

**“THE SEED OF THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT”: FOREIGN MISSIONS,  
PRINT CULTURE, AND EVANGELICAL IDENTITY IN THE  
EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC**

by

Ashley E. Moreshead

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Ashley E. Moreshead

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ABCFM	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
ABHS	American Baptist Historical Society

## **ABSTRACT**

Evangelical Protestants in the early republic published pamphlets, memoirs, and periodicals as a way of identifying to each other and to the unevangelized world who they were and what it meant to be an evangelical, creating their own “print culture” as they tried to preserve the purity of their message while establishing a transformative presence in the world around them. Promoters of foreign missions created their own subset of evangelical literature that recruited volunteers and financial support for evangelical missions overseas. In their efforts to draw attention to the foreign missionary cause, producers of missionary literature tapped into different concerns that evangelicals shared as they navigated the evolving culture of the early republic, specifically in the Northeast, where most early leaders of the foreign missions movement were headquartered. They engaged several cultural processes—including the creation of national and denominational identity, the evolution of American masculinity, and the debates over women's roles in the early republic—and thus contributed their own perspectives to textual dialogues about the nature and evolution of American evangelical identity.

This dissertation focuses on the creation and promotion of the first two American foreign missions organizations, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, and the eventual formation of a Presbyterian Board. These northern reformed evangelicals got involved in foreign missions due to the influence of their British counterparts, who created the first voluntary missionary societies and urged Americans to follow their

example. Missions periodicals perpetuated the transatlantic aspects of evangelical identity, encouraging readers to identify with multiple communities—national, international, denominational, and evangelical—at the same time. Missionary biographies provided visions of evangelical character formation that included selfless ambition, cosmopolitan nationalism, and heroic masculinity, offering a version of evangelical sainthood that could appeal to young men with career ambitions, broadened horizons, and frontier mythology heroes. Edited female missionary memoirs provided images of evangelical womanhood, facilitating a public dialogue about the roles women should play in foreign missions, one that both missionaries in the field and people at home could participate in. Memoirs also offered models of female subjectivity that could appeal to educated, pious, ambitious young women. They depicted women exercising autonomy in their decisions to join foreign missions and seek meaningful work overseas, without threatening mainstream patriarchal values. Such literature helped to unite supporters behind a foreign missions movement while reinforcing the heterogeneity of evangelical identity in the early republic.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

When Myra Wood was thirteen years old, she read the posthumously edited and published memoir of Harriet Atwood Newell, one of the first Americans to sail overseas—and die shortly thereafter—in an effort to spread reformed evangelical Christianity in India. She “admired her amiable and engaging disposition, and was affected with her early piety... I believed she was happy, and almost wished myself possessed of that which could render her so cheerful amidst so many trying scenes.” Reading Harriet's memoir was the first step in a spiritual awakening that would culminate in Myra's conversion and, later, her own commitment to foreign missions. The publication and dissemination of texts like the memoir of Harriet Newell was crucial to both the promotion and definition of evangelical Protestantism in the early republic. As American Protestants spread an evangelical strain of Christianity through revivals and the creation of religious organizations, they also published and distributed sermons, tracts, pious memoirs, and periodicals as a way of identifying to each other as well as to the unevangelized world who they were and what it meant to be an evangelical. In fact, evangelicals created their own “print culture” as writers, publishers, and readers all engaged in the process of preserving the purity of their religious message while trying to establish a transformative presence in the world

around them.<sup>1</sup> It was within this culture of print that promoters of foreign missions created their own subset of evangelical literature, including the memoirs of both Harriet Atwood Newell and Myra Wood Allen, two young New England women who devoted their lives to Protestant overseas missions in the early nineteenth century.

Evangelical print culture began as a transatlantic phenomenon, as theological treatises and conversion and revival narratives were exchanged within a dense web of connections between Britain and her North American colonies during the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> And the transition from Anglo-American to American literature was gradual—in 1820, 70% of American publications overall were still British reproductions. The Massachusetts Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, founded in 1803, was the first American organization created strictly for the purpose of distributing religious literature. It took not only its inspiration but much of its material from the British societies that preceded it. Non-sectarian and broadly evangelical tracts from the Religious Tract Society in London, like *The Dairyman's*

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<sup>1</sup> Cyrus Mann, *Memoir of Mrs. Myra W. Allen*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, 1834), 10; Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), ch. 1. I use the term “print culture” for this study in order to emphasize the importance of the printed nature of missionary literature. This study does not focus on the responses and uses of print among readers, but rather the ways in which producers of missionary literature used publications to create textual communities and intertextual dialogues within a subculture that placed great value on the written word.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in its British Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Susan O'Brien, “A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755,” *American Historical Review* 91 no. 4 (Oct. 1986): 811-832; Frank Lambert, *Inventing the Great Awakening* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

*Daughter*, gave individuals in America as well as Britain the opportunity to experience personal transformation in their own homes without clerical supervision, as well as a sense of membership in a transatlantic religious community. A systematic reference work like Reverend Charles Buck's *Theological Dictionary* offered Americans a way to reconcile their Calvinist roots with their evangelical impulses—though a diverse and disputatious American evangelical population ultimately revised it to emphasize and defend their general practices, rather than define authoritative theological principles.<sup>3</sup> The print culture of American evangelicalism involved a combination of British influences and American adaptations in the early years of the new republic.

Over the course of the first decades of the nineteenth century, both evangelicalism and print culture in the United States gradually became “Americanized.”<sup>4</sup> Americans created a distinctly religious press in the early republic, in tandem with expanding transportation networks and new strategies for raising funds and using print technology.<sup>5</sup> In addition to identifying evangelical practices and

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<sup>3</sup> Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 48; David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 34; Kyle B. Roberts, “Locating Popular Religion in the Evangelical Tract: The Roots and Routes of The Dairyman's Daughter,” *Early American Studies* 4:1 (Spring 2006): 233-270; Matthew Bowman and Samuel Brown, “Reverend Buck's Theological Dictionary and the Struggle to Define American Evangelicalism, 1802-1851,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 29:3 (Fall 2009): 441-473.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Noll argues that by the early nineteenth century, Americans had developed a unique “intellectual synthesis” incorporating evangelical Protestantism, republicanism, and commonsense moral reasoning, which “imparted a distinctly American cast to theology.” *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9.

<sup>5</sup> For example, the Bible Society of Philadelphia, the first Bible society created in the United States in 1808, initially followed the example of the British and Foreign Bible

values, the religious press played a role in addressing the economic concerns that also helped to define religious groups and practices in the early republic. Most Protestants had a conflicted relationship with the market economy of early America, as they tried to negotiate between religious principle and economic practice. But evangelicals largely embraced the tactics of marketing and the mechanisms of commerce, while they tried to maintain their cultural and theological purity at the same time. In particular, the Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists of the urban Northeast did not shy away from the accumulation of wealth for large-scale projects but felt responsible to use it for productive purposes and avoid the corruption of power or greed. In order to fund and execute benevolent causes, denominations and voluntary societies alike relied on marketing to donors and mobilizing volunteers, processes in which “pamphleteering” and publishing played an important role.<sup>6</sup> The development of a specifically religious press and the expansion of communication networks in the nineteenth century allowed evangelicals to disseminate a larger variety of printed

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Society established in 1804. It became the first organization to invest in stereotyping, a printing process that was still new among presses in England. Investing in their own stereotype plates turned the society into a publisher as well as buyer and distributor of Bibles. Other Bible societies followed suit and moved into manufacturing as well as distribution, leading to the creation of the first national religious publishing house, the American Bible Society, in 1816. David Paul Nord, “Benevolent Capital: Financing Evangelical Book Publishing in Early Nineteenth-century America,” in *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860*, ed. by Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 154-155.

<sup>6</sup> Mark A. Noll, “Introduction,” in *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860*, ed. by Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3-29; Brown, *The Word in the World*; R. Lawrence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

materials into more areas, helping to make evangelicalism into one of the most prominent cultural influences in the early republic.

The foreign missions movement was especially reliant on the expansion of print culture. First, publications disseminated theological justifications for foreign missions among evangelical Calvinists beginning in the late eighteenth century. The first arguments for foreign evangelism were written and published as sermons or pamphlets by British evangelicals like Andrew Fuller and William Carey.<sup>7</sup> Carey's 1792 argument on behalf of foreign missions, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, reached beyond his fellow Baptists to become part of a dialogue among New Divinity theologians, who eventually articulated a justification for foreign missionary work for orthodox New Englanders.<sup>8</sup> The writings of evangelical chaplains in British colonies publicized the need for Protestant missions to Africa and Asia among American as well as British readers. Claudius Buchanan, a chaplain with the British East India Company, first

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<sup>7</sup> English Baptist Andrew Fuller's 1781 publication *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, an articulation of somewhat Edwardsean evangelical Calvinism, became "the manual of Baptist foreign missions." E. Brooks Holifield. *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 280-281.

<sup>8</sup> David W. Kling, "The New Divinity and the Origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions," in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*, ed. by William R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 22. Carey, who was himself influenced by the writings of Jonathan Edwards, argued that the Great Commission to spread the Gospel still applied to modern Christians. The New Divinity inheritors of the Edwardsean tradition eventually affirmed that missionary outreach could be used by God to extend his grace in a way that was consistent with Calvinist emphases on the absolute sovereignty of God as the author of salvation.



published *The Star in the East*, which appeared in twenty-one editions in at least nine states between 1809 and 1813 and clearly influenced a great number of American missionaries. His second work, *Christian Researches in Asia*, appeared in at least eleven American editions by 1816.<sup>9</sup> In addition to reprinting these and other British promotional texts, Americans published reports of the first British missions in evangelical magazines like *The Panoplist* and successfully raised funds to help early British missionaries. As New Englanders began to send their own missionaries overseas, and as the religious press in the United States expanded, they devoted periodicals specifically to cultivating support for the cause of foreign missions. They also began to publish American missionary memoirs alongside the biographies of British missionaries whom American readers could venerate. And with the memoir of Harriet Newell in 1812, Americans made a woman the first martyr for the cause to be memorialized in print, to be followed by many more.

The voluminous literature produced by the promoters of foreign missions highlights the complicated nature of evangelical identity in the early republic. Examining how reformed (mostly white, middle-to-upper class) evangelicals—Congregationalists as well as Presbyterians and northern Baptists—raised support to send missionaries overseas reveals ways in which evangelical identity and ideals were

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<sup>9</sup> “Virtually all of the American missionaries whose memoirs appeared before 1840 mentioned having read his works.” Lisa Joy Pruitt, *A Looking-Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2005), 44. Another example is Sierra Leone chaplain Melvill Horne, *Letters on missions; addressed to the Protestant ministers of the British churches*, which first appeared in 1784 and helped to inspire the creation of the London Missionary Society. Michael A. Rutz, *The British Zion: Congregationalism, Politics, and Empire, 1790-1850* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011), 9-11.

varied or contested during this period, even among groups with a great degree of theological consistency. Most studies of evangelical religion in the early republic focus on how its reformist and revivalist impulses shaped America's growing cities and expanding frontiers, leaving the impression that American evangelicals were focused on what they perceived to be the internal problems of their new nation and their desire to make it an orthodox Protestant one.<sup>10</sup> But the new national identity of American evangelicals coexisted with their membership in regional cultures, transatlantic denominations, a multi-denominational evangelical community, and a global Protestant church that they were expecting to cover the world in the near future. Foreign missions reflected a more outward-looking worldview of evangelicals who read about developments in other parts of the world, especially the British empire, and

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<sup>10</sup> The expansion of evangelical Christianity in early America has been well documented, while its causes have been debated. See, for example, Mark Noll, "Revolution and the Rise of Evangelical Social Influence in North Atlantic Societies," in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990*, ed. by Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994): 113-136; Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997); Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). ). In his 1960 study of the "Evangelical United Front," Charles I. Foster describes Britons and Americans facing similar social crises around the turn of the nineteenth century that prompted a conservative evangelical response in both nations. He argues that Americans largely imitated British evangelical organizations, due to the superiority of the more developed British culture. *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960).

contemplated their relationship to the peoples of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The evangelical print culture surrounding foreign missions also tapped into many different concerns that evangelicals faced as they navigated the evolving culture of the early republic, specifically in the Northeast, where most early leaders of the foreign missions movement were headquartered.<sup>11</sup> Examining how foreign missions promoters appealed to their supporters reveals how they engaged several cultural processes—such as the creation of national and denominational identity, the evolution of American masculinity, and the debates over women's roles in the early republic—and thus contributed to dialogues about the nature of evangelical Protestantism and the evolution of American evangelical identity.

Of course, one aspect of evangelical identity in the early republic was its transatlantic nature, and foreign missionary literature both illustrated and perpetuated the importance of Anglo-American connections well into the nineteenth century. As the first chapter of this dissertation explains, modern foreign missions was an Anglo-American movement that relied on transatlantic relationships and publicized them in promotional literature. British evangelicals created the first voluntary societies for

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<sup>11</sup> Historians have recently begun recognizing the importance of studying foreign missions as a way of putting Americans in the context of global history in the early nineteenth century. In “Everywhere and Nowhere: Recent Trends in American Religious History and Historiography,” Kevin M. Schultz and Paul Harvey note the development of missionary studies as a promising field for understanding how distant Christians influenced life back in America. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78:1 (March 2010): 152. Rosemarie Zagarri discusses missionary discourse as a way to put early American history in a global context and avoid depicting the United States as a particularly distinctive or isolated nation-state. “The Significance of the 'Global Turn' for the Early American Republic: Globalization in the Age of Nation-Building,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 31 (Spring 2011): 1-37.

foreign missions with the support of Americans, and later they urged their American brethren to take on greater responsibility within the movement for global evangelism. The first two American organizations in particular were hesitant to take responsibility for their own overseas missionaries as they doubted their ability to rally American supporters, so they were heavily influenced by the advice and encouragement of their British counterparts.

Chapter two shows how the American, Baptist, and eventually Presbyterian foreign missions boards deployed the image of transatlantic community in conjunction with multiple other identities—national, regional, denominational, and broadly evangelical—as they engaged the processes of nation-building and denominational growth that were taking place in the early nineteenth century. The periodical genre was a tool for building “textual communities” within the evangelical fold, and magazines devoted to foreign missions encouraged their readers to identify with multiple communities at once. The American Board encouraged the New England readers of its magazine to see themselves as citizens and representatives of the United States with a duty to perform as Americans within an Anglo-American evangelical community that was united in pursuing the expansion of a worldwide church. Denominational missionary magazines also perpetuated the image of foreign missions as an Anglo-American partnership, one where national and denominational identity coexisted with ecumenical and international cooperation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Standard accounts of early American foreign missions, such as William Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), and John A. Andrew III, *Rebuilding the Christian Commonwealth: New England Congregationalists and Foreign Missions, 1800-1830* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1976), focus on the ABCFM as a national

In addition to growing national and denominational identities, American evangelicals navigated evolving concepts of manhood in the early republic. Biographies became increasingly popular in the early nineteenth century, as they offered models of character formation to help American readers cultivate or redefine their own selves. Chapter three discusses how the editors and writers of missionary memoirs and biographies, in their efforts to draw attention to foreign missions, provided their own versions of evangelical character. They offered visions of selfless ambition, cosmopolitan nationalism, and heroic masculinity that differed from other narratives both within evangelicalism and outside it. The character traits illustrated in missionary biographies overlapped to some degree with those promoted by nationalist writers, religious reformers, and promoters of restrained masculinity, as these ideals evolved throughout the antebellum era. But they also challenged conventional conservative wisdom by offering a version of evangelical sainthood that could appeal to young men with career ambitions, broadened horizons, and frontier mythology heroes.<sup>13</sup>

The last two chapters discuss an American innovation, the female missionary memoir, and the images of evangelical womanhood that it provided. The expanding world of evangelical print in the early nineteenth century included the publication of

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organization and take for granted its relationship to national identity. The phrase “textual community” is taken from Brown, *Word in the World*.

<sup>13</sup> As Bruce Dorsey points out, studies of early American manhood are relatively new, especially as it relates to reform movements. Earlier interpretations of reform either focused on class and national culture, like Foster's *Errand of Mercy*, or on the roles of women and ideals of femininity. *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 3-6.

pious memoirs and conversion narratives written by women, offering female readers and writers an opportunity to claim a degree of spiritual agency for themselves. But the posthumously published memoirs of missionary wives depicted female autonomy and significance on new levels. Chapter four demonstrates how the new genre was used to debate the specific roles that women should or should not play in the foreign enterprise. Given the extent to which women's roles in society at large were debated in the early republic, it should come as no surprise that their roles in missions would be controversial as well. But the dialogue among mostly male-edited female memoirs reveals that this debate was shaped by a combination of concerns and ideals on the home front as well as both American and British missionary experiences in the field. Published biographies allowed for the public discussion of a variety of perspectives, some of which helped to open new opportunities for women in the field.<sup>14</sup>

Chapter five demonstrates how female missionary memoirs capitalized on the potent combination of education, revivalism, and limited career opportunities available to young white women in the Northeast as well as the growing print culture that incorporated female readers and writers. First, they drew attention to foreign missions

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<sup>14</sup> This project not only provides an opportunity to synthesize the many disparate works on women in missions, most of which focus on specific issues or case studies, but also to bring religious history into a dialogue with other works of women's history. While early works of women's history emphasized the role of religion, especially among white northeastern Protestants, many recent works of women's history have paid less attention to the importance of religion, leading Catherine Brekus to lament the fact that "at the same time as American religious historians have failed to write about women, many American women's historians have failed to consider *religion*." Brekus, "Introduction," *The Religious History of American Women: Reimagining the Past* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), quoted in Schultz and Harvey, "Everywhere and Nowhere," 131.

by addressing broader cultural concerns about what women read and how they responded to their experiences with formal education, presenting their own representations of female reading.<sup>15</sup> Their depictions of missionary women's experiences and choices offered a vision of female agency that was not too threatening to patriarchal values but still might be satisfying to ambitious young women. Many pious memoirs provided young American women with role models that evangelicals could admire, but those of women in foreign missions presented pious, socially acceptable heroines who were also well-educated, ambitious, and adventurous, with enough autonomy to pursue foreign missionary work as a career and marriage to missionaries as a way simply to fulfill their own calling.

The world of evangelical print was full of tensions and paradoxes, between denominational and ecumenical loyalties, between domestic and institutional religious practices, and between clerical and lay authority, as well as the desire to employ the marketing techniques of “the world” without tainting the purity of the message.<sup>16</sup> Missionary literature reinforced some of these tensions while contributing even more layers to the construction of evangelical identity. Its messages regarding national and denominational identity, manhood, and women's roles and autonomy usually overlapped with the values being promoted by other Americans, both inside and outside the boundaries of the evangelical fold. But the promoters of foreign missions

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<sup>15</sup> David D. Hall discusses analyzing the “rules within texts and ideological representations of reading” as one of many ways in which historians can conceptualize the history of reading and print culture. *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 180.

