in church membership but also in the missionary efforts abroad.<sup>9</sup> Home missionary work among Native Americans preceded the foreign missionary effort that began in 1810 with the establishment of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.<sup>10</sup> Although men were considered to be and were officially labeled as missionaries, many people came to believe women played a vital role in the missionary effort. After being greatly involved with prayer movements, home missions, and revivals in the United States, participation in the foreign missionary effort seemed like the next logical step for women to increase their involvement in their faith and to demonstrate their devotion to God.<sup>11</sup> The first women to participate in the missionary movement were missionary wives, mainly sent abroad to serve, comfort,

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<sup>8</sup> Pruitt, op. cit, pp. 36, 41, 43, 52.

<sup>9</sup> Andrews, Dee E. *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 112.

<sup>10</sup> "Memorials of Rufus Anderson, D.D., Mrs. Harriet Newell, and Mrs. Ann H. Judson." (Haverhill, Massachusetts: C.C. Morse & Son, 1884), p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Pruitt, op. cit, p. 13.

support, and help their husbands, duties that were essentially extensions of their domestic responsibilities but that they would perform abroad as they accompanied their husband overseas. Since missionary wives were expected to embody Christian ideals, their second duty was to serve as examples to those their husbands preached to in terms of how a Christian woman should act, run a household, and care for her family. Missionary wives also worked to convert “heathen” women and children abroad through women’s prayer meetings and Sunday schools as in the United States.<sup>12</sup>

Over time, these roles were used to justify women’s involvement in the foreign missionary effort. Supporters also defended women’s place in the movement through the idea that women missionaries were vital in the effort to evangelize women. Christianizing native women was essential to the Christianizing of society, as women were considered the heart of the home because of their dominant role in the household and family. In such a position, women educated their children and could therefore affect society depending on how they raised their children. In addition, many in the nineteenth century believed that the status of women in a society revealed the degree of civilization in that society, meaning that if the women were oppressed and degraded, their society was uncivilized.<sup>13</sup> In the eyes of nineteenth-century Americans, the continuation of degrading practices such as polygamy, female infanticide, and “widow-burning” revealed a society as backwards, since women were considered the core of society. Many Americans, both men and women, believed American women were blessed with elevated status, and they considered Christianity the key to such privilege. Therefore, they believed Christianity

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<sup>12</sup> Lindley, Susan Hill. *“You Have Stept Out of Your Place”*: A History of Women and Religion in America (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), pp. 71, 100.

<sup>13</sup> Pruitt, op. cit, pp. 2-3

was the means to civilize a society, and many American women became involved in the movement as they felt obligated to share their advantages by spreading Christianity.<sup>14</sup>

According to such beliefs, it was imperative to convert women in order to Christianize a society, and women missionaries were critical in evangelizing women. Many believed that in general, women were influenced more by other women than by men, and this specifically applied to religion.<sup>15</sup> More importantly, in many societies, especially those in which missions were established, men were prohibited from having contact with women who were not their wives, thus denying male missionaries the opportunity to convert native women.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it was up to the women missionaries to convert native women, who would then raise their children to be Christians, creating a chain reaction that would result in the converting of an entire society once their children raised their own children to be Christians.

### **Resistance to Women Missionaries**

Women's increasing involvement in religion in general as a result of the Second Great Awakening met great opposition, as would their involvement in the foreign missionary movement starting in the 1810s. With an expansion of women's roles in religion, there was concern that women were becoming too independent and were calling for full equality with men as their roles extended outside the home and into the public realm. However, women assured men that they did not want to challenge or usurp male leadership. Many women missionaries opposed female suffrage or equal rights and claimed they just wanted to contribute to the evangelizing of the world. Supporters of

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<sup>14</sup> Lindley, op. cit, pp. 78-79, 100.

<sup>15</sup> Pruitt, op. cit, pp. 36, 43, 71.

<sup>16</sup> Westerkamp, Marilyn J. *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600-1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 147.

women's extended involvement in religion considered it to be an expression of their devotion to God.<sup>17</sup> Judson even claimed that missionary work fit within woman's traditional place in society and that she only wanted to serve God and her husband and to help fellow women, not to radically change women's place in society.<sup>18</sup>

Missionary wives faced these and other arguments as opposition to their part in the missionary effort. In general, foreign missionary work was initially considered irrational and unachievable. The first missionaries, both men and women, were "charged with indelicacy, with a false ambition, with a spirit of romance and adventure, with a desire for ease and gain."<sup>19</sup> There was also resistance to women participating in foreign missions because it was seen as too dangerous for them starting with the long and perilous voyage and with a destination of a "barbaric" society.<sup>20</sup> Critics argued that it was "preposterous for a woman to consider such a rash undertaking," "utterly improper," and "wild and romantic," especially since women were considered too delicate for matters such as missionary work.<sup>21</sup> Further resistance was based on the argument that missionary work brought women out of their traditional place in society and into the public sphere from which they were customarily prohibited, as missionary work could be considered a religious vocation.<sup>22</sup>

### **Judson as a Missionary Wife**

Ann Judson was the first to face such opposition. In 1810, Adoniram and Judson met when Adoniram was visiting her hometown of Bradford, Massachusetts to

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<sup>17</sup> Lindley, op. cit, p. 86.

<sup>18</sup> Westerkamp, op. cit, pp. 143, 147.

<sup>19</sup> Eddy, Daniel C. *Heroines of the Missionary Enterprise* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1850), p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> Knowles, op. cit, pp. 42-43.

<sup>21</sup> Hubbard, Ethel Daniels. *Ann of Ava* (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1913) p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> Knowles, op. cit, p. 43.

appeal to the General Association in Bradford to form a missionary society to support him and three other young, devout Christian men in their interest in serving abroad as missionaries.<sup>23</sup> The Association agreed and formed the first missionary society called the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.<sup>24</sup> The ABCFM was the first of many American missionary societies and would become the largest missionary society in terms of membership, missions, and missionaries.<sup>25</sup> Out of affection as well as recognition of her strength, character, and devotion to God, Adoniram asked Judson to marry him. However, since Adoniram was preparing to go overseas to India to serve as a missionary, his marriage proposal came with a position as a missionary wife for Judson. This was disconcerting for Judson due to all of the possible negative consequences. These included leaving her friends, family, and home forever to risk a dangerous voyage to a foreign and what many considered an “uncivilized” place, followed by a life of peril and suffering as well as a probable premature death. Judson’s decision to accept Adoniram’s proposal was very difficult as she had no example of American women missionaries to follow; she would be the first. Furthermore, only her immediate family supported her as most of her friends and the American public in general strongly opposed the situation. However, after long and careful consideration of what a missionary life would mean, she accepted Adoniram’s proposal as she considered it her duty to God, becoming the first American woman missionary.<sup>26</sup>

On February 5, 1812, Adoniram and Judson were married, and on February 19, 1812, the Judson’s, along with Samuel and Harriet Newell, departed for Calcutta,

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<sup>23</sup> Child, L. Maria. *Married Deeds of American Women* (New York: Arno Press and a New York Times Co., 1974), p. 223.

<sup>24</sup> “Memorials” op. cit, pp. 14-15

<sup>25</sup> Baird, Robert. *Religion in the United States of America* (New York: Arno Press & *The New York Times*, 1969), p. 681.

<sup>26</sup> Knowles, op. cit, pp. 42-51.