<sup>16</sup> Brown, *Word in the World*, 33.

offered alternatives to some of the narratives presented by nationalists or other evangelical writers, as they appealed to northeastern young men and women who were navigating a rapidly changing culture and economy. They also maintained a somewhat cosmopolitan worldview that supported the importance of global evangelism in the face of growing domestic concerns among Protestant leaders and reformers, and encouraged their readers to identify with national and international communities simultaneously. Their contributions to evangelical print culture illustrate perhaps the ultimate paradox—the failure of evangelicals to cohere into a unified movement, in spite of so many efforts and illusions to the contrary.



## Chapter 2

### TRANSATLANTIC FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN MISSIONS

In the late eighteenth century, many American Christians were part of a community of evangelical Protestants whose membership transcended geographical and political boundaries. The creation of a separate American nation did not fracture this trans-Atlantic evangelical community; in fact, many evangelically-minded Protestants on both sides of the Atlantic viewed the creation of the American republic as an opportunity to see many of their ideals put into practice. Many British evangelicals watched sympathetically as Americans secured an unprecedented degree of political freedom and established a republican form of government with seemingly limitless potential for preserving virtue and liberty on the North American continent. Some Americans channeled their optimism into a fusion of evangelical Christianity and republicanism, uniting political and religious goals in the pursuit of an ideal society that could become a staging ground for spreading liberty and virtue around the world.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> J.C.D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty: 1660-1832: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); P.J. Marshall, "Transatlantic Protestantism and American Independence," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 36 No. 3; Mark Noll, "Revolution and the Rise of Evangelical Social Influence in North Atlantic Societies," in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990*, ed. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994): 113-136; Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Daniel L. Dreisbach, Mark David Hall, and

By the 1790s and early 1800s, political challenges—including battles over disestablishment—had somewhat dampened the optimism of Christian republicans and reduced their faith in political strategies. American evangelicals turned to their European brethren for different ideas about how to spread Christian influences in their society. British evangelicals were just beginning to enjoy a degree of political influence in their own country, but as they did not have control over either political or religious establishments, they pioneered a number of apolitical strategies for spreading Christian middle-class “civilisation” in Great Britain and around the world. In a sort of “conservative Enlightenment,” evangelical Protestants in Britain (as well as Germany and Scandinavia) tried to navigate the age of revolution in their own country by applying “rational benevolence to the problems of poverty and ignorance.” Americans emulated a number of British projects, from the establishment of Sunday Schools to societies for the distribution of Bibles, religious tracts, and periodicals.<sup>18</sup>

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Jeffrey H. Morrison, eds., *The Forgotten Founders on Religion and Public Life* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009). Although British and American evangelicals shared a Protestant Whig theology, their views toward the actual war were varied and still appear to be debated. See also Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Mark Noll, *Christians in the American Revolution*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Publishing, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 102; Jonathan D. Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 136; Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 18; Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960); Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850* (New York: Palgrave

As Americans took inspiration from the British in their efforts to Christianize the new nation, they also adapted British models to their own society. In fact, the cultural and ideological differences that had brought about a political rupture between England and America resulted in not only new religious practices, but new theology as well, reflecting the influence of Scottish common sense and republicanism in America. But the “Americanization” process was slow and incomplete throughout the early republic, as American evangelicals maintained a number of interests and beliefs in common with their British counterparts. Close personal ties also existed for decades between certain evangelical leaders on both sides of the Atlantic, ties that political conflict could disrupt but not break. The new national identity of American evangelicals coexisted with their membership in international denominations, in a multi-denominational transatlantic evangelical community, and in a global Protestant church that they were expecting to cover the world in the near future.<sup>19</sup>

The modern foreign missions movement, like so many other aspects of Anglo-American evangelicalism, was initiated by a handful of British men who wanted to spread Protestant Christianity to areas that had so far only experienced the economic impulses of the British Empire. England was still seen by many of its citizens as the “New Israel” chosen to preserve and spread Protestant Christianity throughout the

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Macmillan, 2009); David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Frank Thistlewaite, *America and the Atlantic Community: Anglo-American Aspects, 1790-1850* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959).

<sup>19</sup> For examples of Americans adapting British practices to their own environment, see Nord, *Faith in Reading*, on American Bible and tract societies, and Boylan, *Sunday School*, on the departure of the Sabbath school movement in America. On the “Americanization” of theology, see Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

world. In 1792, English Baptists formed the first voluntary society to send missionaries to India. Immediately following the news of the Baptists' successful beginning in Serampore, David Bogue initiated the establishment of a similar society for England's "Evangelical Dissenters who practise Infant Baptism." The London Missionary Society advertised its first official report in 1795, as well as Bogue's determination that it should include members and leaders of various denominations. Evangelicals in the U.S. and other parts of Europe took notice and began to form their own societies, often under similarly non-sectarian labels.<sup>20</sup>

It is tempting to draw a straight line from the Puritans' errand in the wilderness to Americans' mission to the world, but the missionary work of New Englanders took place only in North America until decades after British Baptists had established the first successful mission in India. The first American missionary societies focused on spreading the Gospel within their own country, rather than sending missionaries to foreign countries. Between the North American Indians and the frontier settlers without churches, American evangelicals had plenty of unchurched people to worry about. Presbyterian minister Samuel Miller described the New York Missionary Society as following the model of "the societies which have been lately formed, in London, Edinburgh and Glasgow, for sending and supporting missionaries among the heathen." But he emphasized the fact that "the parts of our country destitute of the gospel are numerous," even aside from "those occupied by the Indian tribes." The

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<sup>20</sup> Colley, *Britons*; E. Daniel Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793-1837: The History of Serampore and its Missions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967); Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895* (London: Henry Frowde, Oxford University Press Warehouse, 1899), 60, 75.

new society was considering all of these areas in its plans for spreading Christianity. Such societies expected their mission field to expand, too, as American settlers moved further west. The leaders of the Connecticut Missionary Society explained to their correspondents in London that “the field for missionary labors will therefore be extending itself for many years, if not ages,” as the United States expanded its reach.<sup>21</sup>

For nearly two decades, American missions organizations focused on sending missionaries into American frontiers while they supported and communicated with British societies and their missionaries. A number of the London Society's missionaries traveled to India by way of New York or Philadelphia and were hosted by supporters of local missionary societies, often preaching in American churches and raising additional funds for their missions. As religious periodicals like *The Panoplist* and the *Christian Observer* proliferated around the turn of the century, they consistently published reports and letters from the London Missionary Society as well as news from other societies in America and Europe. Not only did the British send news of their missions for distribution, but they expressed the importance of updates from America for encouraging their own efforts: “It revives our inmost souls to see the spreading of the sacred flame in America, and the blessed hope, that roused from the torpor of apathy, we are all beginning to feel the value of those souls that the son of God came down to save by his own most precious blood.” The spread of the gospel in

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel Miller, *The Life of Samuel Miller* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger, 1869), 105; John Treadwell and Abel Flint, on behalf of the Connecticut Missionary Society, to the Directors of the London Missionary Society, Hartford, April 20, 1803, quoted in Emily L. Conroy-Krutz, “The Conversion of the World in the Early Republic: Race, Gender and Imperialism in the Early American Foreign Mission Movement” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012), 41.

America and the spread of Christianity in colonies of the British empire were two streams of the same flow, a steady expansion of the Protestant church that British and American evangelicals expected to cover the earth in the near future. Letters published in the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* from London to the trustees of the Connecticut Missionary Society affirmed that “the different continents contain the same holy catholic Church, that the waters of the Atlantic separate not the communion of saints.” But the division of labor envisioned by evangelicals meant that Americans should take responsibility for evangelizing the rest of the America. In the words of William Carey, the “tribes of American Indians appear to have a claim upon the American churches; or rather, perhaps we may say, that one great end of the existing of the churches in America is, to spread the glorious gospel among the heathens in their vicinity.”<sup>22</sup>

But success with the American Indians was slow in coming, as it had been in the eighteenth century, and New England Congregationalists were anxious to work among people they thought would be more receptive. As Samuel Mills told his colleague at Andover Theological Seminary, “We ought to direct our attention to that place where we may, to human appearance, do the most good, and where the difficulties are the least.” But since America seemed so obviously to be the sphere of

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<sup>22</sup> A few British missionaries were stuck in the U.S. for extended periods due to conflicts with EIC policy in the early years of the nineteenth century. They preached as itinerants and pursued further education while waiting for clearance to go to India. Conroy-Krutz, “Conversion of the World,” 44-45; Letter from Thomas Haweis to Connecticut correspondent, *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* 1:1 (July 1800), 31; Letter from Thomas Haweis of the LMS to Trustees of the Connecticut Missionary Society, *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* 2:1 (July 1801), 31; Letter from Carey to the New York Missionary Society, *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* 2:4 (October 1801), 156.

influence for the United States, Americans had to defend their interest in pursuing missions overseas. After all, millions were still living in “darkness” in the Americas, “and our brethren in England may wonder that, while such is the fact, we should turn our views to any other part of the world.” But after seeing few results from their work with the Indians, “the opinion very generally prevalent is, that for the Pagans on this continent but little can immediately be done.” While evangelicals hoped that better opportunities for evangelizing native Americans might arise in the future, “at present the Eastern world is thought to offer a more promising field.” The news of British successes that filled their publications, combined with American involvement in the trading networks of the British empire, naturally drew Americans' attention toward India.<sup>23</sup>

Americans were still concerned not to duplicate the efforts of British missionaries, as evidenced by the attention to Burma in initial discussions of potential American mission sites. Burma was “not within the limits of the British empire, and therefore not so much within the proper province of the British missionary Societies.” Burma also appealed to Americans because its populace “is great and somewhat advanced in civilization; the character and manners of the people are perhaps as

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<sup>23</sup> Samuel Mills to Gordon Hall, quoted in Francis Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson, D.D.*, Vol. I (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Company. 1853), 42; Letter from ABCFM Secretary to LMS Secretary, *The Panoplist* 4:4 (Sept. 1811), 178. The exchange of goods, people, and ideas between America and British India greatly expanded in the decades following the Revolution. Rosemarie Zagarri, “The Significance of the 'Global Turn' for the Early American Republic: Globalization in the Age of Nation-Building,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 31:1 (Spring 2011): 1-37. Missionaries relied on contacts in the commercial world for help with transportation as well as communication. Conroy-Krutz, “Conversion of the World,” 47-48.

favorable to the reception of the Gospel as will be found in any part of the heathen world.” Americans shared Europeans' belief in the Enlightenment theory that all societies progressed through stages of civilization, from primitive to advanced, and that advanced civilizations were best equipped to understand and accept Christianity. They wanted to find a society that was already somewhat civilized and thus prepared to bear the fruits of their labors more quickly than most American Indian tribes had.<sup>24</sup>

### **The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions**

When they looked to expand their mission field beyond their own continent, Americans relied on the encouragement and advice of their British counterparts. In the summer of 1811, Andover seminary student Adoniram Judson visited the leaders of the London Missionary Society in England, seeking advice on behalf of Massachusetts clergy who wanted to get directly involved in foreign missions. The church leadership of Massachusetts had instructed him to see if the London Society, which had already been in operation for fifteen years, might be willing to partner with a new American organization in sponsoring American missionaries to Asia. But the London Society told Judson that they could not see a joint administration between groups on different sides of the Atlantic being feasible, nor could they afford to give

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<sup>24</sup> *The Panoplist* 4:4 (Sept. 1811), 182; Emily L. Conroy-Krutz, “Engaged in the Same Glorious Cause’: Anglo-American Connections in the American Missionary Entrance into India, 1790-1815,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 34:1 (Spring 2014): 21-44. In 1810 the book *Embassy to Ava* by British officer Michael Symes was published in the United States, and Judson at least referred to it as a source of information about Burma. Symes had traveled to Burma in 1795 on behalf of the British in Bengal, and his description of the Burmese empire included religious toleration as well as other characteristics that appealed to missionaries. Conroy-Krutz, “Conversion of the World,” 60.



financial support to missionaries who were not technically their own. They sent Judson home with a letter, which his superiors published in *The Panoplist*: “We cannot... but wish that prudent and zealous endeavors may be made in America for the support of Foreign missions, and we entertain so favorable an opinion of our good friends in the United States, that we cannot suppose they will permit the London Society to serve alone.”<sup>25</sup>

When Judson traveled to England, church leaders in Massachusetts had recently formed the first American organization devoted exclusively to sponsoring foreign missionaries, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM, or American Board). The foreign missions board's creation came more than a decade after Congregational clergy in Connecticut and Massachusetts had formed the first New England missionary societies, which were voluntary associations devoted to planting churches among new settlements in Maine, Vermont, New York, and Ohio. In 1810, a small group of students at Andover Seminary—influenced by such publications as Claudius Buchanan's *A Star in the East*—decided to follow the example of British missionaries working in India. Adoniram Judson presented their case for a mission to Asia before the Massachusetts General Association, a statewide conference of orthodox (Trinitarian as opposed to Unitarian) clergy held in the Boston area. They decided to form the American Board after the example of the London Missionary Society, which was officially a non-denominational organization representing Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and other Reformed Protestants.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *The Panoplist* 4:4 (Sept. 1811), 183.

<sup>26</sup> Jonathan D. Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 136.

The standard account of American foreign missions attributes the creation of this organization to “a sense of American exceptionalism that was to become especially strong in the early years of the nineteenth century,” in addition to the biblical injunction to spread the Gospel that Anglo-American evangelicals like Edwards and Carey had begun to preach in the eighteenth century. According to this view, Americans were motivated by the idea that the U.S. was a chosen nation, as the inheritor of New England's Puritan heritage, and was providentially destined to play a special role in the christianization of the world. But while the founders of the first American foreign missions board were cognizant of a growing national consciousness in the early republic, their confidence in America's role was far from assured. Even New Englanders had to be prodded by their British counterparts to take responsibility for America's share in the evangelizing of the world. As Americans tentatively increased their commitment to Protestant missions overseas they often alluded to their national identity, not as a justification for their involvement, but as a tool to motivate their supporters to give more money to the cause. In praising the efforts of British societies and their supporters, the American Board appealed to the national pride of American Christians to do as much for their own.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> William Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 39. “By the revolutionary era, it seemed to Americans that the task to be carried out for God, while still to be shared with other Protestants and especially with the better sort of Englishmen (the Evangelicals), seemed quite evidently to be assigned to the Americans above all others.” (42). This view is affirmed by David W. Kling, “The New Divinity and the Origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,” in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*, ed. by William R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 11-38.

Many residents of New England during the early republic idealized the history and culture of their region and began to project it onto the United States as a whole. Artists, writers, and tourists confirmed the idea that the people of New England, with their piety, industry, simplicity, and dedication to education and liberty, were ideal Americans and “model republicans.” Many residents of this region, as well as other Northerners, saw the idealized culture of New England as a place where old European ways and new American values could be melded. The fusion of old and new worlds would establish a collective identity for the new nation shaped by a Protestant heritage, among other things. The vast majority of the American Board's supporters were residents of New England, and the founders of the American Board recognized the importance of this nascent New England nationalism as a factor in motivating public support for missions. It was ultimately one of the key factors in their decision to raise their own support for the first American missionaries and remain independent of the well-established London Missionary Society.<sup>28</sup>

But the decision to create and fund independent American missions was a difficult one to put into practice. By the time that Adoniram Judson presented his case before the Massachusetts General Association, he had already written to the London Missionary Society (LMS, or London Society) to inquire about the possibility of going overseas under their patronage if necessary, and he had received an invitation to visit England for more information. In his presentation to the Massachusetts clergy, Judson described his friends' desire to become missionaries and inquired “whether they may expect patronage and support from a Missionary Society in this country, or must

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<sup>28</sup> Stephanie Kermes, *Creating an American Identity: New England, 1789-1825* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 44, 16.

commit themselves to the direction of a European society.” The young men who initiated the discussion about American overseas missions were not necessarily determined to have American sponsorship, as long as they were able to join the enterprise.<sup>29</sup>

By the next day, the church leaders had decided to establish an organization “for the purpose of devising ways and means, and adopting and prosecuting measures, for promoting the spread of the gospel in heathen lands.” But they were slow to decide upon a specific course of action, particularly regarding the financial support of missionaries, and after a few months they sent Judson to England to consult with the London Missionary Society and discuss a possible collaboration between their two organizations. The American Board hoped that they could send their missionaries out with the financial backing of the London Society while maintaining at least partial control over their mission's direction until they could raise enough money in the U.S. to support them fully.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Baptist histories of the mission to Burma and biographies of Judson credit him with initiating the group's actions. Congregationalist histories deny that he was the instigator and claim that four of the other men were contemplating missions as early as 1806, before they reached Andover. Joseph Tracy, *History of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: M.W. Dodd, 1842), 25-26; James D. Knowles, *Memoir of Ann H. Judson, Late Missionary to Burmah; Including a History of the American Baptist Mission in the Burman Empire*, revised ed. (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1845), 38.

<sup>30</sup> Tracy, *History of the ABCFM*, 26; *The Panoplist* 4:4 (Sept. 1811), 178. They also considered sending their missionaries to spend time at David Bogue's training institute in Gosport. On the British system of training missionaries see Stuart F. Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries, 1789-1858: The Social Background, Motives and Training of British Protestant Missionaries to India* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1984).