India.<sup>27</sup> Together, these young couples were the first American missionaries to go overseas. They arrived at their destination after a rough four-month sea-voyage, only to be forced out of India—then part of the British Empire<sup>28</sup>—by the British East India Company, which opposed any missionary work.<sup>29</sup> The Indian government was also not tolerant of missionaries, and the Judson's and Newell's were summoned before the government and told to leave.<sup>30</sup> Newell became the first martyr of the American foreign missionary effort when she died shortly after leaving India before she could carry out any missionary work. Therefore, Judson was the first missionary wife who was able to serve. The Judson's left India for the Burman Empire to establish a mission in Rangoon, where Judson served as a missionary for a total of thirteen years.

Although Newell is considered the first martyr of the American foreign missionary cause, Judson became the ideal American woman missionary in the American Protestant community, gaining a place in history as the first heroine of the American foreign missionary cause. In addition to carrying out her expected duties as a missionary wife, Judson carried out others as well. She opened several schools specifically for girls as the Burman society traditionally limited and did not value female education. Although not required to, she learned the Burmese language, allowing her to translate tracts and sections of the Bible into Burmese and Siamese, to write catechism in Burmese, and to translate a sacred Siamese text into English.<sup>31</sup> While she was not responsible for directly evangelizing Burmans,<sup>32</sup> Judson worked with Burman women in the hopes of converting

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> Ragland, N.M. *Leaves from Mission Fields* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Co., 1900), p. 116.

<sup>29</sup> James, Edward T. *Notable American Women 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 49, 619.

<sup>30</sup> Knowles, op. cit, p. 70.

<sup>31</sup> Westerkamp, op. cit, p. 147.

<sup>32</sup> Knowles, op. cit, p. 136.

them, setting a standard for future American missionary wives. She organized a society for women that she met with every Sunday at which she read Scripture aloud; between fifteen and twenty women would attend.<sup>33</sup>

Judson herself also attempted to encourage others to join her in the foreign missionary effort. In 1822, Judson left Burma and returned to the United States to recover from a serious illness. During a stop to England, Judson stayed with Joseph Butterworth, a Member of Parliament who knew of and greatly admired Judson's involvement in the mission.<sup>34</sup> Butterworth thought very highly of Judson and of her work and therefore asked her to write about the mission to encourage readers to contribute to the missionary effort.<sup>35</sup> In the "Preface" of her work entitled *An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire: in a series of letters addressed to a gentleman in London*, Judson wrote that she hoped "that every individual who shall peruse these letters may raise his heart to God, in prayer for the conversion of the heathen."<sup>36</sup> This book, a collection of her letters to Butterworth, was published in both England and the United States in 1823.<sup>37</sup>

Judson also received much more positive attention once back in the United States compared to the attention she received prior to her original departure in 1812. Though not complete by this time, the missionary effort had gained greater support, and Judson was well-known. After returning to the United States in 1822, Judson worked to continue the effort to increase awareness of the mission. For example, she made many speeches, wrote addresses, and attended various meetings to speak of the mission in

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<sup>33</sup> Westerkamp, op. cit, pp. 147, 163.

<sup>34</sup> Ragland, op. cit, pp. 149, 153.

<sup>35</sup> Griswold, Rufus Wilmot. "The Heroism of the Knights Errant and of the Female Missionaries of America." *Godey's Lady's Book*. August, 1848. Accessible Archives Inc. <http://www.accessible.com> (accessed July 2008).

<sup>36</sup> Judson, Ann H. *An Account of the American Baptists Mission to the Burman Empire* (London: J. Butterworth & Son, 1823), p. x.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* pp. iv, vii-viii, x, xi.

Burma.<sup>38</sup> Judson spoke to the students at Bradford Academy, where she had been a student, about her experiences abroad in order to ignite interest among the young students in the general missionary cause. It was reported that “the boys and girls were captivated by the speaker’s grace and beauty and thrilled by her whole-hearted enthusiasm,”<sup>39</sup> suggesting that Judson was admired for having qualities traditionally expected of women as well as for her contributions to the missionary effort. It was claimed that meeting Judson and hearing her speak made many people realize for the first time how important the Burman mission was to them personally.<sup>40</sup> In March 1823, Judson also attended the General Convention of the Baptist Church in Washington D.C., where many of the important measures she suggested at the meeting regarding the Burman mission were adopted.<sup>41</sup>

While in Burma, Judson had written letters to friends, family members, and acquaintances to encourage them to promote the missionary cause among those in their own lives. During her stay in the United States, Judson continued her correspondence.<sup>42</sup> According to her December 25, 1822 letter to her sister Mary, Judson claimed that she spent five hours a day writing letters about the Burman mission, including letters to female friends to encourage them to participate in the missionary effort in order to help fellow women suffering from not having found Jesus Christ.<sup>43</sup> Judson also wrote letters to Reverend Dr. Wayland including one written on January 22, 1823 that reads (with emphasis in the original):

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<sup>38</sup> Knowles, op. cit, p. 238.

<sup>39</sup> Hubbard, op. cit, p. 141.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.146.

<sup>41</sup> Ragland, op. cit, p. 157.

<sup>42</sup> Eddy, op. cit, p. 50.

<sup>43</sup> Knowles, op. cit, p. 238.

I want the Baptists throughout the United States to feel that Burmah [sic] *must be converted* through their instrumentality. They must *pray* more, they must *give* more, and make greater efforts to prevent the Missionary flame from becoming extinct. Every Christian in the United States should feel as deeply impressed with the importance of making continual efforts for the salvation of the heathen, as though their conversion depended solely on himself. Every individual Christian should feel himself guilty if he has not done and does not continue to do all in his power for the spread of the gospel and the enlightening of the heathen world. But I need not write thus to you. You see, you feel the misery of the heathen world. Try to awaken Christians around you. Preach frequently on the subject of Missions.<sup>44</sup>

By making such statements and requests, Judson hoped that ministers would encourage the members of their congregations to become involved in the missionary effort, so that, hopefully, these people would in turn encourage their friends and family to also participate; Judson believed that everyone could help.

Although the American foreign missionary movement began with little support and an uncertain future, more Americans joined the effort as they came to perceive evangelical work abroad as important. While her husband received most of the attention from the American public, Judson did play a vital role in encouraging people to participate to the missionary effort through her letters, her addresses, and the example she set, especially for other American women. The American Protestant community gave Judson the title not only of the first American woman missionary, but also of the first heroine of the American foreign missionary movement by the American Protestant community; these honors were used in nineteenth-century written works to inspire readers to contribute to the foreign missionary effort.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, pp. 240-241.

## Chapter 2

### NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE ABOUT JUDSON

Within a few years of her death on October 24, 1826, Ann Judson's story became prominent in written works. As the first American woman to serve as a missionary wife overseas, she became a popular topic for nineteenth-century authors to write about, often in praise for what many considered extraordinary experiences. These authors used Judson's story for various reasons. First, Judson and her life served as an example to promote the missionary movement in general. Other authors more specifically intended to encourage and defend women's involvement in the missionary movement as well as the idea of woman's work for women and the importance of female education. Lastly, some authors wrote with the intention of describing women's place in nineteenth-century society to demonstrate either the importance of women's traditional duties and roles in society or the changes in women's position in society based on the capabilities women had demonstrated.

The types of works that presented promotional writing included newspapers of missionary societies, memoirs, secular periodicals, and collections of biographies. These works were often written to counter various sources of continuing opposition to the missionary movement and specifically to women's involvement in the effort during the nineteenth century. The first written works retelling Judson's story helped to create an image of her as an ideal Christian American woman that readers were encouraged to follow. Subsequently, the portrayals of Judson as an icon of evangelical femininity and a

heroine of the American foreign missionary effort helped to inspire other promotional works. Judson continued to be included in the agendas listed above throughout the nineteenth century, and her common presence in nineteenth-century works suggests how effective her example was in encouraging these agendas.

### Agendas

Many aspects of nineteenth-century works suggest that the authors had certain goals for writing about Judson. For instance, authors often strategically concentrated on certain stories and ideas while excluding other information in order to produce a certain image of Judson and to promote certain ideas. Authors often excluded most if not all of the details about Judson's own missionary work and concentrated on her experiences during the Anglo-Burmese War. This served two purposes. First, authors presented her experiences during the war through romantic language to portray an exotic tale in order to capture readers' imaginations and therefore inspire them to do their part in the missionary effort to fight the injustices described in the works. Secondly, other authors wanted to promote women's involvement in the movements in a way that would counter opposition to women's involvement in missionary work as it was considered outside woman's domestic sphere and therefore improper, without presenting it as a change in woman's traditional place in society. Downplaying Judson's evangelical roles or portraying the responsibilities she assumed as mere extensions of, or connections to, women's place in the home and the family allowed authors to portray Judson as an exemplary Christian wife and mother. Authors telling the stories of missionary wives had to clearly state their purposes in praising the women as good Christian mothers and wives to save themselves from readers' criticism for honoring women missionaries for stepping out of their traditional place in society and being successful in a religious vocation, which

was considered a public role.<sup>45</sup> No matter what was discussed regarding Judson's life, authors would be able to create certain images of Judson as a saint-like or angelic and an icon of evangelical femininity through the inclusion and exclusion of certain details and through vivid, powerful language.

### **Promoting the Foreign Missionary Movement**

Many authors used Judson to promote the general foreign missionary effort as she was the first American woman to serve as a foreign missionary and could therefore be argued as a pioneer of the movement. These authors hoped Judson's story would motivate all Christians, both men and women, to become involved in the foreign missionary movement in any way they could. Their writings about Judson often included sections about the location of the mission in Burma as well as information about Adoniram, suggesting the authors' goals of appealing to a wide audience and to the American Protestant community in general. This was true for many works describing Judson's life including James Knowles' *Memoir of Mrs. Ann H. Judson* and *The Missionary Herald*.

First published in 1821, *The Missionary Herald* was one of the most prominent missionary periodicals of the nineteenth century. Originally published as *The Panoplist* in 1805 and then renamed *The Panoplist, and Missionary Magazine* in 1808, this periodical became especially devoted to foreign missions, in addition to home missions, after the first American missionaries went abroad in 1812.<sup>46</sup> However, as the official missionaries, the male missionaries initially received almost all of the periodical's attention. Judson was often solely discussed as an unnamed figure, secondary to her

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<sup>45</sup> Pruitt, op. cit, pp. 29, 34-35.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

husband. Instead of being recognized for her own missionary work, she was recognized only as Adoniram Judson's missionary wife. This idea is illustrated in an article in the February 1812 issue of the *Herald* in which the author describes the departure of Adoniram Judson and Samuel Newell and their wives for India on the nineteenth of that month, without any details about their wives, including their names.<sup>47</sup>

The *Herald* would have been a vital tool in the agenda to promote the missionary effort as it was so widely read in the nineteenth-century American Protestant community. While there were many passages about Judson in articles about her husband or the mission in Burma, only a few, however, do more than mention her. One of these was an article in the March 1827 issue of the *Herald* that included Judson's letter to Joseph Butterworth regarding her experiences in the Anglo-Burmese War between 1824 and 1826. In order to capture readers' attention and to motivate them to contribute to the missionary cause, Judson's story was told as a romantic, exotic tale of ultimate devotion, sacrifice, and heroism. The introduction of this article in the *Herald* stated that Judson's sufferings were beyond that which was normal for missionaries, conveying ideas of exemplary actions and characteristics right from the beginning of the article. However, the writer of this comment did not make the point of claiming Judson's experiences as extraordinary for a woman missionary, suggesting that the writer considered them remarkable for anyone, and therefore, Judson could serve as an example to inspire both men and women.<sup>48</sup>

Judson's obstacles during the Anglo-Burmese War began when Adoniram was arrested on June 8, 1824 because the Burmese suspected all foreigners of being spies

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<sup>47</sup> "Ordination." *The Panoplist, and Missionary Magazine United*. February, 1812. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed June 2008).

<sup>48</sup> "Burmah; Sufferings of the Missionaries at Ava." *The Missionary Herald, containing the Proceedings of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*. (1821-1906), March 1827, 85. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed June 2008).

for the British. Judson was put under house arrest as a foreigner and was only able to visit her husband in prison by bribing officials with the few possessions that had not been confiscated. The accounts about war, including those in the *Herald* as well as in Knowles's memoir of Judson's life among many others, described how Judson followed her husband as he was moved from prison to prison, traveling several miles a day in the hot Burmese sun. Judson appealed to government officials or female members of the royal family for the release of her husband, almost every day for seven months and frequently after that but with no success. Judson's letter included in the *Herald* also described her daily personal obstacles. For example, she described how afraid she was to go into public, as there was such a hatred for foreigners, and how she wore Burmese fashions to stand out less. This, however, did not stop her trembling as she walked through the streets. In addition, she was dealing with these hardships while pregnant; she gave birth to a daughter who suffered from many illnesses, just as Judson herself and the two Burmese girls she was caring for did, only adding to her struggles. Judson's letter also told of Adoniram's hardships: suffering from fevers, living in prisons with little or no shelter in 106 degree weather, and being forced to march for miles between prisons without shoes, hat, or shirt during the hottest part of the day.<sup>49</sup> This story was retold in the majority of nineteenth century works about Judson as part of various agendas, becoming a major component of her legacy.

Following the first publication of her memoir in 1829, tens of thousands of readers in both the United States and Great Britain were captivated by Judson's experiences as a missionary wife, especially during the Anglo-Burmese War. Her memoir, *Memoir of Mrs. Ann H. Judson, late missionary to Burmah [sic]: including a*

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid

*history of the American Baptist mission in the Burman Empire*, was compiled by James Knowles and was one of the many memoirs compiled to commemorate women missionaries who went abroad. It was published in both the United States and Great Britain. By 1831, Judson's memoir had sold 12,500 copies in its first three editions. At least eleven editions had been printed by 1850 including an 1839 edition published in Germany. In the "Preface" to the memoir, Knowles stated that almost immediately after receiving news of Judson's death, the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions decided a memoir about Judson should be compiled to commemorate her life. Knowles, however, claimed the primary reason for publishing such a work was to advance the missionary cause by motivating people to join the movement after reading the stories of missionaries like Judson. Therefore, this work was meant to promote the foreign missionary movement by showing how much Judson and her husband accomplished and how inspiring was Judson's devotion to God.<sup>50</sup>