Judson spent the summer of 1811 in London, where he met with an enthusiastic reception. But the directors of the LMS were less optimistic about the Board's proposal to sponsor American missionaries jointly. They doubted the practicability of a combined administration, given both the distance between their organizations and the financial burden involved. In the letter they sent home with Judson, the LMS remarked upon their own financial vulnerability: "Whether the liberality of the British public will keep pace with our exertions, we know not. We hope it will." But as the continuation of their own missions already required "a sacred and constant regard to economy" and depended on the unpredictable donations of the British public, they expressed a desire to see the American Board come alongside them and share the burden. They also laid responsibility at the feet of the American public, waiting "fully prepared to hear of general and liberal contributions, as soon as it is known in the American churches, that four of their brethren, 'flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone,' and animated with their own spirit of independence, are engaged in this service." They expressed hope that American Christians would "so fill your funds, that not four only, but forty may go forth with apostolic zeal—with the zeal of Eliot, Mayhew, Brainerd, (names dear to us as to you) and spread abroad in many places, the sweet savor of the name of Jesus—ours and yours..." This letter, published in *The Panoplist* alongside other communications of the Board, laid these expectations before New England's evangelical readers.<sup>31</sup>

But the London Society had not ruled out the possibility of taking on the American missionaries as their own agents, at least temporarily. Judson and his

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<sup>31</sup> *The Panoplist* 4:4 (Sept. 1811), 183.

colleagues were anxious to get to Asia before the increasing tensions between Britain and the U.S. prevented their traveling to India, so they told the Board that they would accept appointments from the LMS if necessary. The American Board then had to decide “whether it will be expedient to resign the four missionary brethren, or any of them, to the London Directors... or whether it will be better to retain the young gentlemen under the direction of this Board, and trust, under Providence, in the liberality of the Christian public in this country for the means of supporting them.” They suggested that “by raising up young men among us endowed with the spirit and qualifications for missions, Divine Providence seems distinctly to call on the Christian public in this country for the requisite means of their support, and upon this Board to apply the means and direct the missionary labors.” And they believed that “if the missionary brethren are retained under the direction of this Board, a greater interest will be excited in the American public, greater liberality for the support of missions will be displayed, and greater exertions for the missionary cause will be made, and, on the whole, more will be done for the spread of the Gospel and the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom.” The Board expected Christians in America to feel more involved in the missionary enterprise if they were convinced God had appointed men from their own country, a divine appointment they could imagine as a call to the whole nation to participate. They knew Americans would be more responsive to calls for donations from an organization of New Englanders that represented the new nation alongside the organizations of Great Britain, rather than organizations headquartered in Great Britain.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *The Panoplist* 4:4 (Sept. 1811), 184; Knowles, *Memoir of Ann H. Judson*, 41. The LMS also maintained “Foreign Directors” among its leadership—the 1815 report lists seventeen, mostly from the continent, plus six from the United States. Andrew Porter,

And calls for donations were a prominent part of the published account of the American Board's proceedings, some more subtle than others. The American Board informed readers of *The Panoplist* that their decision required them to take a gamble on the basis of their faith in the American Christian public. "The Committee have expressed a confidence that adequate missionary funds may be raised in this country; not indeed because funds to any considerable amount have been actually realized." A few indications, such as one or two sizable donations, gave them reason to hope that they could expect sufficient support over time. But to reinforce their message—that their expectations of Christians in America were serious, and that few excuses existed for not meeting them—they held up the British public as an example, including specific amounts of money the British had donated. "The London Missionary Society have for some years past expended about 7,000 [pounds] sterling, annually, in the support of foreign missions; and this year it is expected that they will expend 10,000 [pounds]. Shall the four American missionaries then be cast upon the London funds? Is not the American public as well able to supply L600 annually, the sum estimated to be sufficient for the support of four missionaries, as the British public is to supply L10,000?" The writers essentially shamed their readers into following the British example: "Would it not indeed be a reproach to our character as a Christian nation, as well as shew an ungrateful distrust of Providence, should we resign our missionaries to the London society, under an apprehension that we could not support them?" They did not criticize Judson and the other young men for considering the sponsorship of the London society; rather, they laid the responsibility solely on American

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*Religion vs. Empire? British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 117.

evangelicals to rise up to the challenge of supporting them financially and preventing such an act of desperation that would surely squander this God-given opportunity for greater American involvement in Eastern missions.<sup>33</sup>

A year later, after sending the first group of Americans to India, the Prudential Committee admitted that they had not been too confident in their ability to raise enough money. In spite of their claim to have faith in the generosity of Americans, the American Board had maintained a contingency plan—an offer from the London Society to take responsibility for some of the American missionaries if necessary. In fact, they admitted they would not have made the decision to send their missionaries without having that offer as a backup. Otherwise, “so doubtful was the prospect of obtaining the pecuniary means,” they would have considered such a leap of faith “presumptuous.” After admitting the Board's initial uncertainty, the report reflected on the way American supporters had come forward after the appointment of the American missionaries. “The hearts of the people were wonderfully opened; money flowed in from all quarters; and by the time that the Caravan sailed the Committee were able to meet all the expenses of fitting out the missionaries, and to advance for each of them a whole year's salary,” instead of half a year's salary as they had contemplated. American Christians had come through and prevented the Board from having to give any of its missionaries over to British sponsors, but that result was

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<sup>33</sup> *The Panoplist*, 4:4 (Sept. 1811), 182.



hardly certain at the outset, and the Anglo-American partnership was vital to the American Board's initial venture.<sup>34</sup>

And Americans were still inclined to focus their efforts on America. Two of the first American Board missionaries, Samuel Newell and Gordon Hall, wrote one of the first American promotional pamphlets from the station they eventually established in Bombay. Newell and Hall urged Americans to focus on “The Conversion of the World” as opposed to the conversion of North America. The first part of their appeal revolved around the duty of churches to send preachers “in such numbers as to furnish the means of instruction and salvation to the whole world.” The preaching of the gospel had, in the past, “rescued whole nations from the gross ignorance, and the cruel rites of idolatry... and prepared them for the holy society of heaven.” Naturally, Christians should wish “that the renovating and saving power of the gospel should be experienced as extensively as the ravages of sin have been spread in our world!” Hall and Newell went on to demonstrate that an insufficient number of missionaries were currently in the field by producing a survey of the Christian versus unconverted populations throughout the globe. After counting the Christians in every region of the world, they concluded that “while America has only about one sixteenth part of the unevangelised population of the globe, she has the labours of more than one half of all the Missionaries in the world.” The second part of their appeal claimed that the Protestant churches of the world, if they included American churches as well as European, were capable of sending enough missionaries to evangelize the whole

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<sup>34</sup> *The Panoplist* 5:5 (October 1812), 230. The LMS actually listed Judson, Hall, Nott, and Newell as missionaries in its annual report that year. Conroy-Krutz, “Conversion of the World,” 51.

world. But the responsibility for training missionaries needed to be distributed equitably. And the pamphlet concluded that while Christians were responsible “to impart the gospel to all unevangelized nations, yet some parts of the world have a greater claim to our immediate attention than others.” Factors like the concentration of population, the potential for distributing information, the nature of government, and the health of different climates were all things to consider in choosing the most strategic places to start. “Until there shall be a sufficient number of Missionaries to supply all parts of the world, it will be our duty to select the most important places first.” Thus the two missionaries methodically analyzed the state of Protestant missions and urged Americans to place greater priority on the spread of the gospel throughout the world, a process that had already started without them, rather than devoting so many resources to their own continent.<sup>35</sup>

### **Baptist Beginnings**

Transatlantic relationships also laid the foundation for the creation of the first American Baptist foreign missions organization just a couple of years after the ABCFM. Baptists were a significant minority in New England in the early republic, and as the nineteenth century opened they were growing at a steady rate, thanks to the practices of revivalism and itinerant preaching they had perfected in the eighteenth century. Baptist leaders were beginning to transition their focus away from political fights for disestablishment in the Revolutionary era toward efforts to strengthen their

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<sup>35</sup> Gordon Hall and Samuel Newell, *The Conversion of the World: or the Claims of Six Hundred Millions and the Ability and Duty of the Churches Respecting Them* (Andover: Printed for ABCFM by Flagg & Gould, 1818), 5, 13, 32-33.

denomination within the religious landscape of the new nation. In addition to founding missionary societies for evangelism on the frontier, they tried to improve the educational levels of their clergy and achieve a greater level of “respectability” among other denominations. Foreign evangelism was not a priority for American Baptists, but it was something they supported through the work of their British counterparts. They raised money for the English Baptists in India, particularly to help fund printing equipment for their Scripture translations. The *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*, founded in 1803 by the new Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society in Boston, published excerpts of letters from the British missionaries in India and their Baptist sponsors in England, as well as news from other evangelistic enterprises scattered about the country and the globe.<sup>36</sup>

American Baptists faced an opportunity to get more involved in foreign missions thanks to Adoniram Judson, the same young minister who had helped to prompt the founding of the American Board. Judson was of course appointed by the American Board along with Samuel Nott, Samuel Newell, Gordon Hall, and Luther Rice in 1812. The five men and three women (Ann Hasseltine Judson, Harriet

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<sup>36</sup> William G. McLoughlin, *New England Dissent, 1630-1833: The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State*, vol. II (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971), 1107-1127. “From a total of 90 Baptist churches with 7000 members in 1800, the denomination in New England grew to 166 churches with 12,743 members in 1824 and to 174 churches with 17,000 members by 1830. The number of adherents or nominal Baptists was more than double the number of members.” (1113). On support for British missions, see letter from Thomas Baldwin, Lucius Bolles, and Daniel Thorp to John Williams et.al. (March 23, 1813), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS; published histories of the Baptist Missionary Society, circa 1811, reprinted in the U.S., and publications like *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:8 (Dec. 1812).

Atwood Newell, and Roxanna Knott—Hall and Rice were unmarried) set sail for India where they planned to meet William Carey and the British Baptists who had been operating there for two decades. During the voyage, Judson made a study of biblical commentary on baptism (some accounts say he was preparing to defend infant baptism to the British Baptists). He concluded that adult believer's baptism was in fact more biblical than the infant baptism practiced by his Congregational church. He convinced his wife, Ann, as well as Luther Rice to join him in his change of convictions, and they were all baptized by William Carey upon reaching India.<sup>37</sup>

When Judson and Rice decided they could not conduct infant baptisms according to their instructions from the American Board, they had to give up their support networks in the U.S. Their separation from the ABCFM is traditionally credited with inspiring American Baptists to form their own board of foreign missions in the United States, as well as the first national Baptist convention. As Edward Judson would later write in a biography of his father, “the Baptists of America were a scattered and feeble folk” in 1812, and it was Judson's decision to become a Baptist that “shook them together.” But the founding of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions occurred in the context of a long-standing relationship between American and British Baptists. The British had been involving American Baptists in their work for years, in several supporting roles, and they encouraged their American brethren to take on more responsibility in the realm of missions. This background prepared

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<sup>37</sup> See William Carey's version of the story printed in *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:11 (Sept. 1813), 321.

American Baptist leaders to accept responsibility for their own foreign missionaries in 1814.<sup>38</sup>

By the time the Judsons arrived in India, English and American Baptist leaders had long been exchanging letters and information about their evangelistic activities, just as the members of the London Missionary Society and American Board had been. In 1802, William Carey in Calcutta expressed gratitude to John Williams in New York for sending “the Circular Letter of the different Associations.” He claimed that the English missionaries took “much pleasure” in reading them and gaining “a knowledge of the state of the Churches,” especially the revivals on the frontier and the activities of domestic missionaries. Carey also described for Williams some of his encounters with “Hindoos” and “Mussulmans” as well as the religious state of other Europeans in India. Such correspondence was often published, as a letter from John Ryland in England mentioned, “We see by the Magazines you have had some Correspondence with our Bro. Carey in Serampore.” He also told him that a new young missionary couple would be traveling through New York to India, and that the visitors would “tell

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<sup>38</sup> Edward Judson, *The Life of Adoniram Judson* (New York: American Baptist Publication Society, 1883), 84; quoted in *Bless God and Take Courage: The Judson History and Legacy* by Rosalie Hall Hunt (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2005), 61. Their decision also sparked rumors and accusations about Judson's relationship with the ABCFM, so the Baptists to whom they had written immediately published letters from both Judsons and from Joshua Marshman, explaining the reasons for their decision and insisting that it was not due to tensions with the ABCFM or to excessive influence from the British Baptists in India. It would not have served the Baptists in America to let people think that the missionaries had changed their mind as a result of anything but personal conviction. See *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:9 (March 1813).

you many particulars of the last news from the east Indies, as well as what concerns ourselves,” all news that he assumed the Americans would want to hear.<sup>39</sup>

These English visitors, the Chamberlains, spent time with leading lights of the Philadelphia Baptist community, who negotiated an affordable yet comfortable passage to Calcutta for them on a ship out of Philadelphia. Chamberlain described his primary host, William Staughton, as “one of the right sort,” particularly regarding his views on missions. The preacher William Rogers also had “a missionary soul.” Chamberlain wished “that such who are thus warm hearted would unite & form a Mission Society. The beginning might be small, but the latter end, it is hoped, would greatly increase.” Similarly, other letters from abroad offered encouragement to Baptists in their missionizing efforts on the North American continent. William Carey told the New Yorker Williams, “Divine mercy is making large conquests in your favoured Land... I most sincerely wish that such a work was taking place in India.” In another letter Carey inquired about the status of missionary societies that were working with Indians, as well as expressing “hope that the glorious Work in the Western & Southern States is still continuing, and will continue.” And he wondered if these evangelical revivals had “spread unto any more of the States? Has it contributed at all to the destruction of that disgrace of America, and every civilized Nation, the Slave Trade?” Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic shared an array of beliefs and

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<sup>39</sup> William Carey to John Williams (June 15, 1802), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS; John Ryland to John Williams (June 15, 1802), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS.

goals, though they were engaged in different places and with different kinds of people.<sup>40</sup>

Americans and Britons often relied on each other for help with transportation and communication. When young missionary Chamberlain was forced to go from England to India via the States, the English minister John Ryland recommended him to the “cordial friendship” of New York minister John Williams, “as one whom we think to be a partaker of the right missionary Spirit.” He promised that the Missionary Society's treasurer in England would quickly repay any financial assistance the Americans rendered the new missionaries on their journey. Future groups of missionaries traveled between England and India via New York or Philadelphia, receiving help and hospitality from American Baptists. Letters, books, and supplies also passed through the U.S. At one point Ryland from Bristol complained to Williams in New York that “no Copies of the N. Testament or even of so much as the Book of Matthew have yet arrived in England,” referring to the translations the Baptist missionaries were printing in India. Ryland had been told that “100 Copies of the N. Testament were sent to a ship and Receipts obtained of their Loading but the ship being too full they were returned, and buried under Loads of goods at Calcutta for 10 Months, then they were sent by way of America by Capt. Hague, but where Capt.

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<sup>40</sup> William Rogers of Philadelphia to John Williams (July 17, 1802), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS; Chamberlain in Burlington to John Williams (August 1802), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS; William Carey to John Williams (included in letter from Chamberlain in Serampore, March 2 1803), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS; William Carey to John Williams (Calcutta, November 1803), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS. Carey and others also bemoaned the hostility of colonial governments throughout the British empire to the spread of Christianity.

Hague resides in America we have never been told, nor have we yet heard of the Books.” A letter from Carey had mentioned books being shipped via London with John Cauldwell, but it did not give the name of the ship, so Ryland told Williams “if you know Mr. Cauldwell, or Capt. Hague, I shall be extremely obliged to you to tell them, how much I regret these misfortunes...” The relationship between American and English Baptists thus involved not only ideological sympathies but practical cooperation on many levels.<sup>41</sup>

American Baptists also followed news of the American Board's efforts, and in 1812 the Baptist magazine advertised the ordination of Judson and the rest of his cohort. But when the Judsons wrote of their change in convictions, Baptist leaders in the U.S. were not necessarily prepared to take on the responsibility for sponsoring them. Judson, who had originally thought of going out under the London Missionary Society, again considered the possibility of serving under British sponsorship—either as an agent for the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) of England, or as a missionary for an American auxiliary group to the BMS. The local Baptist missionary societies in

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<sup>41</sup> John Ryland to John Williams (June 15, 1802), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS; John Ryland to John Williams (March 5, 1803), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS. Francis Wayland later recalled these early years of American support for Baptist missions in India when he edited a biography of Adoniram Judson: “Robert Rallston, Esq., of Philadelphia, at one time remitted to the Baptist mission at Serampore, for himself and others, three thousand three hundred and fifty-seven dollars and sixty-three cents. Dr. Carey acknowledged the receipt of six thousand dollars from American Christians during the years 1806 and 1807. The interest of our churches in missions to the East was also, from time to time, quickened by the arrival of missionaries from England, on their way to India, or on their return home, as, at that time, they could not obtain passage in any of the ships of the East India Company. I well remember, in my boyhood, the temporary residence of such missionaries in New York, and the deep interest which their presence occasioned in all the churches in that city.” *Memoir of Adoniram Judson*, 44.



Salem and Boston immediately diverted some of their funds toward the newly baptized foreign missionaries, but Boston minister Daniel Sharp inquired of Andrew Fuller in England about the possibility of Judson becoming a full-time worker with the Baptist mission at Serampore. He said that he and his compatriots could not “bear that our brother should be neglected, or left to suffer because of his attachment to the truth.” But American clergy assumed that “it would much more advance the cause of Christ, and that brother Judson would be much more useful and happy in the missionary service, if he were intimately connected with, and under the direction of, our beloved brethren at Serampore.” The experience and knowledge of the British missionaries would prove beneficial to a new worker like Judson, while the stability of the Serampore mission would be reassuring to American supporters. And the Boston ministers would “esteem it an honor and a pleasure to render him the pecuniary aid which from time to time he may need. Indeed, we expect that our exertions will not be limited to the support of our American brother, but that we shall be able to forward to Serampore a willing tribute for the promotion of the general cause.” The American Baptist leadership was eager to join the well-established British venture.<sup>42</sup>

Not yet knowing what the British response would be to their proposition, the Boston ministers wrote to other Baptist clergy in the U.S. about the possibility of uniting Baptist churches into a national organization devoted to “this great work of sending the preached Gospel among the Heathen.” Some of their concerns were

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<sup>42</sup> The Baptist magazine also praised the American Board for donating funds toward the printing equipment of the British Baptists in India. *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:5 (March 1812); 3:8 (Dec. 1812); Daniel Sharp to Andrew Fuller (Boston, March 5, 1813), quoted in Wayland, *Memoir of Adoniram Judson*, Vol. I, 124-125.

strictly practical: “There must be somewhere a common centre, a general treasury into which all the money in whatever way raised, may flow. We have no anxiety whether this deposit should be in Salem, Boston, New-York, or Philadelphia,” so long as everyone could agree on it. But they also saw “the voice of divine providence” in recent events drawing their “speedy attention and assistance” to the foreign mission field. They asked their fellow Americans to advise whether it would be “best at present, to request our baptist brethren in England to take these young men under their patronage, and to consider us only as an auxiliary society?” Or should they “attempt to appoint and support them ourselves?” They suggested that “the subject must impress you... and hence hope for your cordial co-operation.” They saw the Judsons as providing American Baptists with an opportunity to take on a more significant role within the foreign missions movement, but they were unsure whether American Baptists were prepared for the responsibility.<sup>43</sup>

Baptist ministers discussed their plans in the pages of the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*, using the words of American and British missionaries to convince their readers of the urgent need for support. In March of 1813 they published the letter in which Judson described his new conviction regarding baptism and his anticipation that he would have to separate from the American Board. Though he was experiencing the temporary support of the British missionaries in India, he depicted himself as a lone American Baptist in need of a community. To the American Baptists he wrote, “I look to you. Alone, in this foreign, heathen land, I make my appeal to those whom, with their permission, I will call *my Baptist brethren*

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas Baldwin, Lucius Bolles, and Daniel Thorp to John Williams (March 23, 1813), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS.

in the United States.” The Baptist brethren in England and in Serampore also encouraged Americans to form their own organization, much as the London Society had urged the clergy of the Massachusetts Association in 1811. English missionary Joshua Marshman testified to Judson's “sincere conviction” and suggested that it “seems to point out something relative to the duty of our Baptist brethren with you, as it relates to the cause of Missionaries.” Certainly the Congregational Board could not be expected to support a Baptist missionary, given their instructions to baptize children along with their parents. But “it is certain that the young man ought not to be left to perish for want, merely because he loved the truth more than father or mother; nor be compelled to give up missionary work, for want of support therein.” Of course, Marshman assured American readers that “we should certainly interfere to prevent a circumstance like this happening.” But they had their own costs to bear, and more importantly, it appeared “as though Providence itself were raising up this young man, that you might at least partake of the zeal of our Congregational missionary brethren around you.” Marshman encouraged the American Baptists to “share in the glorious work” by taking responsibility for Judson. “After God has thus given you a Missionary of your own nation, faith, and order, without the help or knowledge of man, let me entreat you... humbly to accept the gift.” As an English observer, Marshman used the language of providentialism to motivate American involvement on a greater scale. Carey, too, suggested that the “change of sentiment in brethren Judson and Rice... lays the churches in America under obligations different from any under which they lay before.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:9 (March 1813), 266, 270; *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:10 (May 1813), 289.