### **Promoting Women's Involvement in the Foreign Missionary Effort**

It could also be argued that the works describing Judson's story were intended to reach out to women specifically as is the case for Knowles' memoir honoring Judson. Not only was the memoir meant to inspire all Christians, both men and women, but Knowles also intended it to inspire women through the example of Judson as a woman missionary. Knowles drew attention to the fact that Judson was very influential, especially among women, even before serving as a missionary wife. For instance, soon after learning that Judson accepted Adoniram's marriage proposal and subsequently a place as a missionary wife, Harriet Newell also decided to become a missionary wife. Knowles included Newell's journal entry from October 20, 1810, in which she

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<sup>50</sup> Knowles, op. cit, pp. iii-vi.

questioned how she could refuse to follow in Judson's footsteps; if Judson could make such great sacrifices for God, then Newell thought she could, too.<sup>51</sup>

Knowles paid close attention to the importance of women in the missionary effort. As did many other memoirists of women missionaries, Knowles claimed that missionary women like Judson gained a place in Heaven, suggesting that missionary work was a way for anyone, and especially women, to gain a place in Heaven.<sup>52</sup> He believed that Judson could influence and inspire other women to contribute to the missionary cause in order to help others and carry out their duty to God. Part of this belief originated from Knowles', as well as many others', opinions that what were considered woman's natural qualities complemented missionary work. Knowles wrote:

It is a happy peculiarity of modern benevolent exertions, that females are invited to participate in the holy work of benefiting and saving mankind. There are posts which they may occupy, appropriate to their warm affections, and their untiring zeal, and yet to their modest and retiring habits. A large proportion of the whole sum of good, which is accomplished in the world, is the result of female diligence and liberality. In the support of the Burman mission, the Ladies of our churches and congregations may contribute essential aid. The female schools seem to claim their special attention, as the most direct and efficacious method of elevating the social condition, cultivating the minds, and saving the souls of the women of Burmah [sic].<sup>53</sup>

With such beliefs, Knowles openly questioned, "Why should such disinterested benevolence and heroic firmness fail to obtain the applause of men?"<sup>54</sup> He believed that Judson as well as other women missionaries deserved the same amount of attention for their work as men, if not more. Knowles argued that Judson should be praised for her contributions to the foreign missionary movement and for accomplishing so much as a

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<sup>51</sup> Knowles, op. cit, p. 43.

<sup>52</sup> Pruitt, op. cit, p. 42.

<sup>53</sup> Knowles, op. cit, pp. 401-402.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, op. cit, p. 53.

woman defined by early nineteenth-century ideas and practices. In addition, Knowles suggested the major role women could play in the missionary effort.

Despite frequent attempts to motivate the entire American Protestant community to contribute to the foreign missionary movement, some articles included in issues of *The Panoplist*, and *Missionary Magazine* or *The Missionary Herald* were intended specifically for female readers. For example, the December 1812 issue included a letter written by “two young ladies, now the wives of American Missionaries in India” to another missionary wife before her own departure. Although they were not named, it is likely these two women were Ann Judson and Harriet Newell. In the letter, they wrote that since the three of them were experiencing the same difficulties due to their status as missionary wives, they had a strong connection. In addition to addressing woman’s new place as a missionary wife, the authors wrote of their own experiences, providing the readers with firsthand accounts of their thoughts and feelings; the letter emphasized that their decisions to participate were not made in haste or based on poor reasons but stemmed from their desire to sacrifice everything to serve God. Many of their comments were meant to combat opposition to what many considered inappropriate and irrational decisions and actions. They wrote:

Our contemplated undertaking is great, arduous, and highly important. To enter a path untrod before by an American female requires much previous consideration...A life of self-denial is before us, and we must begin by cutting the most tender ties. The paternal roof, and all that is endearing in the appellation of parent, sister, and brother, must be forsaken, never to be seen more...lost forever. We must encounter the dangers of the deep, perhaps be taken by some foreign tyrannical power, separated from those we love... Yes, we will give up worldly happiness, joyfully encounter the dangers of the deep and the unknown trials that await us, at our place of destination.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> N--. “Missionary Letters.” *The Panoplist, and Missionary Magazine (1808-1812)*, December 1, 1812, 316. <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed June 2008).

This passage is one of the earliest published works to suggest that editors and authors considered Judson and Newell potential examples for other women to follow because of their heroic selflessness and devotion to God.

Daniel Clarke Eddy was another nineteenth-century author who wanted to support and defend women's role in the foreign missionary effort in order to encourage women to participate in the missionary movement. He attempted to accomplish this goal by telling the stories of women missionaries. This was true for his two works, *Heroines of the Missionary Enterprise: or Sketches of Prominent Female Missionaries*, published in 1850, and *Daughters of the Cross: or Woman's Missionaries*, published in 1855. Though with different titles, publishers, and publication dates, these works are basically the same, with only a few chapters removed from the latter. The fact that his work commemorating female missionaries was republished suggests that it was well received by the reading public. A review of *Heroines* in the September 1850 "Editors' Book Table" of *Godey's Lady's Book*, a secular magazine exclusively dedicated to women, stated that this work was expected to be popular among "our mothers and daughters."<sup>56</sup> This remark supports the theory that women were greatly influenced by other women in general and in regards to the missionary effort specifically.

In *Heroines of the Missionary Enterprise*, Eddy demonstrated how much he respected women missionaries in general and specifically those he included in his work through an anonymous quote on his title page: "But there are deeds which should not pass away,/And names that must not wither."<sup>57</sup> Through their examples, Eddy attempted to "inspire the heart of the reader with missionary enthusiasm, and do justice to the

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<sup>56</sup> "Editors' Book Table: The Patapsco Young Ladies' Magazine. New Music..." *Godey's Lady's Book*, September, 1850. Accessible Archives Inc. <http://www.accessible.com> (accessed July 2008).

<sup>57</sup> Eddy, op. cit, title page.

memory of those who deserve more honor than the fallen warrior and the titled senator.’<sup>58</sup> He also recognized how well-known and how important the women in his work were since their stories had previously been told so many times. Such extensive public and literary attention demonstrates the change of attitude about women in the missionary movement, from being seen as romantic, irrational, and improper when Judson left for Burma in 1812 to being considered angelic, heroic, and self-sacrificing; many came to believe these women deserved great admiration and fame for their actions especially after their deaths. This evolution of attitudes was a result of the written agendas in works such as Eddy’s in promoting missionary work and women’s roles and significance in it.<sup>59</sup>

In his work, Eddy dedicated each chapter to a different woman missionary he deemed worthy of praise, and among this select group he considered Judson deserving of special attention. Eddy claimed that she would be one of the women who would be honored throughout time because of her great importance in the missionary effort as the first American missionary wife, her exemplary heroic life, and her thirteen years of service. In his chapter about Judson, Eddy described the important events of her life including her conversion, the difficult decision to accept Adoniram’s marriage proposal and place as a missionary wife despite strong opposition, her promoting of the missionary cause during her return to the United States, and especially her experiences in the Anglo-Burmese War. Eddy concentrated on Judson’s life during the war, describing how she continually worked for the release of her husband and the other prisoners by appealing to the Burmese government and the royal family but how “So completely does heathenism deaden the heart to all generous and elevated feelings, that those strong men could witness unmoved, aye, with delight, the intense anguish of a feeble, weeping, broken-

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, “Preface.”