As the editors of the Baptist magazine circulated specific proposals for American Baptist missions, letters from India continued to urge the formation of an American organization. The English Baptists reportedly agreed with Judson that “the cause of Christ will be best promoted by having an *American Baptist Mission* in these parts, as well as an *English Baptist Mission*.” But the English missionaries were willing to be flexible with the arrangements if Americans were not able to raise enough money. If necessary, Judson said, they were sure “that their Society in England will receive us as their missionaries, depending on assistance from the American society as an *auxiliary*,” or supporting organization. Still, an independent national Baptist mission would certainly be more attractive to the American missionaries, and they believed “the pecuniary resources of the Baptist churches in America” to be sufficient for such an undertaking. William Carey endorsed both recommendations—an auxiliary society or an independent American organization—as good options, but later he clarified that the English missionaries “are servants of our society, and do not consider ourselves at liberty to appropriate their funds to any specific purpose without their consent.” Again, he suggested that “this is a providence which gives a new turn to American relation to Oriental Missions.”<sup>45</sup>

To the English missionaries, the responsibility for American Baptists seemed obvious. As William Ward asked Baptist leaders in Philadelphia, why could they not form a national society “to receive contributions for the mission and translations, and promote annual collections all over the United States; I mean by annual sermons? Put your shoulder to this, my dear Staughton. You have now two countrymen Baptist

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<sup>45</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:10 (May 1813), 291; *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:11 (Sept. 1813), 321.

Missionaries in India.” The Americans were the ones who needed convincing. The Baptist denomination in the U.S. was still experiencing growing pains, and “[l]ack of education, lack of money, lack of prestige, and above all lack of self-confidence” hampered the efforts of the first generation of Baptist leaders in the early republic. It was their British brethren who prodded them forward in the area of foreign missions.<sup>46</sup>

### **The War of 1812**

Political tensions between Britain and the U.S. did not diminish the sympathies between American and British missionaries. As John Ryland wrote, “All war is dreadful, but especially that between protestant states, and above all between people sprung from the same stock, and united by so many ties as ought to be felt between Englishmen and Americans.” Laws like the Non-Intercourse Bill that limited trade between the U.S. and Britain during the tense years preceding the War of 1812 were bemoaned by American and British evangelicals alike.<sup>47</sup>

The missionaries sent by the ABCFM caught the last ships from the United States to India in 1812, just as war was beginning. But the first Americans to arrive in British India, the Judsons and the Newells, received hospitality from the British missionaries in India. William Carey hosted them for a night in Calcutta, where he did translation work for the colonial government, and offered what help and advice he

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<sup>46</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:11 (Sept. 1813), 324; McLoughlin, *New England Dissent*, 1114.

<sup>47</sup> “But alas! we are all miserable sinners, and tho God has raised up in both Countries many who begin to feel as saints yet they themselves are imperfect, and have but little influence in regulating the Concerns of Nations.” Ryland to Williams (August 28, 1807), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS; Conroy-Krutz, “Conversion of the World,” 45.

could. They had received permission from British authorities to stay in Calcutta only temporarily, so Carey's colleagues in Serampore invited the four Americans to stay with them until the rest of their friends reached India and they could decide upon a permanent location. The missionaries' wives were favorably impressed with the British Baptists, Marshman and Ward, who met them at the shore, "led us to the house, and introduced us to their wives. They received us very cordially... These Missionaries are eminently pious as well as learned." Samuel Newell gushed that the Serampore mission "exceeds all the ideas I had formed of it in America. The Lord is evidently with them."<sup>48</sup>

Not only the missionaries, but the leaders back home continued to speak highly of their British brethren and complain about the negative effects of war. Luther Rice returned to the U.S. from India in 1813, partly to deal with health concerns and partly to help coordinate the creation of the new national Baptist organization that was under consideration. He was concerned about the war mainly because of its potential impact on the American economy. In a letter to one of the Boston ministers, he professed not to be "insensible that our brethren as well as others must feel the pressure of public calamity and burden created by the war, in which, unfortunately, the country is involved." But he held up the English Baptists as a model for the Americans, because

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<sup>48</sup> The Baptist Missionary Society of England had established its mission in Serampore because of the East India Company's hostility toward missionary activity in its territory. Only Carey resided in Calcutta, where the British government made use of his skills as a linguist. In 1813 the charter of the East India Company was revised to allow for company chaplains and greater freedom for missionaries, although they still were circumscribed by the Company's authority. See Porter, *Religion versus Empire?*; Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India*; Knowles, *Memoir of Ann H. Judson*, 68-69; *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 4:2 (June 1814), 61.

“the Baptist churches in England, notwithstanding the incessant wars in which that country has been involved, have patronized missionary operations to an extent which has accomplished objects of the greatest magnitude and importance, and erected monuments of successful efforts which cannot be destroyed even by the dissolution of the world and the death of time.” He stressed that American Baptists would want to “assure ourselves that our brethren in the United States have equal love for the Lord Jesus; and certainly not less zeal for diffusing the savour of his precious name among those who must, otherwise, *perish for lack of vision...*” He reminded readers of the Baptist magazine that “those who are led into the truths in *this particular* are bound to make great sacrifices, and determined efforts, for disseminating in its holy simplicity and purity *the truth as it is in Jesus.*” Sharing his convictions was not exactly optional.<sup>49</sup>

The American Board, too, challenged American Christians to reach the standard of faith and generosity set by the British public, who were enduring war not only with the U.S. but with Napoleon and his allies. The ABCFM's Prudential Committee declared that “Great Britain, while sustaining a conflict unexampled in the history of the world, is displaying a liberality, a zeal, and a spirit of enterprise, for imparting the word of life and the blessings of salvation to all people, to enemies as well as to friends, not less strikingly unexampled.” And not only was Great Britain maintaining “this glorious work” in spite of other entanglements, “she continues without remission, and abounds more and more. By her admirable example, America should be provoked to emulation. Under no circumstances should we faint or be

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<sup>49</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:11 (Sept. 1813), 331.

discouraged; but, trusting in God in whose cause we are engaged, if difficulties present themselves, our zeal should rise, and our efforts be augmented.” The British public was serving as proof that tribulations could stimulate religious commitment, rather than providing an excuse to withdraw.<sup>50</sup>

The War of 1812 affected more than fund-raising efforts for the American missionaries, as hostility between the U.S. and Great Britain disrupted the partnership between English and American evangelicals in practical ways. But it gave them the opportunity to proclaim publicly their commitment to transatlantic evangelicalism. In 1811 William Carey lamented the non-intercourse bill, “as it greatly hinders that christian intercourse which is so desirable, and tends so much to the mutual edification of christians in different countries.” A year later Carey was “very sorry” to hear about the war, partly because he believed that “all war which is not absolutely defensive is a great sin, and brings with it a host of evils, both natural and moral.” But he also regretted the interruption in exchanges among Christians in America and elsewhere. “I love my American brethren, and hope to spend an eternity with them; the interruption therefore of social intercourse here is highly afflicting.” As he wrote, a new group of British missionaries had recently arrived in India after stopping in the U.S., and Carey again expressed their gratitude toward “our American Brethren for the kindness shewn to them, and for the renewed instance of their kind remembrance of the work, in which we are engaged.” One of the newly arrived missionary wives wrote back to Philadelphia in December of 1812 that the “friendships I formed in America are of a nature not soon to be forgotten.” Rev. William Johns in

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<sup>50</sup> *The Panoplist* 5:5 (October 1812), 232.



Birmingham, England, assured Lucius Bolles in Boston that “brethren we are in Christ, which neither seas, nor governments, nor politics can divide.” The Baptist magazine published all of these sentiments to remind New England Baptists that their transatlantic community continued to exist in spirit.<sup>51</sup>

The American Board took the opportunity to proclaim their belief in the church as transcendent. As ministers would often express in their sermons at Board meetings, they believed that the church was the most important agent of change, not only among individuals who sought conversions but also within larger communities and, ultimately, the world. “If the sure word of prophecy warns us of perils and calamities, of *distress of nations with perplexity*; it gives us assurance also that in these *troubulous times*, the Gospel shall be extensively propagated, and that in *overturning, and overturning, and overturning*, the Lord is making way for the establishment in all the earth of that kingdom which cannot be shaken.” By spreading the Gospel during time of conflict, evangelicals were participating in the fulfillment of prophecy—not a prophecy of the victory of particular nations over one another, but of the victory of the church. To retreat from their efforts during a national crisis would be to turn away from God's plan for a spiritual kingdom that would overcome national divisions. In 1815, *The Panoplist* reiterated this point in a review of a sermon commemorating the

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<sup>51</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:7 (Sept. 1812), 193; *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:10 (May 1813), 302; *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:12 (Dec. 1813), 375; *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 4:3 (Sept. 1814), 85. In 1816 John Ryland reiterated that “No one more deeply regretted the Misunderstanding between our Country & yours than myself, which some on both sides of the water wd. evidently be glad to renew and foment. May the Lord mercifully defeat their iniquitous attempts.” Ryland to Williams (April 5, 1816), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS.

end of the war. The sermon, delivered and published by a minister in Providence, argued that war would eventually cease to exist, according to Isaiah 2:4—“They shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” The minister claimed that “universal peace” would be established through the “publication of the Gospel through the whole earth, and the effusion of the Holy Spirit on all nations.” The editors of the *Panoplist* affirmed these beliefs and suggested that “Christians ought to keep them constantly in view, in all their plans for doing good to mankind.” The vision of nations at peace was a motivating factor for spreading the Gospel and expanding the church.<sup>52</sup>

But in the meantime, the war only increased the existing hostility of British authorities toward American missionaries in India. The first American missionaries were ordered to leave British territory, and they worried that American involvement in foreign missions might be over before it had begun. As Harriet Newell wrote, “Must we leave these heathen shores? Must we be the instruments of discouraging all the attempts of American Christians to give these nations the word of life?” Samuel

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<sup>52</sup> *The Panoplist* 5:5 (October 1812), 232; *The Panoplist* 11:6 (June 1815), 169. Mark Hanley discusses this view of the church as the primary agent of change in his study of ABCFM sermons. He identifies other key elements of the Board's worldview being “universal human equality as the governing social principle of Christ's kingdom; physical improvements and an equitable distribution of resources driven by Christian benevolence; a plan of conquest that rejected war, militarism, and nationalism; and, finally, a conception of foreign missions that underscored U.S. Protestant obligation even as it predicted radical *domestic* transformation and assimilation into a larger Christian whole.” Hanley, “Revolution at Home and Abroad: Radical Implications of the Protestant Call to Missions, 1825-1870,” in *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home*, ed. Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 46.

Newell obtained permission from the East India Company to go to Britain's recently acquired Isle of France (Mauritius), where they heard the governor might be more receptive to mission work. So after just a few weeks in Serampore, the Americans left behind their British friends. William Carey updated his correspondents in Philadelphia that the Judsons and Newells had gone to the Isle of France, while the other American Board missionaries were headed for Bombay. He was “exceedingly sorry for the persecution they have met with,” but assured his friends that the English missionaries “shall not desert them, nor their companions, should they be in want.”<sup>53</sup>

Although the Judsons did not yet have confirmation that Baptists in America would support them, they had to find somewhere to settle—Mauritius was only a temporary stop, since the British authorities there only wanted to have missionaries work among the British residents, not the natives. Burma had been discussed earlier because it was a site of little previous missionary activity, but the dangers it posed had been a discouragement. Since 1807, several Englishmen from the LMS and BMS had spent short periods of time in Rangoon, but in 1813 Felix Carey (son of William) had just moved there and was the only missionary in the Burmese Empire. He and his predecessors had made some progress with the Burmese language and had completed a translation of the Gospel of Matthew for the printing press at Serampore. Upon visiting Calcutta he invited the Judsons to return to Rangoon with him, as Burma seemed to present an opportunity for the American and British missionaries to work together in a region not controlled by British authorities.

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<sup>53</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:10 (May 1813), 299 (originally published in the *Panoplist*); *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:11 (Sept. 1813), 323.

The Judsons stalled, waiting for word from America, by going first to Madras in June 1813, where they “were very kindly received” by another English missionary, Mr. Loveless of the LMS, and his wife, a native of New York. They were afraid to wait long in Madras and risk being discovered by the East India Company, so they decided to go ahead and board a ship for Rangoon, with some hesitation knowing that in Burma they would have to live without the material comforts “peculiar to European settlements in the east.” But when the Judsons arrived, Carey was gone to the capital of Ava to meet with the emperor, who offered him a position working for the government. Judson reported that “there has yet been but very little effected in this country to any real missionary purpose. Brother Carey's time is greatly occupied in government matters... Not a single Burman has yet been brought to the knowledge of the truth, or even to serious inquiry.” It appeared that God had left the work of evangelizing Burma to the American Baptists, but at the time the Judsons expressed great disappointment to find that Carey was not in Rangoon to help them. The first American Baptists in Asia relied heavily on their British colleagues to help them get started, as Company authorities chased them out of British territory and American support was cut off by the war.<sup>54</sup>

During the War of 1812, as communications between continents were cut off, Baptists in the U.S. lost track of their new representatives in India. But the initial letters that had been published describing the Judsons' baptism in India, as well as Rice's return to the U.S., had helped the Baptist leadership stimulate widespread

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<sup>54</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 4:4 (Dec. 1814), 97-98; Knowles, *Memoir of Ann H. Judson*, 103; *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 4:5 (March 1814), 147.

interest among their churches. By 1814 the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* was full of letters from both new and revamped Baptist missionary societies in different areas of the country. The Savannah Baptist Society for Foreign Missions published an address celebrating the fact that America had caught “the same hallowed spirit” that existed in Europe for missionary exertions. Both domestic and foreign missionaries had already gone out under the patronage of Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Now to prevent these denominations from working alone, God had brought “some of their Missionaries over to the Baptist persuasion. These, still desirous of pursuing their generous, disinterested career for the benefit of the heathen, now present themselves to the American Baptists for support. And shall they present themselves in vain?” These appeals for support were reportedly meeting with success. The New York Baptist Foreign Missionary Society claimed that at its first meeting, “a liberality was manifested... which does honour to the Christian character.” William Rogers and William Staughton also created a Foreign Mission Society in Philadelphia in the interest “of imitating the laudable examples” set by other American Baptists.<sup>55</sup>

Subsequently, the Baptist magazine advertised the first national convention of Baptists for foreign missions in the fall of 1814. Luther Rice had, upon his return from India, set out to coordinate the efforts of existing societies and establish more auxiliary societies, using stories from his travels to help bring different parts of the country into a national Baptist organization. He suggested Philadelphia as a central location for convening delegates from northern and southern societies. Led by a board of ministers from all over the country—Charleston, Boston, Philadelphia, New York,

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<sup>55</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 4:1 (March 1814), 3, 6, 28, 5.

and more—the convention also named several prominent laymen as honorary members, such as the merchant Robert Ralston and Captain Benjamin Wickes of Philadelphia, who had often helped with the transportation of missionaries. The convention published a constitution as well as an address to Baptists and other Christians, in which they professed their optimism in spite of continued international conflict. They spoke of the “blessing which has succeeded the efforts of our denomination in India,” referring to the work of the British Baptists, predicting that the Scriptures would “probably be translated into all the languages of the East.” And of course, the Judsons’ “change of sentiment” was credited with being “a means of exciting the attention of our churches to foreign Missions.” Thus Baptist leaders actively portrayed foreign missions as a divinely ordained cause for national unity—“our churches” referring specifically to the Baptist churches in the U.S.—while they continually reminded American Baptists that they were also part of a transatlantic denomination with a distinguished history.<sup>56</sup>

As supporters rallied behind the Judsons to establish the first American Baptist mission, it became clear that Anglo-American cooperation would not include permanent partnerships in the field. Felix Carey decided to take a position elsewhere and left the mission in Burma to the Judsons. William Carey encouraged American Baptists to “consider those countries as the *lot* which falls to them, of the vast regions of Asia,” as if it were America’s responsibility to take the lead in the region surrounding Burma, while the British would occupy a supporting role for a change. “Arise and take possession of the land, and behold we are with you, and will help you

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<sup>56</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:12 (Dec. 1813), 355; *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 4:3 (Sept. 1814), 65.

by our advice and influence to the utmost of our power.” He prophesied that the missionaries would pray for each other and “that the joint labours of the English and American Baptist Societies may be blessed to the promotion of our Redeemer's interest in the east.” The Baptists were adopting a strategy of “divide and conquer”—they shared a vision for the conversion of the world and were pragmatic in their approach, splitting the world into American and British territories. The American Baptists' portrayal of their relationship with the British confirms Andrew Porter's analysis from the British perspective: “Although the ramifications and ripples caused by extra-British links are less easily recaptured, genuinely international, cross-denominational ties between societies, among individuals and within families were plentiful. They demonstrate how the Protestant missionary world drew its energy from sources and continued to organise itself in ways that transcended narrowly national, domestic and imperial categories.” The unification of American Baptists into a single organization made it possible for them to take some responsibility off the shoulders of Baptists in England.<sup>57</sup>

The context of transatlantic evangelicalism was thus pivotal to the founding of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions as well as the ABCFM. National identity was one factor that motivated the leaders of the two organizations because it was a way to unite American Protestants behind the cause of foreign missions, rallying them in support of missionaries who could be seen as “their own.” But both organizations

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<sup>57</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 4:11 (Sept. 1816), 344; “British, American and continental European societies drew each other together. As they did so, they paid less heed to the presence or absence of empire than they did to the proximity and possible duplication of each other's efforts and the expanding scope for evangelical co-operation.” Porter, *Religion vs. Empire?*, 135.

looked to emulate their British predecessors and relied on them for help, even during times of political and military conflict. Although the dynamics of the Anglo-American relationship would change with each generation, evangelicals throughout the nineteenth century continued to present the campaign for global evangelism as a cause in which Americans and Britons were close allies as well as rivals for national glory.



### Chapter 3

#### TRANSATLANTIC EVANGELICALISM IN MISSIONARY PERIODICALS

The religious landscape in America changed dramatically during the early decades of the republic. By the 1820s, the state church was a thing of the past even in New England. New sects and upstart denominations flourished, competing with each other as well as older churches. At the same time, nation-builders competed with regional and transatlantic loyalties in trying to cultivate an American identity among citizens of the new republic. Foreign missions promoters engaged with all of these processes as they tried to cultivate support within the evangelical population of the Northeast. They found that maintaining and publicizing the transatlantic nature of the foreign missions movement could help them appeal to supporters on the basis of national, denominational, and evangelical identities all at the same time.