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, “Preface” and pp. 33-34.

hearted woman. To every prayer she offered, and every plea she made, they gave back words of cruelty and scorn.”<sup>60</sup> Eddy’s descriptions of the Burmans who Judson faced for her husband’s freedom distressed American Protestant readers in the nineteenth century. The language Eddy used amplified Judson’s actions by writing that she encountered such great obstacles and by presenting the Burmans as evil, unfeeling people because they were not Christians. These readings motivated many Americans to contribute to the missionary cause. Eddy also recognized that Judson went to the prisons, where no other woman was likely to have dared to go, and that she was allowed entrance into the prison only due to her “devotion and tireless perseverance.”<sup>61</sup> In addition, Eddy included the statement written by an English prisoner regarding Judson and her efforts to help the foreigners arrested by the Burmans (see section on Women in Society pages 35-36 for further details). This statement was published in India and Britain in addition to in the United States, suggesting that nineteenth-century authors believed it reinforced Judson’s reputation and role as an example for others to follow. In the statement, the prisoner described how Judson forgot her own needs to care for others and how, through her actions, she demonstrated the power of faith.<sup>62</sup>

Eddy concluded his tribute to Judson by claiming that her story belongs to all Christians, and not just to those of her denomination, and that the church will remember her forever: “On the record of American missions we find the name of no female who endured so much—who sacrificed so much—who accomplished so much.”<sup>63</sup> Lastly, Eddy acknowledged that along with Harriet Newell, Judson was one of the first heroines of the missionary effort and that Newell and Judson were “humble instruments of the

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<sup>60</sup> Eddy, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* p. 56.

<sup>62</sup> Eddy, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-59.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

missionary church.”<sup>64</sup> Such carefully chosen language suggests that Eddy wrote these works with a certain intention. Like many other nineteenth-century authors, he portrayed Judson as a saint-like, ideal Christian woman in order to encourage readers to follow her example and join the missionary movement.<sup>65</sup>

Another nineteenth-century author who praised Judson was Sarah Hale. Hale’s *Woman’s Record*, originally published in 1852, is an encyclopedic collection of biographies of important women throughout history and from all over the world. Especially in her “Introduction” and “General Preface,” Hale placed a great deal of emphasis on religion. She claimed that women were naturally more moral than men as designed by God and were therefore vital in establishing religious sentiment and morality in society. As a result of such beliefs, Hale greatly valued women missionaries, believing they played a major role in the missionary effort, and included descriptions of the lives of several American women missionaries including Ann Judson. She also included charts of information about hundreds of American women missionaries including their names, maiden names, husbands’ names, places of birth, places of missionary work, and years of departure as well as notes if deceased. Incorporating such extensive information about women missionaries in her work suggests how highly Hale valued women’s work in the missionary effort.<sup>66</sup>

To Hale, Judson was one of the most important, influential, and praiseworthy American women missionaries, as suggested by the language and information provided in the extensive entry dedicated to Judson in *Woman’s Record*. Hale paid particularly close attention to Judson’s extraordinary experiences as a missionary wife during the Anglo-

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 61.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, pp. 58, 60-61.

<sup>66</sup> Hale, Sarah Josepha. *Woman’s Record*. (New York: Source Book Press, 1970), pp. vii, xxxvi, xlv-xlvi, 901-911.

Burmese War, and her language contributed to the heroic and exemplary picture she painted of Judson in order to inspire readers. She wrote that Judson was an “angelic woman, whose mission was to wear out her precious life for the preservation of others and the advancement of her Saviour’s [sic] cause” and that “Well does she merit the reverence and love of all Christians; nor can the nineteenth century furnish the record of a woman who so truly deserves the title—a missionary heroine.”<sup>67</sup>

Included in the “Third Annual Report of the Auxiliary Foreign Mission Society, in the Eastern District of Fairfield County” is Rhoda F. Wheeler’s report for the Ladies’ Association of Monroe at their meeting in Brookfield, Connecticut on October 4, 1827. She emphasized her support for women missionaries by stating that:

The same devoted spirit which caused a weeping Mary to be searching at the dawning of the day for her risen Saviour [sic], has impressed the feelings, and influenced the conduct of females in the circle of our own observation and acquaintance. They have left their country and native home; bid adieu to the endearments of refined society, and religious privileges, that they might carry the benign influence of the gospel to cheer and enlighten the dark corners of the earth.<sup>68</sup>

Wheeler also recognized the extensive effect women have as mothers since they were the primary influence over their children as their first teachers; therefore, women can raise their children to be good Christians.<sup>69</sup>

In addition, Wheeler praised Judson individually since by this time, Judson’s story was well-known by members of the American Protestant community through previous publications about her experiences even though she had died less than a year before. Wheeler’s singling out of Judson suggests that among the other women

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p. 368.

<sup>68</sup> “Third Annual Report of the Auxiliary Foreign Mission Society, in the Eastern District of Fairfield County; at a meeting in Brookfield, October 4, 1827: from the Ladies’ Association of Monroe.” (New Haven: Nathan Whiting, 1827), p. 19.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

missionaries who had served by that time, Judson was the one who deserved to be honored and the one who was seen as the prime example to follow because of her commendable qualities: “Who does not admire the devotedness, the patient submission, the self-denial, the heroic fortitude, of Mrs. Judson? Who would not wish to emulate her virtues, and to gain a covert beneath the extending mantle, when her spirit took its upward flight?”<sup>70</sup> Wheeler hoped that Judson’s example and the praise Judson received from many people would encourage Americans and especially women to help in the missionary cause, paralleling the agenda of many other American Protestant authors. Wheeler even tried to make people feel responsible for contributing to the cause, stating that “If we do not wish to go to heaven ourselves, we can be excused, and heaven will be full” of those such as Judson who did help in the missionary effort.<sup>71</sup>

Lastly, Judson was used as a standard for missionary wives, becoming an example for other women to follow. For instance, in a review of a memoir of the woman missionary Sarah Lanman Smith that appeared in the “Editor’s Book Table” of the August 1842 issue of *Godey’s*, the reviewer noted that Smith “furnishes one more instance to those of a Newell and a Judson, and other honoured names among the pious and self-sacrificing women of America, of devotion to the missionary cause.”<sup>72</sup> The mentioning of Judson as well as Newell implies that the reviewer considered them worthy of special mention above all of the other female missionaries. Over time, they developed positive reputations and were whom later women missionaries looked up to as examples to follow and a model for future missionary wives. Since conveyed by many nineteenth-

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> “Third” op. cit.

<sup>72</sup> “Godey’s Lady’s Book.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2009. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9124973>. (accessed January, 2009).

century authors as the exemplary model to follow, Judson became the epitome of woman missionaries.