Periodical publications were the primary venue for foreign missions organizations to promote their cause in America as in England in the early nineteenth century. The first periodical devoted to foreign missions grew out of magazines that were initially broader in scope. Early religious periodicals in New England were created by orthodox clergy hoping to expand the influence of orthodox churches in their region and on the frontier. The *Panoplist* was founded as a theological work by Jedidiah Morse in 1805, then became a combined theological and missionary magazine (after merging with the *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine* in 1808). Congregational clergy were partly inspired to engage in such publicity by the success of local Baptists in that area, but they were also following the examples of English

periodicals like the *Evangelical Magazine* of London. As periodicals multiplied within the diversifying and expanding public sphere of the early republic, they also became more specialized. In 1820, *The Panoplist* became the *Missionary Herald*, devoted specifically to foreign missions with Jeremiah Evarts of the American Board at the helm.<sup>58</sup>

The most important purpose of the *Missionary Herald* was to cultivate regular financial support for the ABCFM among Christians in New England and eventually beyond. The periodical genre was an effective tool for spreading information among a broad population as well as creating a connection between an organization and its regular supporters. It was the only form of media that “combined regularity, frequency, periodicity, broad appeal and accessibility.” Its editors hoped to expand their reach through the dissemination of the periodical, taking advantage of the expanding commercial and communication networks that could take printed materials into the vast rural areas of the Northeast. But they also wanted to cultivate financial and moral commitments among a consistent readership by sharing the lives of individual missionaries, stories of converts, and regular reports from mission stations around the world. The “internal consistency” of such publications “nurtured a high

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<sup>58</sup> An article in the first issue of the *Panoplist* described five religious periodicals in Great Britain, beginning with the *Evangelical Magazine*, which was “well known and highly approved by the friends of vital religion in the United States... All the above works harmonize in their design, with the *Panoplist*, and from them the Editors expect to derive much assistance.” “Periodical Works,” *The Panoplist* 1:1 (June 1805), 37; Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 145; John A. Andrew III, *Rebuilding the Christian Commonwealth: New England Congregationalists and Foreign Missions, 1800-1830* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1976), 9, 20.

degree of intimacy, familiarity, and identification with not just one particular missionary society, but, through the citation of other periodicals and the reprinting of articles from other mission fields, with a broader Christian community.”<sup>59</sup>

In the 1810s, even before becoming the official organ of the ABCFM, *The Panoplist* devoted most of its space to the promotion of foreign missions. The magazine publicized the formation of local auxiliary societies that raised money for the Board, advertised the publication of sermons and other works related to foreign missions (many of which were British), and reprinted poems and missionary letters and organizational reports from the British magazines. It also began to publish lists of individual and auxiliary donations to the Board on a monthly basis, to promote loyalty among regular supporters and challenge other readers to meet the standards of giving set by the most generous donors. In the 1820s, as the Board systematized its various methods of collecting funds, the *Missionary Herald* became the Board's sole repository of missionary news, so people had to read it first (or copy articles from it to reprint in other periodicals). This move reflected the Board's desire to disseminate

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<sup>59</sup> Quotations from Felicity Jensz and Hanna Acke, “The Form and Function of Nineteenth-Century Missionary Periodicals: Introduction,” *Church History* 82:2 (June 2013): 368-373. The genre of the serial publication had emerged in the late eighteenth century as the “textual institution” of England's public sphere. On the one hand, journals could expand and diversify the reading public by drawing in new readers as they multiplied and appealed to different segments of the population. At the same time, though, the periodical could establish a continuous relationship between certain authors and a defined group of readers, “evolving readers' interpretive frameworks and shaping their ideological awareness.” Jon Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 19, 4. According to William J. Gilmore, schooling and commerce generally grew in tandem, allowing a rural mass culture to emerge in the American Northeast by 1815. *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 22-23.

missionary zeal but ensure that the support aroused would benefit the ABCFM in particular, reflecting the many paradoxical functions of the periodical genre.<sup>60</sup>

Most evangelical periodicals in the early nineteenth century intensified denominational identities while simultaneously connecting their readers to a broader evangelical textual community throughout the United States. Missionary magazines had the added paradoxical effect of encouraging their readers to identify with both national and international communities. The *Missionary Herald* employed various strategies of appeal encouraging readers to see themselves as citizens of the United States with a duty to perform as Americans, as well as citizens of an Anglo-American evangelical community that was united in pursuing the expansion of a worldwide church. Denominational missionary magazines also perpetuated the image of foreign missions as an Anglo-American partnership, one where national and denominational identity coexisted with ecumenical and international cooperation, as the Baptist and

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<sup>60</sup> This publicizing of donations represented a merger between wealth and Protestant religion in America. "A person's religious commitment was neither publicized nor cast aside; it was simply irrelevant. The system of societies was designed to collect money and propagandize the efforts of the board, and no one questioned an individual's motives for joining one of the associations. Although willing to accept donations in any form or amount, the agents' emphasis on the benevolence of wealth served to buttress the virtues of industriousness and frugality. Nowhere were the benefits of wealth more apparent, for they placed the blessed few among the first rank in the glories of evangelizing the world." Andrew, *Rebuilding the Christian Commonwealth*, 89, 124. In 1823 a new system was developed that would exert more effective control over fundraising. Large societies were formed for cities or counties and called Auxiliary Societies, "immediately auxiliary" to the ABCFM. Smaller societies formed for small towns or parishes were to be known as Associations, subsidiaries to the larger auxiliaries. "This network would provide both a system for raising money and a web of communication radiating from Boston." And every society would be divided by sex. Constitutions were created on the basis of a model provided by the board. Subscriptions were to be collected on an annual basis. (138)

Presbyterian examples will illustrate. But the ABCFM was unique in presenting itself as the representative of the American nation within this international campaign.<sup>61</sup>

### **New England Nationalism**

The writers and editors of the *Missionary Herald* capitalized on the desire of many New Englanders to conflate their own region's culture and identity with that of the new nation. By the 1820s, the Anglophile intellectuals of New England were a shrinking minority, as most Americans worried about establishing and defending a national character, as well as a national literature. Many of the images of the new American nation that New Englanders promoted in the early republic exalted American civilization (when defined as New England civilization) as having surpassed that of Europeans, especially the “failed republicans” of Britain and France. American writers contrasted British materialism and inequality with the republican virtue of their own citizens, conflating “Americans” with “New Englanders” as they encouraged the image of New England as the embodiment of the nation. Such writers also depicted New England Protestantism as superior to the British version because Americans enjoyed so many choices among denominations, without any “oppressive” financial commitment to a state church. Of course, images of a national culture—created in the image of New England or otherwise—were largely fictional during the early republic. Regional identities remained paramount, as few inter-regional connections existed in reality until the 1830s. But the distance between image and reality allowed writers

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<sup>61</sup> Brown, *Word in the World*, ch. 6.

and regional publications to cater to New England's desire to impose their own identity on the United States as a whole.<sup>62</sup>

In the 1820s, the *Missionary Herald* began to portray worldwide evangelism as a truly national cause, though in reality the vision was not yet completely fulfilled. For example, the magazine published a brief survey of the current activities of all of the missionary societies in the U.S., including the work sponsored by the American Board and its supporters as well as other denominations. The author rejoiced that “the spirit of missions is not confined to any one section of our country, nor to any one denomination of Christians. The North and the South, the East and the West, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists, emulate each other in the work of sending the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the heathen.” But the image of missions as a national (rather than regional or denominational) cause was expected to provoke even greater commitments from all quarters, because the spread of missionary work was “a noble emulation, imparting strength to the bonds of mutual good-will.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Sam W. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010); Stephanie Kermes, *Creating an American Identity: New England, 1789-1825* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 91-96, 101. Trish Loughran argues that national identity was largely a fiction for the first few decades of the early republic. Americans accepted the idea of national unity precisely because they were too disconnected for their regional identities to be threatened in reality. Allegedly national texts were not disseminated far enough to provoke dissent. Beginning in the 1830s, as infrastructure and communications technology created real connections between regions, real differences were exposed, and the national dissemination of regional texts (like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) had the potential to undermine images of national unity. *The Republic of Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

<sup>63</sup> Brief View of Missions among the Heathen, under the direction of societies in the United States, *Missionary Herald* 21:1 (January 1825), 8.

And despite the denominational and regional diversity that existed in reality, the American Board referred to the “United States” or “America” in addressing their New England supporters, implying that their organization represented the entire nation. In 1823, the Board announced that while evangelicals internationally were in need of more systematic fund-raising efforts, “the portion of the church militant, which is stationed in this country,” was just as disorganized as any other. They described Christians in America as “very badly disciplined; and nothing is more difficult than, when there is an emergency, to bring the whole effective force into the field.” They used American military forces at the beginning of the Revolution as an illustration of the disorganization that existed within the church: “every man comes when he pleases, and goes when he pleases; and there is little calculation to be made as to the achievements in future campaigns. This damps the spirit of enterprise.” And as a consequence, the missionaries abroad, who were equated to “soldiers in the field” burning with “Christian patriotism,” were hesitant to expand their efforts into “the enemy's territory, lest they fail of the necessary support, and thus lose, in great measure, their labors, if they do not lose their lives.” The Board thus tried to shame their readers into following the example of their Revolutionary heroes in order to do their part as Americans within the larger international “religious community.”<sup>64</sup>

The *Missionary Herald* also emphasized the material and religious advantages that American Christians enjoyed, making them especially capable of sending and supporting missionaries. One article referred to “the amazing power, which American Christians may now exert upon the destinies of men,” as well as “the account to be

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<sup>64</sup> “Systematic Charity,” *Missionary Herald* 19:11 (November 1823), 365.

rendered of our distinguished opportunities,” those beneficial circumstances that New Englanders viewed as gifts from an omnipotent God. America's natural resources, political system, commercial networks, and spiritual benefits—specifically the revivals seen over the past few decades—all suggested great potential for Americans' moral influence throughout the world. The article contrasted the opportunities in America with those of Christians elsewhere, who “might plead their narrow sphere of action, and the barriers which enclose them on all sides,” but no such excuses would apply to Americans. In this case, America's most successful citizens provided the example for evangelicals to emulate, as the appeal suggested that any Christian should work “as strenuously to exert some agency in bringing immortal souls to glory, as the most enterprising merchant, or the most laborious farmer, presses forward in the pursuit of wealth,” rather than settling for less than was possible.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Brief View of the missions under the direction of the ABCFM, *Missionary Herald* 23:1 (January 1827), 1-3. There were also times when the Board posited the distinctiveness of American missionary efforts themselves. In 1838, the Board explained the system of organization that had developed among their missions and how it differed from those of European societies, showing American Christians that they could have faith in the missions they were supporting to operate according to republican principles. At each mission station, the missionary and assistant missionaries (including wives, presumably) were to hold regular meetings (at least once a year) in which they could settle questions related to procedures and behavior within the mission. Missionaries and male assistants over the age of twenty-one were supposed to vote at these meetings, with their final decisions being subject to the scrutiny of the Board's Prudential Committee. Of course their decisions all had to be compatible with the various instructions they received from the Prudential Committee and with the general laws set in place by the Board. But missionaries were given at least some degree of self-government in this system of “communities,” which the Board presented as being “obviously more in accordance, than any other, with the genius of our republican institutions, and with our habits as American citizens. The alternative is, either to suffer each individual missionary to act according to his own pleasure, or to make some member of each mission the chief and head of the mission, through whom the others shall communicate with the directing body at home.” They



But the writers and editors of the *Herald* differed from more nationalistic writers in that they did not try to exalt Americans as superior; rather, they continually portrayed Americans as inferior to the British regarding their actual role in world evangelism. They held up the British contribution to foreign missions as a way to provoke emulation. Since New England evangelicals in particular assumed a shared set of values with British Protestants, holding up the English as a standard for the American public could resonate with different kinds of readers—those who still wanted to be like the English as well as those who wanted to exceed them. The writers of the *Missionary Herald* suggested that Americans think of themselves as a community in competition with their British counterparts. This strategy for raising funds was initially encouraged by George Burder of the London Missionary Society a few years after the successful establishment of American missions in the Sandwich Islands. He declared that if the Board's efforts continued to grow, “I am not sure that we shall not become jealous.” But he prompted the Board to “proceed as fast as you please, and we will try to keep before you,” anticipating “a race that angels will delight to witness.” Such a competition “between Old and New Britain” would produce “what few if any wars have deserved to be styled—THE HOLY WAR.” In the same spirit, Jeremiah Evarts published a report for the Board allegedly proving

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went on to describe how European societies usually implemented some form of the latter system. The Church Missionary Society had actually started out with something closer to the American system, where at least clerical members of the mission had a vote on questions of business, but over time their missions had mostly developed committees of superintendents. The only other missions board known to adopt the system of communities under the rule of general laws was the American Baptist Board, which had just recently begun writing laws and putting such a system in place. Twenty-ninth Annual Meeting of the Board, *Missionary Herald* 34:11 (November 1838), 428.

“that the Christian public of this country will not suffer the missionary cause to languish.” And hundreds of young men had come forward to train for the ministry, motivated by the missionary accounts “exposing the wants and miseries of the greater part of the world, dead in sin, without God and without hope.” Evarts claimed that the same conditions had “recently existed in Great Britain, and on the continent of Europe.” But in the United States he claimed that even greater potential existed for supporting the multitudes of missionaries needed throughout the world. “We profess, as a people, to receive Christianity,” and within that population were many who had made individual commitments to the Gospel. The means of these individuals ranged from “great wealth” to “competent fortunes” to industrious persons “capable of imparting a continual and powerful impulse to any beneficent exertions,” if they were sufficiently engaged. “Could not such a Christian community achieve wonders in the work of benevolence,” he asked, that would make all previous efforts “appear small and unworthy of the cause?”<sup>66</sup>

The *Herald* presented such a comparison with the Board's 1836 Annual Report, announcing that where donations to missionary societies were concerned, “we are much behind our brethren in England.” The British, “with a population not exceeding our own in numbers, bearing various burdens of which we know nothing, and with less wealth in the hands of the mass of the community, their principal societies are far in advance of ours in their receipts.” According to the last reports, including those of the London Society, Wesleyan Missionary Society, and Church

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<sup>66</sup> Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Mr. Burder, *Missionary Herald* 18:2 (February 1822), 59; Report of the Prudential Committee, *Missionary Herald* 18:4 (April 1822), 98.

Missionary Society, the people of Great Britain had given “not less than \$1,200,000” for the spread of the gospel. By contrast, American churches of all denominations had contributed no more than \$350,000. Later that year, the Board argued that American Christians were not even doing the minimum expected of them. “God seems to be opening the whole world to missionary effort and enterprise,” yet the Board was passing up opportunities to work in new fields and accruing debts just to maintain their current operations. “The only question for us to settle is, whether we will come up to the new mark which God has set for our exertion.” They used the British record to indicate what was possible and shame Americans for not fulfilling their own potential.<sup>67</sup>

By the 1840s, Americans' economic prosperity defied comparison with Great Britain and justified even larger requests from the American Board. “The temporal prosperity,” which God was spreading throughout the country, “is without a parallel in the history of the world.” But this was no reason to boast, because “our greatest danger is from this very quarter.” Wealth could be a corrupting influence on

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<sup>67</sup> Abridgment of the Annual Report, *Missionary Herald* 32:1 (January 1836), 3; Annual Meeting of the Board, *Missionary Herald* 32:11 (November 1836), 439. In another effort to fill the coffers, promoters suggested that national and religious identity should be more explicitly conflated in raising support for foreign missions: “The primary sources, whence all our missionary streams are fed, must be more appreciated and cultivated in all our future movements.” The American public “should be taught... that this grand enterprise is our own, that it belongs to the American people, that it is both *American and Christian* in its very nature, and that piety and patriotism alike conspire to sustain its progression, till the world, which is the sphere of its jurisdiction, shall become also the field of its victories, and all people shall gladly swell its triumphs.” Even in the 1840s, the American Board was still trying to convince American Christians that the rest of the world was an appropriate sphere of influence for them. Thirty-Fourth Annual Meeting, *Missionary Herald* 39:11 (November 1843), 412.

American society, but fortunately, God was giving Americans these resources while at the same time showing them where they could invest, “in the most hopeful circumstances, for the benefit of our fellow men. From this remarkable coincidence, do we not learn his will? Is it not irresistibly clear that he has blessed us beyond all other nations, that we may labor beyond all other nations in diffusing the knowledge of his salvation throughout the earth?” The gift of unprecedented resources was presented as a sign of unprecedented responsibility, so people with pride in their nation's success—and concern to see it continue—were encouraged to give more of their money to the foreign missions board, not only to obey God through evangelism but to prevent their own nation from being corrupted by its material wealth.<sup>68</sup>

In their annual meeting in 1850, the ABCFM again asserted that Americans as a nation should be expected to provide unprecedented support to foreign evangelism: “The true mission of the church of God in this country can hardly be misapprehended. She has been placed on this pinnacle of Christian privileges, and endowed with this rich inheritance of means and facilities for doing good, in order that she may be, as her divine Lord was, 'a light to them that sit in darkness.'" But the expectation had not yet been met, as one address, “The Churches Able to Furnish More Means,” made clear. If only the American church would “stand forth in the 'glorious beauty' which it is her privilege to wear... publishing salvation, how soon would the darkness be rolled away, and the nations acknowledge their Redeemer and their God!” The committee was far from certain that American Christians would fulfill their potential, prophesying doom if they did not make the right choice. “If she fulfills her heaven-appointed ministry,

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<sup>68</sup> Annual Survey of the Missions of the Board, *Missionary Herald* 44:1 (January 1848), 2.