### **“Woman’s Work for Women”**

The idea of “woman’s work for women” was a key justification of women’s involvement in the missionary movement. This was the belief that women should help other women.<sup>73</sup> On November 19, 1822, Judson wrote an address “To Females in America, Relative to the Situation of Females in the East” as an appeal to her fellow American women for aid in “civilizing” heathen nations. This address was included in many nineteenth-century works including James Knowles’ memoir to Judson as well as the November 30, 1822 edition of *The Christian Watchman*, a Protestant magazine published in the United States. Like many others, Judson argued that “heathen” societies were uncivilized and that women in these societies suffered from degradation due to a lack of Christianity. To gain female readers’ support, Judson addressed women directly and drew their attention to the fact that women in Christianized nations such as the United States were blessed with privileges and with education that brought the female mind to its rightful state because of Christianity, the presence of which people believed civilized society. Meanwhile, women in “heathen” societies were prohibited from receiving education, leading to their oppressed status. Judson also described in her address how arranged marriages were made for young girls by their parents in some heathen nations and how women were not educated in how to carry out their duties as wives or mothers which contradicted nineteenth-century American ideas of womanhood. Their husbands called them “dogs” or “servants” rather than considering them equal companions, and

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<sup>73</sup> Keller, Rosemary Skinner and Rosemary Radford Ruether, ed. *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*. (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 836.

women in some heathen societies were expected to willingly burn with their husbands' corpses. This practice, called "widow-burning," was considered a duty of women to their husbands. If a woman refused, she disgraced her family, leading to further degradation as, for example, her family would give her barely enough food to survive. With such a low status in society, Judson stated that it was no wonder that mothers saw having daughters as a curse, often leading to female infanticide.<sup>74</sup>

Judson recognized in her address that these extremes were not present in every "heathen" nation. However, she argued that no matter what the level of visible female oppression present in a society, Christian women had a duty to help their degraded fellow women; Christian women were privileged and therefore were responsible to help other women who were deprived of civilization and salvation. According to Judson, Christian women did not face such social injustices, thus proving that Scripture was the way to their salvation in this life as well as the next, since the presence of Christianity was the major difference between the United States and heathen societies. After noting that heathen women had natural intelligence but only lacked exposure to Scripture, Judson wrote (with emphasis in the original):

Shall we, my beloved friends, suffer minds like these to lie dormant, to wither in ignorance and delusion, to grope their way to eternal ruin, without an effort on our part, to raise, to refine, to elevate, and to point to that Saviour [sic] who has died equally for them as for us? Shall we sit down in indolence and ease, indulge in all the luxuries with which we are surrounded, and which our country so bountifully affords, and leave beings like these, flesh and blood, intellect and feeling, like ourselves, and of *our own sex*, to perish, to sink into eternal misery? No! by all the tender feelings of which the female mind is susceptible, by all the privileges and blessings resulting from the cultivation and expansion of the human mind, by our duty to God, and our fellow creature, and by the blood and groans of Him who died on Calvary, let us make a united

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<sup>74</sup> Knowles, op. cit, pp. 400-406.

effort; let us call on all, old and young, in the circle of our acquaintance, to join us in attempting to meliorate the situation, to instruct, to enlighten, and save females in the Eastern world; and though time and circumstances should prove that our united exertions have been ineffectual, we shall escape at death that bitter thought, that Burman females have been lost, without an effort of ours to prevent their ruin.<sup>75</sup>

Judson wrote this address with the intention of promoting and justifying women's missionary work. She believed women were important in missionary activity abroad as missionary wives as well as at home by influencing others to become involved in the missionary effort. Through vivid descriptions of the degrading status of women in heathen nations, Judson hoped to inspire female audiences to join the missionary movement, and to encourage women to persuade others to become involved. Many authors used similar descriptions that horrified nineteenth-century readers for the same purpose, but Judson's efforts may have held more sway as they were made by a woman who had already made personal sacrifices to face an uncivilized world and was eager to continue doing so.

### **Promoting Female Education**

Female education also played a role in the foreign missionary effort regarding the education of the women missionaries themselves as well as the education of native women and children in the locations of the missions. While many opposed female education outside what was necessary for the domestic sphere, Sarah Hale disagreed. She argued that the examples of the women in her collection proved the benefits that resulted from the education of women on their intelligence and character. Hale believed that men and society in general also gained from improving women's education since educated women were better prepared to educate their children. According to Hale, societies in

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<sup>75</sup> Knowles, op. cit. pp. 400-406.

which men opposed education for women were uncivilized and plagued by barbaric practices and traditions, while those that supported women's education were civilized, experiencing advancement in aptitude, wealth, and general development. Therefore, she argued female education revealed general social progress and thus the status of a society. Many held similar beliefs, including Judson who established schools for girls in Burma. Judson also worked closely with women to educate and convert them in hopes of ending female degradation and oppression through education and Christianity, which was considered in the nineteenth century to be the key difference between a society being civilized and uncivilized. These goals were part of "woman's work for women" in which women missionaries worked to help other women. In addition, since women were sent by God to educate their children to be good Christians, moral progress of society originated from and depended on women being educated to prepare them for their duties.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, their sons would be prepared for a life in the public sphere, and their daughters would be prepared to educate their own children.

Many articles in *Godey's Lady's Book* provided additional support for female education. This secular periodical began in 1830 when Louis A. Godey, a publisher and former newspaper editor, established a magazine out of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In January 1837, he bought the Boston *Ladies' Magazine* and invited its editor, Sarah Hale, to edit the new version of the *Godey's Lady's Book*. In 1860, the magazine achieved its highest readership of 150,000 but began to decline when Hale retired shortly after; the magazine would only continue to be published until 1898.<sup>77</sup>

The material published in *Godey's Lady's Book* aimed to educate women in areas such as health, the home, and fashion while moving away from political, religious,

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<sup>76</sup> Hale, op. cit, pp. vii, xlvii-xlviii.

<sup>77</sup> "Godey's Lady's Book" op. cit.

and social issues.<sup>78</sup> However, these distinctions were blurred by the continual inclusion of material about women missionaries, possibly in order to praise them for their accomplishments as women, wives, and mothers. Many articles about the importance of female education and of female missionaries were published. For example, in May 1837 in *Godey's Lady's Book*, "The Ladies' Mentor" noted that the education of females was the best proposal in a pamphlet entitled "Suggestions on the Best Mode of Promoting Civilization and Improvement." This article also argued that missionary efforts would fail unless females were brought out of ignorance and degradation since women were so important in society; this could not be accomplished without education.<sup>79</sup> These two comments connect to the idea that missionaries could civilize a people through female education.

Although not explicitly stating the significance of female education, James Knowles did recognize the important role education played in Judson's life. However, he presented information regarding her education as subtext to the circumstances of her religious conversion. He described how Judson was educated at the Bradford Academy starting at the age of twelve or thirteen, and became a member of the Congregational Church in Bradford at the age of seventeen while at the school.<sup>80</sup> She soon became so connected with her faith that she wrote letters to her friends who had not found Jesus Christ, encouraging them to repent for their sins.<sup>81</sup> This attention to and concern for people's faith foreshadowed her future as a missionary. Judson also was a teacher after graduating from the Academy, providing her with experience that would help her later in

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> "The Ladies' Mentor." *Godey's Lady's Book (1835-1839)*, May, 1837. Accessible Archives Inc. <http://www.accessible.com> (accessed July 2008).

<sup>80</sup> Eddy, op. cit, pp. 34, 39.

<sup>81</sup> Knowles, op. cit, p. 22.

life as a missionary teacher.<sup>82</sup> Despite describing Judson's education as secondary to her conversion, many believed that a basic education prepared women for their duties abroad.

### **Women in Society**

While some works about Judson were written specifically to promote missionary work or women's involvement in the movement through her story and example, many publications used Judson and her life as a missionary to illustrate certain ideas about women and their roles in nineteenth-century American society. Promoting women's involvement in the missionary effort was also an attempt to endorse a new place for women in American society, often by interpreting missionary work as a connection to women's traditional place in society. Such support was included in secular nineteenth-century works, as Daniel Eddy suggested. Eddy recognized that Judson was honored as a good nineteenth-century woman especially because of her actions during the Anglo-Burmese War, for which she received a large amount of attention in a wide variety and extensive collection of works. He wrote:

Her kindness to the prisoners—her arduous labors to do them good—her appeals to the government—her visits to the nobles—her ceaseless efforts won for her undissembled gratitude and immoral renown. Nor are the acts of Mrs. Judson recorded alone on the records of Christian missionaries. The secular press of our own and others lands, ascribed to her the honor of materially assisting in the adjustment of the existing difficulties, and by her appeals and persuasions, doing much to prevent bloodshed and crime.<sup>83</sup>

Eddy believed that Judson's actions prevented the execution of the prisoners including her husband, demonstrating woman's capabilities and their important role in the public realm as it was, after all, through her efforts that their lives were saved.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Eddy, op. cit, p. 40.

<sup>83</sup> Eddy, op. cit, pp. 55-56.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, pp. 55-56, 58.

In *Woman's Record*, Sarah Hale described how she valued women because she believed they had a significant role in nineteenth-century society as, according to Hale, God designed women to be more moral and spiritually pure than men. Therefore, women were held responsible for instilling morality in humanity especially by raising their children to be good Christians, thus aiding and spurring on progress. More specifically, women were responsible for encouraging valued qualities such as piety and righteousness in their sons in preparation for their futures in the public sphere. Hale claimed this duty was a holier job than the work that men did. She also noted that people believed every important man in history owed his skills, virtues, and success to his mother. Hale concluded that if women received the privileges God meant them to have, women could carry out their duties as mothers. Furthermore, while believing women had great influence over society through their traditional roles, Hale opposed feminist thinking and gender equality, or as she saw it “competition” with men. Women’s duties were moral, familial, and domestic. By establishing such theories, Hale hoped to improve the reputation of women since she believed they held such a valued position in the progress of humanity through their traditional place in society.<sup>85</sup>

However, Hale argued that without Christianity, women were barred from their rightful freedoms, meaning that society was inhibited because women—“God’s appointed agent of morality”<sup>86</sup>—were oppressed and therefore could not carry out their duties to spread morality. Such thinking supported the idea of missionary work and women’s involvement in the effort. Hale considered women missionaries like Judson important because of their great efforts to advance humanity in “heathen” nations through their traditional place in society, especially by educating women and children. As a

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<sup>85</sup> Hale, op. cit, pp. viii, xlv-xlvi, 689.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. xxxv.

result, Hale greatly supported foreign missionary work in general and women's involvement in it.<sup>87</sup>

In addition, Hale's entry about Judson concentrated on her experiences during the Anglo-Burmese War. Hale considered Judson's actions as signs of exemplary devotion to her husband, as was Judson's duty as a wife. She also included an extract from a statement made by an English prisoner held in the same prison as Adoniram to express his great appreciation for Judson's efforts to help all of the prisoners. He stated:

the overflowings of grateful feelings on behalf of myself and fellow-prisoners, compel me to add a tribute of public thanks to that amiable and humane female, who, though living at a distance of two miles from our prison, without any means of conveyance, and very feeble in health, forgot her own comfort and infirmity, and almost every day visited us, sought out and administered to our wants, and contributed to every way to alleviate our misery.<sup>88</sup>

Not only did Judson's efforts help her husband, but they also helped save the lives of the other prisoners, and many believed she was able to accomplish this without exceeding her social boundaries as a woman. The fact that Hale concentrated on Judson's actions during the war and excluded details about her own missionary work suggests that Hale wanted to use Judson's example to demonstrate what women were capable of and show how they benefited humanity through their traditional place in society rather than through new, more public roles including those of missionaries.<sup>89</sup> However, this is disregarding her more public efforts including appealing to the government for aid.

L. Maria Child was another author who praised Judson for fulfilling her traditional expected duties as a wife according to nineteenth-century standards. Like many other nineteenth-century authors, Child suggested in her work *Married Women*:

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Hale, op. cit, p. 369.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, pp. 367-369.

*Biographies of Good Wives*, published in 1871, that Judson was an example of a good wife because of her devotion to her husband and her efforts to help the other prisoners during the Anglo-Burmese War. As many other authors did, Child noted that an English prisoner wrote a tribute to Judson for all she did for them during their imprisonment, forgetting herself and only caring for others. Lastly, Child included a quote from one of Adoniram's letters describing Judson and how much Adoniram valued her: "With what meekness, patience, magnanimity, and Christian fortitude, did she endure those sufferings."<sup>90</sup> Child praised Judson as a good wife, suggesting how women already had important domestic roles in the nineteenth century through which they impacted society.<sup>91</sup>

In addition, *Noble Deeds of American Women*, edited by Jesse Clement and originally published in 1851, is a nineteenth-century secular publication that identified Judson's importance in American women's history because of the effects she had on society through her involvement in the missionary effort. This work highlighted Judson's efforts to promote the missionary cause by attending meetings of female associations during her return to the United States, by writing a history of the Burman mission, and by writing letters to encourage others to work for the cause and in turn to persuade others to become involved in the effort. Although a more secular work, this publication did include information about many women missionaries. Referring to all of the women missionaries discussed, this work claimed that "The names of these pioneer missionaries are sacred to the memory of all living Christians, and, being embodied in the history of the grandest enterprise of the age, are to be handed down to all future generations."<sup>92</sup> The text suggests the importance of the missionary movement in nineteenth-century America

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<sup>90</sup> Child, op. cit, p. 235.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, pp. 224-237.

<sup>92</sup> Clement, Jesse, ed. *Noble Deeds of American Women* (New York: Arno Press and a New York Times Co., 1974), p. 53.

and how vital women were in the movement. Women's involvement in the missionary effort was significant to nineteenth-century American society because religion was a vital factor, affecting many people and many aspects of life in nineteenth-century America. According to the section about Judson, Clement claimed that she endured more hardships and dangers than other women, and these obstacles tested and proved the strength of her faith, as well as her own emotional and psychological strength.<sup>93</sup>

Judson is specifically mentioned in many articles published in *Godey's Lady's Book* especially in the first two decades of its publication. For example, an article entitled "The Heroism of the Knights Errant and of the Female Missionaries of America," by Rufus Wilmot Griswold, was published in *Godey's Lady's Book* in the August 1848 issue. As the magazine was a secular publication, its articles were able to promote women's participation and significant roles not only in missionary work but also in society. In addition to details about the male missionaries, Griswold told the stories of five women missionaries, beginning with Judson. As many other nineteenth-century authors did in their works describing Judson, Griswold excluded her missionary accomplishments other than her efforts to promote the missionary movement and focused on her actions during the Anglo-Burmese War. He noted that her demonstrations of "Christian heroism" and "benevolence, constancy, and fortitude"<sup>94</sup> were praised in several works published both in India and Britain. Among these writings was a work by an officer of the British military staff in Burma called "Two Years in Ava." In his article, Griswold included an extract from this work that described Judson provides a vivid summary of her experiences, stating that:

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<sup>93</sup> Clement, op. cit, pp. 53, 57-59, 63.

<sup>94</sup> Griswold, op. cit.