God will bless her, and she shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Many nations will call her blessed. But if she falter, and shrink from the toil and self-denial of this great enterprise, the day will come when her light shall be quenched, her sanctuaries defiled, and all her pleasant things laid waste. The kingdom of heaven will be taken from her, and given to another people.” America's unique blessings provoked a jeremiad rather than a celebration of national destiny because the ABCFM was worried about how this abundance would be used. And of course, the responsibility lay specifically with the churches of America to see that their prosperity, freedom, and civilization were preserved.<sup>69</sup>

So, in many ways, the American Board encouraged its supporters to think of themselves as part of a national community with unique characteristics that demanded the greatest contributions to foreign missions. But they hesitated to exalt their own

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<sup>69</sup> *Missionary Herald* 46:10 (October 1850), 338. In 1852 they printed a “Statistical History of Benevolent Contributions” which was supposed to help them figure out why donations had not gone up more rapidly. But the survey revealed that the rate of increase over time had been steady if not dramatic, even compared to their British counterparts. Speaking specifically of the London Society and Church Missionary Society, “we find, though their receipts were considerably larger than ours, that the experience of the Board was more favorable than theirs. The receipts of the London Missionary Society experienced a decline in both of the last two periods of four years, and those of the Church Missionary Society in the last three periods,” although the last couple of years had seen improvements for both. Another way to make the American contributions to missions look more significant was “to take several Societies into account in reckoning what have been the proper receipts for foreign missions; not only the American Board and the General Assembly's Board of Foreign Missions, but the American Bible Society, the American Tract Society... [etc.]” Americans could feel proud of the fact that they gave to missions through several avenues, not just the American Board, though their giving still lagged behind the leadership's goals. “The Churches Able to Furnish More Means,” *Missionary Herald* 48:10 (October 1850), 290.

efforts and abilities over those of the British, with whom Americans were still trying to catch up. They also reminded readers of the *Missionary Herald* that they were participating in an international enterprise in which national differences were not important. The report from the 1850 annual meeting declared “the Bible and Tract Societies, the Societies for Foreign and Domestic Missions, the Theological and Sabbath School Societies, and other similar classes of benevolent religious associations, now existing in the Christian world, as together constituting *one grand Evangelical Voluntary Association of Christians*,” devoted to fulfilling the Great Commission. The Board accepted that given “the present state of opinion and feeling in Christendom, national and denominational societies are inevitable,” but these divisions were purely practical—all were united on “the great evangelical basis, of holding Christ the Head.” The periodical continued to publish reports from British organizations and writings of British missionaries as well as speeches from British society meetings and reviews of British publications (though they occupied a smaller proportion of its pages as American missions grew more numerous). Often these writings were influential in the decisions of the Board's leaders, such as the accounts from Scotsman and LMS missionary John Philip of his work in South Africa. His letter to the Board about opportunities for missionary work in Africa, published in the *Herald* in 1833, was a vital part of the inspiration for the first American missions to southern Africa.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Forty-first Annual Meeting, *Missionary Herald* 46:10 (October 1850), 335; Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 127.

The American Board reminded readers that the British were the more experienced partners in this enterprise, at times holding up certain policies of British societies that were similar to its own as a way of defending their validity when they were unpopular. For example, the American Board did not allow missionaries under their direction to return home on account of ill health or family concerns without first obtaining express permission from their directors. This regulation was apparently challenged, and so the Board defended it by demonstrating that a couple of the older British societies had been enforcing similar policies for many years. The Wesleyan Methodists had, “after having been many years engaged in foreign missions,” adopted a resolution in 1825 that any missionary who returns to Great Britain without permission of the General Conference's missionary committee, “except in cases of *extreme danger*, through sickness,” should be considered as having severed his association with the organization. The Church Missionary Society, too, “which has conducted its affairs with great wisdom,” had similarly revised its laws in 1812 to specify that “The missionaries, who go out under the direction of the society, shall be allowed to visit home, permission having been previously obtained from the general committee.” According to that society's annual report for 1831, the most recent one the American Board had seen, the policy of requiring permission was still in effect after nineteen years, “among missionaries in the remotest situations, and in every variety of climate and condition.” The American Board obviously hoped that demonstrating their consistency with the long-standing policies of British organizations would lend credibility to their own unpopular rules.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Twenty-ninth Annual Meeting of the Board, *Missionary Herald* 34:11 (November 1838), 429. In 1841 the Board admired the societies in Great Britain for achieving greater distribution of their promotional literature. They compared the circulation of

Because the British organizations were older, the American Board could also discuss their problems as situations Americans might try to avoid, particularly in the area of finances. In January 1843, the debt of English societies became a warning for Americans to heed. “It is not many months since the aggregate indebtedness of the English Missionary Societies exceeded half a million of dollars. And who has not acknowledged the existence of a fear in his own breast, that it would not be possible to

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the *Missionary Herald* with that of similar periodicals in Great Britain to show how British societies had managed to reach their potential supporters efficiently. When looking at the pages of information British societies published, “the measures adopted by older and more experienced societies in Great Britain for waking and sustaining the missionary spirit,” they discovered that “the whole number of pages issued in a year by the Church Missionary Society, which issues most, falls short of what are issued by this Board by about 2,000,000,” but “the number of copies of their publications much exceeds that of ours.” The American Board published a greater amount of information, but the copies of periodical publications they distributed “the last year did not exceed 97,000, falling short of theirs by 138,000 copies. Though the patrons of that society, as a reading community, are not probably to be compared with the patrons of this Board, yet their publications reach nearly twice and a half as many persons. Results very similar would be seen on comparing the periodicals of this Board with those of the British Wesleyan or London Missionary Societies.” The report also mentioned that the vast majority of British periodical publications—“more than “fifteen sixteenths of the publications issued by the Church Missionary Society, nearly or quite all those of the Wesleyan Society, and about four-fifths of those of the London Missionary Society”—were basically given away for free, whereas the Board received payment for more than half the periodicals they issued. “If all the information which such a work as the *Missionary Herald*, with all practicable improvements, could enter and be read by every family of the patrons of the Board, the Committee suppose that the beneficial influence would be incalculably great, and perhaps leave little more to be sought for in this respect. But such a circulation for the *Herald*, cannot be at present anticipated. To meet this deficiency, the Prudential Committee have thought it important that a smaller publication should be issued, one more easily read, less expensive, and more capable of being readily scattered over the land.” Thus the American Board announced that it was considering adopting the British method in order to reach more potential supporters. Annual Meeting of the Board, *Missionary Herald* 37:11 (November 1841), 446-447.



keep the receipts of this Board, in the year upon which we now enter, at three hundred thousand dollars?" The Board went on to complain about the "Character of the Missionary Spirit of this Age" being too inconsistent. When volunteers were ready and willing to go, the support was not sufficient to sponsor them. But "then see what vacillation there is;—now, a want of funds, and then, what a want of missionaries! ...Where is the spirit of Mills, and Hall, and Judson, and the other pioneers in our missions to the heathen?" Americans needed to stop treating their participation as voluntary and occasional but instead as a practical commitment that merited sustained attention. "We need to look at the enterprise as a business matter, and see what is to be done... and whether this be not a part of our business in this world, and as such, demanding a share of our habitual thoughts and plans."<sup>72</sup>

While trying to develop a more reliable method of fund-raising on a local level, the Board admired the way that British societies managed to rely less on occasional voluntary contributions and more on a regular collection of expected donations, treating missionary support more like an additional tithe rather than an irregular offering. They described it as "the English plan of bringing the call to each door and to every heart... of not trusting to a mere collection through a contribution-box, but to a pledged and systematic devotion of a part of our income to the cause of missions, as God has prospered us; this plan has been found far more efficient than any other in swelling the amount of contributions to this cause." The top-down nature of the English system surely would have been less appealing to Americans than the voluntary system, but history showed that it worked, and the Board was above all

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<sup>72</sup> "Character of the Missionary Spirit of this Age," *Missionary Herald* 39:1 (January 1843), 17.

concerned with maintaining their income. They marveled that “children in England have contributed in one year to the London Missionary Society, in this way, a sum equal to one-eighth of the entire amount obtained by the labors of all our pastors and agents, from all the churches connected with this Board during the last year.” The only relevant difference between the U.S. and England that the Board acknowledged in suggesting the application of this system was the difference in population distribution. It was “undoubtedly more difficult to give full effect to this system here, than in the denser population of England,” but it was worth trying to replicate as much as possible.<sup>73</sup>

The American Board and its magazine thus stood in contrast to other New England writers in their comparisons of Americans and Europeans. Rather than celebrate their nation's superiority, they depicted the British as senior partners in an international evangelical campaign. The American Board hoped that national pride would spur their supporters into giving more money so that they could catch up with

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<sup>73</sup> Thirty-fifth Annual Meeting, *Missionary Herald* 40:10 (October 1844), 340. The American Board also complained specifically about a lack of effectiveness in their system of auxiliary societies, when compared to those of British organizations. They claimed that the “principal missionary societies in Great Britain are far in advance of us, as to the number and efficiency of their organizations for the diffusion of intelligence and the collection of funds. In theory their system is not more perfect than our own. But its practical working is much more complete, steady, and thorough.” The British auxiliaries relied upon a greater number of regular volunteers and collected support from more sources. The London Missionary Society had “auxiliaries in every part of the United Kingdom,” as did the Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Missionary Society, and the Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. A sign of their effectiveness was the fact that annual meetings “form a capital feature in all these systems of associated effort for the collection of funds.” American evangelicals were shamed for not showing as much enthusiasm: “How unlike all this are the annual meetings of auxiliary societies sometimes witnessed among ourselves.” (341)

the British in their efforts overseas. But they also clearly expected their readers to respect the British example and desire to emulate it as well as compete with it. The affinity between American and British evangelicals endured throughout the antebellum era, even as Americans struggled to balance regional and national identities alongside their membership in the evangelical community.

### **The Search for Denominational Legitimacy**

For denominational organizations like the Baptist and Presbyterian foreign missions boards, claiming to represent the entire nation of evangelicals was not an option—or even a potential selling point. Rather, they expected their readers to prioritize denominational legitimacy, and they cultivated a sense of transatlantic community with their counterparts in Britain as a way of addressing denominational concerns. They expected their supporters to respond positively to portrayals of their organizations as members of a larger international movement in which their transatlantic counterparts were trailblazers and role models, even for other Americans.

As the Baptist sect grew into a full-fledged denomination in the early nineteenth century, Baptist leaders, mostly centered in the urban areas of the northeast, were engaged in a quest for “respectability.” In addition to promoting domestic missions and revivals that would strengthen their numbers, they tried to improve the educational levels of their clergy to meet the standards of the older churches. And some Baptists enhanced their prestige by publicizing the compatibility between Baptist beliefs and the values of republicanism, claiming, for example, that “Thomas Jefferson was influenced in writing the Declaration of Independence by Baptist principles.” But the Baptists who promoted their sect's involvement in foreign missions more often emphasized their transatlantic connections and called upon the

Baptists of the United States to unite on behalf of the denomination worldwide as well as in America.<sup>74</sup>

The early years of Baptist promotion, when American Baptists were still coming into their own, emphasized the activities and writings of esteemed British Baptist individuals and societies. The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society, founded in 1802, created the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* to promote revivals and frontier evangelism but also to raise money for British Baptist missionaries in India. The activities of the British missionaries, which evangelicals of other denominations followed with interest as well, contributed legitimacy to American Baptist efforts. The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society published letters they received from William Carey, including one in which he reported having received three issues of their magazine as well as other writings. He claimed that it gave him “real pleasure to hear of the attempts made in America to spread abroad the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and among the institutions which are designed for the encouragement of these attempts,” he named “the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society as one of the finest; and the Magazine connected therewith as a very useful means of spreading religious intelligence.” According to the editors, Carey had also sent them several suggestions for making the periodical “more perfect.” They quoted him as saying he had “been much gratified by the perusal of the numbers, and would not willingly see any blemishes in the work.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> William G. McLoughlin, *New England Dissent, 1630-1833: The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State*, Vol. II (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971), 1107-1127.

<sup>75</sup> Emily L. Conroy-Krutz mentions the broad American interest in the first Baptist mission to India in “The Conversion of the World in the Early Republic: Race,

After the creation of the national Baptist convention and Board of Foreign Missions in 1814, the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* continued to publish letters from British Baptists and excerpts from British periodicals. A letter from Andrew Fuller regarding the first national Baptist convention declared that it was “pleasant to hear of the unanimity of the American brethren in the cause of Missions,” and that he appreciated “their affectionate proposals of mutual correspondence.” The leaders of the convention had resolved to communicate their proceedings to the Baptist Missionary Society in England as well as the missionaries in Serampore, “assuring them that it is the desire of this board to hold an affectionate intercourse with them, in the work of the Lord,” and expecting to “derive joy from the reflection, that though in these transactions their respective seats of council be remote from each other, their hearts and aims are harmonious.” In 1816, the American board reiterated their desire to maintain with the English Baptists, as well as with the American Board,

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Gender, and Imperialism in the Early American Foreign Mission Movement,” (PhD diss, Harvard University, 2012), ch. 1, as does Wilbert R. Shenk in “Introduction,” *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004), 3; Letter from the Rev. Mr. Carey, *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 1:7 (May 1806), 195-196. Benedict Anderson emphasizes the importance of communication networks in building national consciousness: “neither economic interest, Liberalism, nor Enlightenment... provided the framework of a new consciousness—the scarcely-seen periphery of its vision—as opposed to centre-field objects of its admiration or disgust. In accomplishing *this* specific task, pilgrim creole functionaries and provincial creole printmen played the decisive historic role.” *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (New York: Verso, 2006), 64. But religious publications such as the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*, even after it became a national magazine in 1820, revolved around denominational identity, not national identity. They continued to broadcast international news, and they were sent to Britain as well as to foreign mission stations, while British periodicals were sent over to the U.S. in return.

a “friendly and steady reciprocation of reports, publications, missionary information, and mutual good offices in aid of our united efforts for the glory of God, and the everlasting welfare of immortal souls.” A few years later, William Ward visited the U.S. from Serampore and made numerous speeches in cities like Boston and New York, raising money in America for the British Baptist mission. He reported “great pleasure & satisfaction in my visits to various parts of the States, & in forming friendships,” especially with the Baptist ministers in Boston. American Baptists touted their connections with British Baptists, knowing that other evangelicals—especially the American Board—followed their activities and esteemed their accomplishments in India.<sup>76</sup>

By the 1820s, Baptists had achieved enough growth in the United States—as well as victories in state battles over disestablishment—that they could see themselves having advantages that their British counterparts did not enjoy. In an 1828 address in their periodical (which became the *American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer* in 1820, and later the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*), the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions declared that “The time has arrived, when the American Baptist Churches ought to engage in this sacred cause, with a degree of zeal, and a combined

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<sup>76</sup> Baptist Mission to the Heathen, *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 4:3 (Sept. 1814), 65; Extracts from the proceedings of the Board, *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 4:11 (Sept. 1816), 341; William Ward to Lucius Bolles (Dec. 25, 1820, and March 13, 1821), William Ward Correspondence, ABHS archives, RG-1373. William Carey was actually concerned with how the conversion of Judson and Rice, the event that led to the formation of the Baptist Board, might affect the competitive relationship between American denominations: “I hope none of our Baptist brethren in America will glory over their Congregational brethren on account of this circumstance. The fact is important, but let us improve it as christians.” *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:11 (Sept. 1813), 321.

energy, more commensurate with the increasing strength of the denomination.” The Board claimed that the presence of American Baptists abroad did not accurately reflect the strength of the churches at home, especially considering how much of the world consisted of “moral desert.” They challenged American Baptists to give even more than their British counterparts, considering the fact that Americans now enjoyed so many advantages politically and economically. But American contributions were still put to shame by those of the British—the past year's donations totaled \$11,272.90, “a sum which is less than one fourth of that contributed for the same object, by the Baptist Churches in England, whose numbers are far less, and their burdens much greater than ours. Are American Baptists, then, less concerned for the honour of the Redeemer, and for the salvation of men?”<sup>77</sup>

The Baptist magazine also published direct appeals from British Baptists. In 1836, missionaries in Calcutta sent “An Appeal to American Christians on Behalf of British India” to encourage readers to think specifically about the needs of Bengal, in the heart of British territory. The American editors prefaced it by reminding their readers how much they had already learned about the potential of India for missionary

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<sup>77</sup> Address of the Board to the Churches, *American Baptist Magazine* 8:6 (June 1828), 174. Deborah Wade also suggested the example of the English public when she discussed their efforts to establish a female boarding school upon a returning to Burma. “I felt... a strong prepossession in favour of native boarding schools, but by no means indifferent to the great and benevolent exertions now in operation in Bengal, and other places, in the way of free day schools.” Boarding schools were particularly expensive institutions to run, and since the war and the English occupation of Burma prices had been very high. “If the ladies and little misses in America, should follow the example of the good and benevolent ladies of England, in sending out boxes of small articles for the schools, they would be very acceptable, and save considerable expense.” Burman Mission: Extracts from Mrs. Wade's Journal, *American Baptist Magazine* 8:12 (December 1828), 362.

work, and “how small a part of what has been done for its Christianization, is attributable to the holy enterprize of American Christians.” American missionaries had set up shop in other parts of India by this point—not only the Baptist Board, but the ABCFM and the Western Foreign Missionary Society (predecessor to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions). But Americans had no presence in Bengal, at least partly because of “the apprehension which has existed in years past, that the co-operation of the American church in evangelizing British India was not specially called for, and might by some be deemed an interference,” according to the editors. But now the British missionaries in Calcutta were themselves asking American Baptists, as their closest allies, to reinforce their efforts by sending American missionaries. “We look to you, churches of America, with hope and confidence; next to our Lord, we rely on your prayers, sympathies, and energy. Shall we trust in vain?” Schools had been built, bibles had been translated, tracts had been written and printed, but men were needed to teach and preach and bring people into the church. It was a pivotal time for India, “the infancy of a nation's thoughtfulness,” but the missionary force had aged and decreased in number to the point of being inadequate for even the operations already underway. They wanted “the American church to remember THAT SHE HAS NOT A SINGLE MISSIONARY IN BENGAL, containing a population of not less than 30 millions.” The missionaries then spoke of “the Church” as a whole, claiming that their appeals came from “a consciousness that it is our duty to lay before the Church the present condition of this country,” so that if “the Church” did not take advantage of current opportunities for evangelizing India, “the blood of this people will be required, not at our hands, but at [theirs].”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> “An Appeal to American Christians on Behalf of British India,” *Baptist Missionary*



While the missionaries' request focused on the need for more manpower, for most American readers this appeal would have read as a need for more funds to support the requested volunteers. The Baptist magazine reported American aid to British missionaries in the coming years in the form of donations to the English Baptist Missionary Society and its auxiliary, the Calcutta Baptist Missionary Society. The editors claimed such transatlantic cooperation to be a sign “that the Spirit which first kindled the missionary flame on the altar of the church, will not only maintain, but augment its lustre and brightness, until the whole world shall be cheered by its influence.” The magazine advertised not only American Baptist donations to the British but those from interdenominational organizations as well. Funds were appropriated for the Baptist Missionary Society by the American Tract Society, American Sunday School Union, and the American and Foreign Bible Society, all of which were interested in supporting the translation and publication of Bibles in Eastern languages. An annual report from the Calcutta Baptist Missionary Society in 1839 cited the “liberal contributions placed at the disposal of the Calcutta Baptist missionaries by the American and Foreign Bible Society” as a factor in indicating “the manifest call of Providence, to engage with renewed ardor in this holy work.” These examples of international cooperation were depicted as signs of even greater success to come, and promoters hoped they would instill even greater confidence in their American supporters.<sup>79</sup>

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*Magazine* 16:2 (February 1836), 27-30.

<sup>79</sup> “An Appeal to American Christians on Behalf of British India,” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16:2 (February 1836), 27; Other Benevolent Institutions: American Tract Society, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 16:7 (July 1836), 181; Baptist (Eng.) Missionary Society, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 18:2 (February 1838), 44; Other

In the 1830s, Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic emphasized the importance of maintaining a sense of connection in order to strengthen their denomination and its missionary zeal. A Baptist assembly in London in 1834 issued an address to the American Baptist national convention in which they affirmed their sympathy with the Americans in spite of the distance between them: “Our descent is one, our faith is the same, and our mutual hope is fixed on the same eternal glory.” They also congratulated their American brethren “on the high privileges you possess, beyond so many of the nations of the earth.” They reflected on New England’s history, beginning with “the period when the ‘Pilgrim Fathers,’ driven by intolerance, took up their residence in your now happy country,” followed by “the formation of your first state on the broad principles of entire civil and religious liberty, by Roger Williams, a member of our own denomination.” And more recently in “your numerous and flourishing churches, in the extension of divine truth, and in those revivals of religion with which you have been so happily favored, we see the blessed fruits of voluntary Christian zeal.” They attributed much of the American Baptists’ success to their “perfect freedom from the encumbrance of a State Religion,” and went on to describe the various successes and challenges faced by Baptist churches in England. The American response confirmed that “Baptists of England and America are connected by the most intimate relationship.” They resolved that the national convention would send a couple of delegates in order to “reciprocate the friendly and fraternal expressions of their brethren in England,” because they believed that cultivating this

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Societies: American and Foreign Bible Society, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 19:7 (July 1839), 178; Other Societies: Calcutta Baptist Missionary Society, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 19:8 (August 1839), 203.

connection would help ignite the missionary spirit at home and increase their support for missions.<sup>80</sup>

Operating on that principle, various articles in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* emphasized the transatlantic context of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions in their appeals to American supporters. An 1842 history of “The English and Baptist Missionary Societies” emphasized the influence of British Baptists in pioneering foreign missions and in encouraging American Baptists to get involved, believing that this history would help American supporters feel more invested. The article started with the very origins of the Baptist Missionary Society in England, in which the seeds were also planted for a “monthly concert of prayer” that missionaries and their supporters in England and America would participate in for years to come. Of course, the first missionaries sent out by the Baptist Society in England had found their efforts “greatly circumscribed” by the East India Company. But eventually they were able to expand their efforts, and the article listed current Baptist stations and converts in India. In case readers might be dismayed by the numbers, the article reminded them that while making converts was the ultimate goal, “thus far, no small part of foreign missionary work has been preparatory. Of the labors of none of the missionaries is this so true, as of the English Baptists. They were pioneers.” Evidence of their progress could also be seen in the continual increase in donations. “Perhaps there is no body of Christians in the world, who, *considering their circumstances*, contribute more liberally for the cause of foreign missions than the English Baptists.”

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<sup>80</sup> Meeting of the Eighth Triennial Convention, Appendix: Address of the Baptist Union... to their brethren composing the Baptist Triennial Convention, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 15:6 (June 1835), 257.

The American author hoped that the English example would “continue to stimulate other portions of the Christian church to still greater efforts in this most precious of causes,” indicating his goal of increasing American donations to Baptist missions.<sup>81</sup>

The same article emphasized the “*influence of the missionary movement among the Baptists in England, upon the Baptists in America*,” including the frequent correspondence between English and American Baptists in the early nineteenth century. But while letters from English missionaries in particular were influential, “the most efficient agency at work in this country was the American Baptist Magazine,” established in 1803. It “published not only interesting portions of this private correspondence, but also of that, between the missionaries and the Society in England. At no period since the publication of the Magazine have its pages contained more thrilling accounts of heathenism, or more persuasive appeals from the missionaries. This influence awakened in the hearts of the Baptists in this country a missionary spirit.” The article credited Judson's conversion with being the “event which contributed more than any thing else to hasten the formation of the Baptist Triennial Convention.” But it pointed out that “seed was sowing” in the U.S. before Judson's conversion, and the “English Baptists were sowing it,” not just in America but “over the Christian world. There is not a missionary society in existence which is not indebted either for its origin or its increased activity to the missionary efforts of English Baptists; but none are so much as ourselves.” The article expressed hope that English Baptists would continue to exert a strong influence over Americans, as they were “still greatly in advance of us.” The Board of Foreign Missions celebrated the

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<sup>81</sup> The English and Baptist Missionary Societies, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 22:9 (September 1842), 253-257.

pioneering past of their British brethren and the closeness of their relationship in order to increase their supporters' confidence in the denomination's enterprise and encourage them to strive for greater success.<sup>82</sup>

Like the American Board, the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions believed that public awareness of their transatlantic brethren would motivate American Baptists to compete with the achievements of the English. As a result, the Board of Foreign Missions decided to “unite with their English brethren in celebrating the jubilee of their missionary society.” Earlier in the year, the English Baptist Missionary Society had announced their intention to observe 1842 as “a year of jubilee” in honor of the society's fiftieth anniversary. American Baptist leaders declared the “*relation* between our English brethren and ourselves is so definite and so palpable, and we may add, so important, that sympathy with them in this, the day of their thanksgiving, is most reasonable.” At the same time, the article reminded Americans of their own success: “God has wonderfully blessed us. There are few stations occupied by modern

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<sup>82</sup> The English and Baptist Missionary Societies, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 22:9 (September 1842), 253-257. This author maintained that the English actually had some advantages when it came to mobilizing support for foreign work. Their churches were much closer together, “occupying a territory not one-twentieth as large as that occupied by American Baptists,” where “communication is not only quick, but convenient.” Conversely, Americans were “not only widely dispersed, but of dissimilar views and plans of action. What is said in Boston or New York, often needs an interpreter at the south, and in the valley of the west.” The challenges to communication were “an obstacle to an efficient effort in behalf of any great enterprise; an obstacle, it is true, which time and our internal improvements are rapidly diminishing, but one which is at present seriously felt in the cause of foreign missions.” These factors justified the challenges that American Baptists faced in raising support, but only to an extent: “whatever apology we may make for our present distance behind our English brethren, we need not, and must not remain where we are.”

missionaries, more interesting, if so much so, than those which have been selected by the American Baptist Board... We have every thing to inspire hope, every thing to encourage us to go forward.” Ministers were encouraged to preach on this subject and take up an extra collection on its behalf. Later in the year, the magazine reiterated this point by describing the series of “jubilee meetings” held throughout England, and by printing one of the speeches delivered at the meeting in Kettering, by the son of the late Andrew Fuller. Editors believed that keeping their organization in this comparative context would “provoke a holy emulation.”<sup>83</sup>

Many sermons and reports described the English Baptists as setting the standard for sacrifice, a source of both pride and shame for American Baptists as they enjoyed success in their own country. One writer reminded supporters that as members of the Baptist denomination, it had “been our boast that our brethren in England were the pioneers in this work.” But were Americans now living up to that heritage? Hundreds of converts in Burma supposedly waited to be baptized, but not enough missionaries were being sent to gather in the harvest. “These facts are spread before our brethren, and we receive from them, on an average, six cents a year.” Americans needed to step up, “if we would worthily illustrate the name of the Baptist church in America.” American Baptists in the 1840s were capable of giving much more than they had been, but they were put to shame by the sacrifices of their English predecessors. One of the Baptist missionaries in Assam emphasized this contrast and

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<sup>83</sup> The English and Baptist Missionary Societies, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 22:9 (September 1842), 253-257; Jubilee of the Baptist Mission, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 22:5 (May 1842), 126; Jubilee Meeting at Kettering, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 22:10 (October 1842), 279. (Reprinted from the Baptist magazine in London).

argued that with the blessings of liberty, which had allowed Baptists to develop so successfully as a denomination, came exceptional responsibilities. “For the first time in history, Baptists have become the prevailing sect of a nation,” and the missionary questioned whether they would “acquit themselves honorably in this the day of their strength.” Their success at home made their efforts abroad pale in comparison to their less fortunate British brethren. Once again, the British were held up as standards for emulation, but for the Baptists, denominational pride more than national pride was at stake. American Baptists had an important heritage to live up to, one that had initially helped them establish their legitimate presence both in New England and in global evangelism, but now could put them to shame as the inheritors of a pioneering tradition.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Short Sermon, *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 23:12 (December 1843), 307; “Address of Mr. Brown, of Assam,” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 25:9 (September 1845), 231. To prod their supporters further into competition with the British, the Baptist magazine published specific comparisons between American and British contributions. An article called “The Comparison” discussed the spending of American and English missionary societies, again, holding up their English counterparts to show Americans that they were not doing their fair share for the cause of missions. It stated again that the “English Baptist brethren are far in advance of American Baptists in liberality of contribution to the cause of God. Their numbers are less than one sixth of ours; their ability in proportion to their numbers is much smaller; their taxes for the support of government, and also of the Established Church, are exceedingly heavy and oppressive; and yet for the single object of Foreign Missions, they contribute annually more than *one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars*.” This article went on to compare the spending of American and English Methodists, according to the publication of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which said that \$437,384 had been donated to the English Wesleyan Society in 1840-41, while only \$141,363—less than half that amount—had been raised by the American Methodists. No longer was it enough to compare the activities of just the Baptists—American evangelicals as a whole were being put to shame by their English counterparts. “The Comparison,” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 23:1 (January 1843), 11.

## The Elusive Ecumenical Ideal

One of the themes present throughout a variety of missionary literature is a celebration of ecumenical cooperation and brotherhood among evangelical Protestants. This emphasis reflects a desire to transcend or combat the divisive sectarian atmosphere that had emerged in the early republic, especially when it came to recruiting support for foreign missions. For the American Board, evangelical unity had been a concern at its inception. Many early promoters of foreign missions had seen it as a cause that could unite New England Protestants in the face of theological and denominational conflicts. Local missionary societies formed throughout New England to serve as auxiliaries to the American Board and raise money and awareness among churches. The foreign cause “served as a rallying point for the evangelical community.”<sup>85</sup>

The sectarian conflicts of the republic's first decades had subsided and given rise to a “spirit of evangelical interdenominationalism” in New England by the 1820s, but new tensions emerged both within and beyond New England in the 1830s and 1840s. Reformed and Arminian denominations competed to convert settlers on the frontier. Theological differences resulted in divisions between New School Presbyterians, Old School Presbyterians, and Congregationalists throughout the Northeast, as well as multiple factions of Baptists. And regional differences eventually separated the northern populations of several denominations from their

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<sup>85</sup> Quotation from Jonathan D. Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 137; Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 26, 63; Andrew, *Rebuilding the Christian Commonwealth*, 79.



southern counterparts, as even northern evangelicals split over issues like abolition and women's equality. By the end of the antebellum era, an attempt to establish a World Evangelical Alliance had failed, and sectarian and regional lines were drawn more clearly than ever. Missionary magazines attempted to maintain an image of a collaborative evangelical spirit and unified Protestant movement for foreign missions in the midst of schism and interdenominational conflict.<sup>86</sup>

The first challenge to the American Board's claim to represent unified American evangelicals in the enterprise of foreign missions had come from the conversion of Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice, which led to the formation of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions. In the 1841 biography of Gordon Hall, a member of that first cohort, his colleague Horatio Bardwell discussed the separation of Judson and Rice from Hall and Samuel Nott. He depicted the parting as perfectly amicable, characterized by “mutual confidence and affection,” and argued that twenty years later, the cause of missions had only benefited from the division of the cohort. As a result of Judson's departure from the American Board's mission, “a large evangelical body of Christians was called into the missionary field;—a mission established in a central portion of the eastern world, in which faith and patience have been signally displayed and blessed. Both denominations concerned may now united in expressions of gratitude, that God has blessed the honest intentions of both divisions of the first American Mission, and unitedly disclaim the thought, that, by his *providential* dispensations, he has sanctioned the peculiar opinions of either.” Thus the American

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<sup>86</sup> Sassi, *Republic of Righteousness*, 145, 200.

Board expressed an attitude of acceptance and cooperation toward the organization that had taken on the sponsorship of one of their original missionaries.<sup>87</sup>

But the American Board had never really expected to represent the Baptists in America, who were still a small sect at the time of the Board's founding. They commissioned their ministers to baptize converts along with their families, an order that believers in adult-only baptism could not follow. The more significant challenge to the American Board's status came from Presbyterians in the 1830s. They began to publish their own periodical in order to represent the views of Old School Presbyterians who did not necessarily agree with the Congregationalists in charge of the American Board. The *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* began publication in 1833 under the direction of the Western Foreign Missionary Society. This Presbyterian organization had its roots in a society formed by the Synod of Pittsburgh to evangelize Indians on the Pennsylvania frontier. In the 1820s, the General Assembly had turned this western mission over to the ABCFM, whose efforts overseas and among natives further east had always received Presbyterian support. But the Synod of Pittsburgh believed that Presbyterian support for missions had declined in the years following, so in 1831 they initiated the reestablishment of a Presbyterian society in the hopes of invigorating the “missionary spirit” among western Presbyterians. The society's leaders professed their continued sympathies with “evangelical missionary societies which are established on different principles—especially that of the London Missionary Society in Great Britain, and the American Board in the United States,

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<sup>87</sup> Horatio Bardwell, *Memoir of Rev. Gordon Hall, A.M., one of the first missionaries of the Amer. Board of Comm. for Foreign Missions, at Bombay* (New York: Dayton and Saxton, 1841), 42.

whose zealous operations are worthy of high commendation.” But these Presbyterians thought foreign missions were best conducted under the authority of the ecclesiastical structures of a denomination, not an interdenominational organization like the American Board. To support this claim they brought up “the remarkable success of several missionary Societies which are organized on a similar plan; particularly those of the Church Missionary Society, Baptist Missionary Society, Wesleyan Missionary Society, and the United Brethren's Missionary Society, in Europe;” as well as “those of these denominations in the U. States.”<sup>88</sup>

The periodical then went to great lengths to proclaim that the society's goal was the multiplication of missionary efforts, not division. The new society maintained that a proliferation of organizations would result in even more widespread support for missions, rather than diminishing support for the American Board. One way in which they made this argument was by publishing comparisons between the U.S. and Europe and convincing Americans that they still had the potential to do more. An article in the second issue of the *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* commended England for beginning and sustaining the modern phase of missionary efforts, “contributing between \$700,000 and \$1,00,000 annually.” But the article predicted that the “intolerable tythe system” of England's churches would prevent them from expanding their efforts beyond what they had already done. American Christians, on the other hand, were “oppressed by no ecclesiastical bondage, and by no grinding civil taxation,

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<sup>88</sup> *The Foreign Missionary Chronicle: Containing a Particular Account of the Proceedings of the Western Foreign Missionary Society, and a General View of the Transactions of other Similar Institutions, Volumes I and II*, edited by E.P. Swift (Pittsburgh, 1834), iv.

as our brethren in England.” In fact, Americans were “in the full enjoyment of gospel blessings,” where every individual had access to the “bread of life and the water of life.” It was incumbent upon them to consider their duty to the world as a result. To this point, the 1833 Annual Report of the Western Foreign Missionary Society added Americans' relative economic prosperity, suggesting that other nations expected more from them because of their wealth. “From 4 to 6 millions of the human race, at a moderate calculation, are yet unchristianized; and for their illumination there are less than 800 missionaries in the field, including those of every Protestant denomination... A people so highly favored by the munificent author of all good, as the christians of these U. States; possessed of so many resources, and belonging to a population so much distinguished in the earth for its liberality and its enterprize, will surely not be backward in a cause like this.”<sup>89</sup>

The periodical also used a variety of British sources to support their argument that Americans could and should multiply their efforts. Writings from complementary organizations like the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Ladies' Hindoo-Female Education Society of England asked for support for Scripture distribution, female schools, and other specific aspects of foreign missionary work that generally enjoyed widespread evangelical support. Another article excerpted speeches by the secretaries of the Church, Wesleyan, and London Missionary Societies given in the British House of Commons on the effectiveness of Christianity “to civilize mankind and promote their social well-being.” Reprinted pieces from other magazines, such as

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<sup>89</sup> “Missions to the Heathen Vindicated,” *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 1:6 (September 1833), 91; Annual Report, *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 1:5 (August 1833), 67.

a “Table of the Receipts of Benevolent Societies” from the London *Missionary Register*, presented the donations to European and American organizations side by side. Similarly, an original article compared the Presbyterian society's efforts thus far with those of the “large and prosperous Institutions of Britain” as well as the American Board. British organizations were “annually augmenting the number of their stations and their laborers,” while the American Board was “progressing in its work with undiminished wisdom and success, and constantly accumulating resources. In comparison with these, and indeed with some lesser organizations of different denominations, our Society as yet has been a small and humble co-operator.” These facts were presented as motivation for American Presbyterians to give more to missions than they had in the past, as one piece of the Anglo-American evangelical pie.<sup>90</sup>

Once the Presbyterians sent their own missionaries to India, they were able to publicize the warm welcome they received from British officials and missionaries

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<sup>90</sup> “Christianity the Means of Civilization,” *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 5:11 (November 1837), 174; *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 3:5 (May 1835), 74 (the *Missionary Register* was published by the Church Missionary Society, an arm of the Church of England); “The Present Aspect of the Cause,” *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 4:9 (September 1836), 145. The magazine also published biographical sketches of people like Baptists William Carey and Joshua Marshman, LMS pioneer Robert Morrison of China, and even “The Late Miss Bird, of Calcutta.” This woman had gone to India as the sister of a widowed civil servant and begun her own school for native females, along with writing and translating a number of tracts and books on behalf of the Church of England. The sketch of Miss Bird's life is also an example of transatlantic crossover in other ways—she grew up in London but spent several of her teen years in New York, where she was influenced by Isabella Graham. The sketch of her life was originally published in the *Christian Observer*, then circulated as a pamphlet, a copy of which was sent to the Presbyterian society by Miss Bird's brother. “Biographical Sketches,” *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 5:5 (May 1837), 65.

alike as encouragement for more American involvement. “The door of entrance to this extensive empire is now widely opened, and every encouragement given to all who are willing to devote their lives to the instruction of those who are perishing for lack of knowledge; and hence, the obligations of American Christians are greatly increased to... assist, in the use of the divinely appointed means of the gospel, in overturning every system of iniquity which Satan has erected here.” Thus the Presbyterian magazine, like preceding missionary magazines, promoted the idea that its readers had capabilities and responsibilities as American Presbyterians within the transatlantic enterprise of Protestant missions.<sup>91</sup>

As English Congregational minister Andrew Reed declared during his tour of American churches, “the churches in England look on those here with trembling hope, ardent for the result. By these two nations, if by any, must the heathen world be brought from darkness into the light of the Gospel.” The two countries “should be linked in indissoluble union... and the British and American churches should be solemnly pledged to each other never to tire or cease until the knowledge of the Lord cover the earth.” But for the Presbyterians, this image was doubly important because

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<sup>91</sup> Second Missionary Reinforcement, *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 5:6 (June 1837), 84. Letters and journals from the Board's missionaries often included descriptions of their interactions with British missionaries, especially in India and China where missionaries often visited each others' stations or worked in close proximity to one another. For example, one missionary to India reported joining an English missionary on his “Missionary Tour through part of Garwal and Kamaun,” as the English were looking to relocate some of their missionaries whose health suffered in lower-lying areas. Journal of the Rev. J.M. Jamieson, *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 14:1 (January 1846), 12.

it helped them portray the creation of their own organization as a multiplication of evangelical efforts rather than a schism with the American Board.<sup>92</sup>

Just a few years following the creation of the Presbyterian periodical and Western Foreign Missionary Society in Pittsburgh, Old School Presbyterians took charge of the General Assembly in Philadelphia and abrogated the 1801 Plan of Union between Presbyterians and Congregationalists. By the 1830s, evangelical theology and revival methods in America had evolved into something beyond the pale of orthodox Calvinism. Congregationalists in the tradition of Samuel Hopkins had led the way in innovating on the theological front, while Presbyterian minister Charles Finney was the most extreme practitioner of “new measures” for promoting revivals and conversions. New School Presbyterians wanted to maintain communion with the Congregationalists and leave open the possibility of using new revivalist techniques, while Old School Presbyterians came to believe that the New School and the Congregationalists were growing tolerant of Arminian heresy. The Old School-dominated General Assembly severed their ties with the Congregationalists, withdrawing all Presbyterian support from the ABCFM and creating a Presbyterian

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<sup>92</sup> Ministerial Qualifications, *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 2:5 (August 1834), 270. Reed gave this speech before the General Assembly's Education Society, which helped fund the training of potential missionaries, like the American Education Society. He was part of a deputation from the Congregational Union of England that visited a number of evangelical conventions and meetings in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston in the spring of 1834. Reed spoke at the ABCFM meeting as well. Overall, the British delegates admired American efficiency and determination and rated the General Assembly “next in importance to the Congress of the United States.” Foster, *An Errand of Mercy*, 153. See Andrew Reed and James Matheson, *A Narrative of the Visit to American Churches by the Deputation from the Congregational Union of England and Wales* (New York, 1835; London, 1836).