The sufferings mental and bodily, to which that amiable and interesting woman had been exposed during the confinement of her husband, were so great, that it is almost impossible to believe her fragile form could resist such accumulated distress. Her personal liberty was not restrained, and she availed herself of it to make repeated and unavailing efforts for the enlargement of her husband but her solicitations were constantly refused. . . and at one period, the prisoners having been removed to a place of confinement several miles from Ava, she followed and took up her abode in a miserable hut, where, to escape insult, she assumed the Burman attire. A more dreadful situation for a woman of feeling and education to be placed in cannot well be imagine: she possessed not a single friend to whom she might look for assistance and support; she had no home to inhabit; her daily food was of the coarsest description; and to increase her cares, Mr. Judson's life she knew to be in the power of a cruel and sanguinary court. Yet still her strong mind and good sense enabled her to make way against her adversities, until an addition was made to her cares by the birth of her infant, when she became so dangerously ill, that Dr. Rice, on being released from prison, found her perfectly senseless.<sup>95</sup>

The language used in the descriptions of Judson's experiences created an image of Judson as a heroine and suggested the strength and abilities women had. Through his report, the British officer conveys his beliefs that Judson did more than expected of her especially as a woman and that she faced horrible obstacles in every part of her life in order to help others.

The passage above is an example of the positive public attention in both America and in Britain Judson received for her efforts. As a result of such praise, Griswold called her an "Admirable woman," and asked "How many canonized saints have been as pious? How many heroes have been as brave?"<sup>96</sup> Griswold's article suggests that Judson was respected for her actions during her husband's imprisonment rather than for her work as a woman missionary.

Another article in *Godey's Lady's Book* that refers to Judson was "The Ladies' Mentor" in the August 1837 issue. The author of this article included a quote

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<sup>95</sup> Griswold, op. cit.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

from the principal of the New Hampton Seminary who claimed that woman's sphere was more extended than in any previous period. The principal suggested that this pushing of social boundaries was a result of women gaining more responsibilities after demonstrating their capabilities and talents. The principal stated:

To the missionary enterprise, and the example of our beloved Mrs. Judson, are we much indebted for the proof of what woman might do. Amid the solitude and gloom of heathenism, there was no room for narrow jealousy, lest woman should tread too closely upon the steps of her husband; there her energies were demanded, and they were at hand... Woman is no longer limited in her range to the sequestered walks of private life.<sup>97</sup>

Unlike many people who tried to defend women's missionary work as corresponding to women's traditionally accepted place in society, the principal suggested through this remark that Judson breached or extended the domestic sphere, opening the door into the public sphere. Such comments demonstrate the development of the connection between missionary work and feminist ideas, even though the women missionaries themselves claimed they had no intentions in changing the gender hierarchy or challenging male authority.<sup>98</sup>

The above works along with many other examples of nineteenth-century publications and writings demonstrate how Judson's life and story were used as part of the agenda of the American Protestant community to promote the foreign missionary movement and women's role in the movement, as well as certain ideas or changes related to women's place and role in society. Judson was portrayed as having shown extraordinary devotion and experiences as a missionary wife, all of which were used to create an image of a missionary saint and martyr after her death who everyone should try

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<sup>97</sup> "The Ladies' Mentor." *Godey's Lady's Book*. August 1837. Accessible Archives Inc. <http://www.accessible.com> (accessed July 2008).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

to emulate by participating in the missionary effort. Judson's example was specifically used to inspire women. She was admired and praised for what people considered demonstrations of heroism, determination, selflessness, and devotion to both God and her husband. The common exclusion of her accomplishments as a missionary and the concentration on her experiences during the Anglo-Burmese War, however, may have been conscious strategies to promote the important characteristics of women and their significant contributions to society as well as the missionary effort without suggesting that it was improper or a breach of their traditional place in society.

## Chapter 3

### CONCLUSION

Victor Hugo labeled the nineteenth century the “woman’s century” because of the progress women were making at the time.<sup>99</sup> Ann Judson’s story was one of the many stories of women in religion that support this statement. Judson’s story was told throughout the nineteenth century by Protestant American authors to encourage people to contribute to the foreign missionary effort, or to support and defend women’s involvement in the effort as well as women’s place in society. The depiction of Judson as an icon of evangelical femininity was intended to motivate American women to contribute to the missionary cause; she became a role model for American Protestant women.

Judson’s own promotional efforts and the example she set contributed to the growth of American public support for the foreign missionary movement as well as women’s role in the effort. The author of “The Ladies’ Mentor” in the August 1837 issue of *Godey’s Lady’s Book* wrote that “When the movement was first made, the necessity of employing women as well as men in our missionary plans was not understood. But now, when it is found indispensable that every missionary sent abroad should be accompanied by his wife...not unfrequently, she is the most successful of the two.”<sup>100</sup> With the support of the American public, foreign missions continued, as did

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<sup>99</sup> Tucker, Ruth A. and Walter L. Liefeld. *Daughters of the Church*. (Michigan: Academie Books and Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), p. 245.

<sup>100</sup> “The Ladies’ Mentor” op. cit.

women's role in them. By facing great public opposition to women's involvement in foreign missions to serve God and to help others, Judson inspired American women and opened the door for future women missionaries. Women's acceptance into the foreign missionary effort gradually expanded throughout the nineteenth century to allow single women as well as female physicians to serve abroad. This expansion of women's role in the missionary movement during the nineteenth century again verified Victor Hugo's label of the century as the "woman's century."

Many nineteenth-century authors interpreted missionary wives' involvement in the missionary effort as support for women's traditional place in society, arguing that their responsibilities as missionary wives were continuations of their domestic, moral, and familial responsibilities. Also in support of women's traditional place in society, women missionaries denied that their involvement in the foreign missionary movement was a challenge to male authority or a call for more rights for women. However, many authors, especially in the late nineteenth century, argued that women's participation in the effort actually was a breach of the women's traditional place in society as being confined to the domestic sphere; they therefore believed it was a step towards equal rights for women. In 1881, author F.A.H. published "Women in the Missionary Lands" in *The Woman's Journal* in which he/she praised Judson as a wife, arguing that without Judson's help, Adoniram may not have survived his imprisonment and therefore would not have been able to complete his decades of service as a missionary. On the other hand, F.A.H. stated:

And so the wheels of progress roll on. It is wonderful to see how within even the last twenty years, public opinion has changed, and how the averages of occupation and positions of privilege have opened to women. And Woman must continue to advance, awaiting no permission, but taking the work of the world as her birthright equally with her brother.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> F.A.H. "Women in Missionary Lands." *The Woman's Journal*. Boston: unknown publisher, 1881. The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. <http://www.gerritsen.chadwyck.com> (accessed June 2008).

Many people considered women's involvement in the foreign missionary movement to be a religious vocation for American women and believed their involvement helped to set the foundation of the feminist movement that began in the mid-nineteenth century.

Whether they supported feminist thinking or not, women missionaries had a prominent influence on nineteenth-century American society because of their significant role in the foreign missionary movement and consequently in religion in the United States. Especially due to the Second Great Awakening, religion became a major element in nineteenth-century American society, and the foreign missionary movement was a major element of the Awakening. As the first American woman to serve abroad as a missionary wife and with a strong presence in promotional works for the missionary effort, Judson was a major player in American society and history.

Analyzing Judson's life and role as a missionary wife in the American foreign missionary movement as well as in promotional works helps us to better understand the establishment and evolution of the missionary movement, especially in its infancy. Judson's story and place in the religious agenda also helps us understand the evolution of women's role in both the missionary movement as well as the larger society. Through Judson, we can observe the extensive and strategic use and power of written works used to promote the missionary movement among other religious endeavors. Whether as the first American woman missionary, a humanitarian working to improve the status of Burmese women, or an early feminist, Judson affected nineteenth-century American society. Through her own actions and her story, Ann Judson became the epitome of nineteenth-century evangelical femininity and the first heroine in the history of the American foreign missionary movement.

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