Board of Foreign Missions in 1837. They transferred the Western Foreign Missionary Society's operations from the control of the Synod of Pittsburgh to the authority of the new denominational organization.<sup>93</sup>

The theological conflict between Old and New School Presbyterians, which was echoed by theological conflicts in other denominations as well, resulted in a complete denominational schism—in 1838, two different assemblies gathered simultaneously, each claiming to be the true Presbyterian Assembly. The Old School's rejection of the Plan of Union and withdrawal from many interdenominational ventures was followed by the further solidification of denominational lines among both Presbyterians and Congregationalists in the 1840s (the New School faction did not increase their ties with Congregationalists following the schism, but instead looked to shore up their Presbyterian credentials). But the new Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, led by an Old School-dominated Assembly, continued to promote the conversion of the world as a unified Anglo-American Protestant enterprise.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 62-63; First Meeting of the Board of Foreign Missions of the General Assembly, *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 5:12 (December 1837), 187-188.

<sup>94</sup> James Bratt, "The Reorientation of American Protestantism, 1835-1845," *Journal of Church History* 67:1 (March 1998), 66. The new Presbyterian Board devoted much space in the *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* to justifying their break with the American Board through theological or pragmatic statements on behalf of denominational control of missions. For example, the magazine printed excerpts from a sermon by Samuel Miller called *The Church of Christ always a Missionary Church*. Miller argued that "the Church," meaning the denominational organization, should maintain control over certain aspects of the missionary enterprise—while anyone might raise money for Scripture distribution and teaching, the church alone should ordain and oversee ministers "regularly sent to any field of labor, domestic or foreign." Christian



The *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* depicted Protestant foreign missions as a large, successful enterprise that included the American Presbyterian church among many partners. For example, the 1838 volume of the *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* opened with a four-part “General Survey of Protestant Missions,” based on a survey in the London *Missionary Register*. Its purpose was to present statistics and news from every Protestant mission station throughout the world, so that “a correct opinion may be formed of the present state of the Missionary enterprise.” The survey discussed missions in geographical order, going from one station to the next closest mission the way a person would if one toured all of the Protestant missions throughout Asia and Africa. The different denominational and national organizations were mentioned within overviews of each country they had a presence in, so that the focus was on the global Protestant campaign and not any individual society. Following this survey was a two-part history of the spread of the Gospel, from the first church in Jerusalem through every century including the eighteenth and early Protestant efforts outside Europe. The “Historic View,” based on an 1807 book by a theologian at Oxford, wrapped up with a brief overview of the several British societies founded near the turn of the century. The editor of the *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* argued that the proliferation of missions in the nineteenth century should be taken as evidence that “the light is becoming more steadily manifested, as well as more generally diffused.” The creation of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions thus represented the latest in a spate of newly founded organizations, whose increase in number could be taken as

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Duty: The Rev. Dr. Miller's Sermon, *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 6:11 (November 1838), 322.

evidence of the success of the movement, rather than a failure of cooperation among Presbyterians and Congregationalists.<sup>95</sup>

But in many ways, the Presbyterian schism marked the end of the “conservative united front” that had produced so many evangelical operations in the first decades of the century. The Old School Presbyterians who had split from the New School Presbyterians and Congregationalists to form their own Board of Foreign Missions wanted to maintain the appearance of cooperation with their Protestant

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<sup>95</sup> A General Survey of Protestant Missions, *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 6:1 (January 1838), 1; Progress of the Gospel: A Brief Historic View of the Progress of the Gospel, in Different Nations, Since Its First Promulgation, *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 6:6 (June 1838), 173. In 1845, the Presbyterian Board announced that it would support missionaries to the Catholic regions of western Europe. But instead of sending their own ministers, they would contribute funds to the Evangelical Societies of France and of Geneva and encourage Presbyterians to “become deeply interested in this field of labour.” A General View of the Home and Foreign Organization and Proceedings of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 13:1 (January 1845), 1. To raise support they published things like a French Protestant minister's speech, given in Edinburgh, on the “great European battle with Popery” getting underway in France. The editor also quoted another French [?] missionary, D'Aubigne, as warning that this battle posed the greatest threat to England, “and God, who chooses his soldiers from whence it pleases him, seems to call more especially upon those in England who know his Word, to come forth to the glorious conflict.” But the appeal was for more Protestants to come forward and fight the battle in other countries, rather than just in England itself. “State of Religion in France,” *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 13:8 (August 1845), 242. From the Amoy station in China, where several organizations had representatives, a Presbyterian missionary referred to the successful work of his female LMS colleague among local women and encouraged his sponsors to send additional “female missionaries” to help. Because of a general need for reinforcements, all of the missionaries had “concluded to address an appeal to Christians in America and England for additional men to be sent to this place.” “China: Amoy Mission,” *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 14:10 (October 1846), 300-301. Thus in many ways, the Presbyterian *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* continually promoted an image of foreign missions as a multi-denominational Anglo-American partnership

brethren, but they were not prepared to compromise with them. A few years later, the memoir of Presbyterian missionary Walter Lowrie offered his point of view on a number of issues that had seen evangelical disagreement. He actually took issue with the idea of translating the Bible “without note or comment,” a practice of the Bible societies that had enabled them to maintain interdenominational appeal, because he said that people in different cultures needed commentary to help them understand certain expressions and metaphors. Christians in America regularly interpreted the Bible through the commentary they heard from ministers, teachers, and friends, so why should the Chinese not be provided with commentary as well? His editor's willingness to publicize his opinions, in spite of the risk that they would be unpopular, shows a willingness to defend sectarian decisions even if they were unpopular with other evangelicals.<sup>96</sup>

The hardening of both sectarian and regional divisions in the 1840s was reflected in failed attempts to create an Evangelical Alliance. Leaders from a variety of denominations in Europe and America conferred and corresponded in an attempt to create an organization based on essential evangelical beliefs and encourage “mutual recognition and cooperation among evangelicals irrespective of church or nationality.” They assuaged fears of denominational competition by specifying that the Alliance would be organized around individual rather than church membership, looking to create “a worldwide cooperative community of individual believers.” And at their

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<sup>96</sup> Foster, *Errand of Mercy*, 253-254; Walter Lowrie, ed., *Memoirs of the Rev. Walter M. Lowrie, Missionary to China* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1854), 278, 300. Lowrie's father and editor was an early secretary of the Presbyterian Board. Walter's brother, John Lowrie, served as a Presbyterian missionary to India.

1846 meeting in London they wrote a nine-point doctrinal statement intended to include members from all Protestant denominations (except Quakers) in “an overriding Christian community dedicated to evangelizing the world.” But they could not overcome tensions regarding the question of who would be in charge of the movement, or fears of an international organization too reminiscent of the universal Roman Catholic church, or disagreements over the abolitionist movement and the relationship between Christianity and slaveholding. The 1846 plan was officially rejected on both sides of the Atlantic, but in reality, an international alliance “did exist under the guise of independent national bodies which cooperated enough to meet various international crises and to hold a series of world religious congresses.” The holding of international conferences for mutual support “reflects a compromise between the evangelical need for an international expression of common identity and the demands of peculiarly national problems which prevented the formation of a stronger, more lasting, international organization.” To some degree, the “dichotomy between stress on unity in-and-of-itself, in conjunction with doctrinal agreement, and the call of others for cooperative action designed to meet immediate Christian needs proved characteristic of American evangelical ecumenism during the nineteenth century.” But for some of the promoters of foreign missions, international cooperation held more than just practical benefits. They expected the very image of a transatlantic framework for foreign missions to enhance the legitimacy of their organizations as well as encourage a greater spirit of brotherhood among evangelical Protestants in America.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Philip D. Jordan, *The Evangelical Alliance for the United States of America, 1847-1900: Ecumenism, Identity and the Religion of the Republic* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 36, 52, 61; Second and third quotes from Mark Y. Hanley,

As the American Board looked for ways to rehabilitate their image as a national and ecumenical organization that represented more than just New England Congregationalists, the *Missionary Herald* publicized the formation of a new British organization. The “Turkish Missions Aid Society,” as it became known, wanted to raise funds for American missionaries in Turkey, where the British government had a presence but British missionary societies did not. The founding of this society in the 1850s gave the American Board a prime opportunity to appeal for greater ecumenical cooperation as well as highlight their international connections as a national organization. First, the *Missionary Herald* claimed that British desires to support American missionaries should motivate Americans to increase their support for the missions of the American Board. American evangelicals could see the Turkish Missions Aid Society as “a public and important testimony, from Christian ministers and laymen of different denominations in Great Britain, to the confidence which they feel in the wisdom, fidelity and success with which the missions of this Board have been conducted.” Of course, British supporters were partly motivated by the belief that American missionaries occupied an advantageous position in the East because they were not associated with political forces which “may at times entail upon others suspicion, prejudice and embarrassment.” The fact that British evangelicals were interested in supporting American missionaries also implied that they had confidence in Americans, and especially in the ABCFM, to conduct their business according to the same standards.<sup>98</sup>

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*Beyond a Christian Commonwealth: The Protestant Quarrel with the American Republic, 1830-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 73.

<sup>98</sup> Forty-fifth Annual Meeting, *Missionary Herald* 50:10 (October 1854), 297.

British support for American missionaries was also a confirmation of “the general inexpediency of multiplying unnecessarily missionary organizations, under different control, for the occupancy of the same ground, and of the better wisdom of reinforcing and strengthening those which have the pre-occupancy and the precedence in their confidence and success.” The Board celebrated this affirmation of the cooperative nature of foreign missions, calling the British society a “public and noble testimony to the catholic character of Christian missions, in the conduct of which we hail all as brethren and co-laborers who seek to bring men to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, overlooking all differences of nation, sect and country, and recognizing no distinction save that which separates the friends and enemies of the Redeemer's kingdom.” The Board in turn proclaimed “a deeper interest in, and livelier regard for, all the numerous and useful missions established by the churches of Great Britain; and from this very time the Board anticipate a better and heartier co-operation in all those great Christian enterprises, in which England, Scotland, Ireland, America, and all of every tongue who love our Lord Jesus Christ, shall constitute one 'allied army' for the subjugation of the whole world to God.” This new connection with British evangelicals gave the Board an opportunity to reaffirm their sense of leadership among Americans in a transatlantic evangelical partnership committed to global evangelism.<sup>99</sup>

The *Missionary Herald* continued to emphasize the potential of this new organization to unify evangelicals behind the missions of the American Board. Originally called the “Association in aid of Evangelical Missions in Western Asia and

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<sup>99</sup> Forty-fifth Annual Meeting, *Missionary Herald* 50:10 (October 1854), 297.

the east of Europe, especially those of the American Board,” the society comprised “evangelical Christians of various denominations.” They described their purpose as being to raise funds to help missions in Western Asia and Eastern Europe, with the missions of the ABCFM being “entitled to the largest share of support,” because they covered more territory in the region than any other. (But the American Board made sure to point out that the idea originated completely in Britain, “without any suggestions from this side of the Atlantic.”) A letter from the secretary of the new society to one of the American Board's missionaries in Turkey testified that the British considered “it a high privilege, as well as a responsibility that is laid on us British Christians, to strengthen your hands, and encourage your hearts, and those of the native brethren. As you have labored long in this mission field, and with so many and rich tokens of the divine blessing, the path of duty appears clearly defined to us... to cooperate with an act through you.” A year later the society's secretary, C.G. Young, reportedly described the American Board's missions in Turkey as unparalleled in their progress, having seen evangelical Armenian churches built already in Constantinople. He reminded supporters that the society's funds were not promised exclusively to the American Board, but the editor of the *Missionary Herald* noted that the society had raised over eighteen hundred pounds in its first year, of which they had given over eleven hundred to the American Board's missionaries in Turkey.<sup>100</sup>

The leaders of the American Board as well as the new British society for Turkish missions depicted themselves as partners in evangelizing the rest of the world, each representing unified Protestant “nations.” Secretary Young hoped that the

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<sup>100</sup> “Foreign Aid,” *Missionary Herald* (December 31, 1854), 52; “Turkish Missions Aid Society,” *Missionary Herald* 50:12 (December 1854), 387.

missions in Turkey would “strengthen the ties of brotherhood between the two great Protestant nations, 'whose powerful co-operation,' to use the words of the esteemed Secretary of your Board, 'seems to be essential to the speedy conversion of the world.’” A report on the first anniversary meeting, taken from the *London Christian Times*, noted with satisfaction that the “proceedings were characterized by a catholic and generous spirit,” expressing hope that this new form of collaboration would “strengthen the friendly relations which now exist between Great Britain and America! Our religion is one; and so is our work.” The chairman of the society, Reverend Marsh, reportedly called it “a privilege to be able to assist, in the prosecution of so good a cause, persons who held the same faith, though they were not inhabitants of the same country as themselves.” Though he specified cooperation between different nations, he described an evangelical spirit that could be applied to ecumenical relationships as well: “No alliance was so strong and so certain, and no alliance could be so holy, as that which was founded on religious principles, and on united efforts to advance, by all legitimate means, the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>101</sup>

The members of the British society who spoke at this first anniversary meeting expressed pleasure partly because their funds were being used effectively—so far, one member argued, their wisdom had been proven by the success of the American missionaries in the past year. Several other distinguished members of the society seconded that argument with their own favorite anecdotes of American success in the

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<sup>101</sup> “Turkish Missions Aid Society,” *Missionary Herald* 50:12 (December 1854), 387; “Turkish Missions Aid Society,” *Missionary Herald* 51:6 (June 1855), 182-185. At the first annual meeting, the society changed its name to Turkish Missions Aid Society.



field. But on a less practical level, the collaboration between American and English Protestants represented a step toward a more ecumenical spirit in Christendom, reflecting the ideal of an evangelical identity that transcended denominational as well as national boundaries. Christians in general, they said, “had lost that Christian brotherhood which once existed,” and “knew nothing more likely to restore that Christian brotherhood than Christians of different countries uniting their efforts towards the one great object which they had in view.” Of course, this brotherhood was strictly a Protestant one. The ancient churches of the East were labeled “nominal,” and the society celebrated the fact that American missionaries had finally introduced Muslims and Jews to a form of Christianity “not connected with idolatry.” Success was to be measured in terms of new Protestant churches planted and Bibles being read by people previously connected with Nestorian, Greek Orthodox, or Armenian churches. The American and British societies hoped that evangelical Protestant churches established among these older Christian communities would eventually go on to convert their Muslim and Jewish neighbors.<sup>102</sup>

Throughout the 1850s, the *Missionary Herald* reported on the various ways in which British funds were being put to use. The missionaries in Constantinople reported sending four of their Greek students to Athens to study under Jonas King with the support of funds from the Turkish Missions Aid Society. In 1855 their funds supported the hiring of a native assistant and a colporter in Yuzgat, where both men were making inroads among the local population. The mission station in Ceasarea put funds toward expanding the mission school, separating Armenian boys and girls and

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<sup>102</sup> Turkish Missions Aid Society, *Missionary Herald* 51:6 (June 1855), 182-185.

giving the girls a female teacher. In 1858, an American Board committee declared that the donations of the society were reported to be “about \$2,000 in advance of those of last year,” and they had helped the American Board establish more native workers in the field. They claimed to be all “the more grateful for such a contribution of funds, as it comes from the hands of those who have merged all denominational peculiarities in mutual love to the cause of our Redeemer; and also, by its bestowment, they evince a confidence in our brethren, whom we rejoice to have so honored.” The Board declared “these manifestations of Christian union as that evidence, in the face of the world, which our Lord commanded, saying, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one to another.’” Thus the *Missionary Herald* used the British Turkish Missions Aid Society to encourage respect as well as support for the American Board, expecting the good opinion of British brethren to resonate with their American supporters.<sup>103</sup>

In general, missionary periodicals like the *Herald*, the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, and the *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* disseminated as much information as possible about the operations of missionaries and their sponsors as the best way to get and keep supporters interested (and demonstrate that their donations were not going to waste). The spread of Protestant Christianity was progressing with enough success to give supporters confidence in moving forward, or so the argument went, but its continuation was dependent on the joint participation of British and American evangelicals. Appeals for financial support often reminded Americans of each

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<sup>103</sup> Armenians: Station Reports: Constantinople, *Missionary Herald* 51:9 (September 1855), 268-269; Forty-ninth Annual Meeting, *Missionary Herald* 54:10 (October 1858), 302-303.

denomination that they had particular strengths and abilities—reminders designed to remove any excuses for not giving more to foreign missions. But promoters saw the transatlantic nature of the evangelical movement as an important framework for their operations, and they expected it to add credibility and appeal to their work in the eyes of American evangelicals. Missionary periodicals reminded their readers that to be an American evangelical in the early republic was to be a member of an esteemed transatlantic community as well as a thriving new nation, and that dual citizenship made their participation in foreign missions crucial. Their deployment of a combination of national, denominational, and international evangelical identities in cultivating support for their organizations reflects the layered identities of most Americans during the early republic. The fact that these evangelicals relied on the rhetoric of transatlantic community suggests that nationalism and evangelicalism did not have a solid marriage in the minds of many believers in the early republic. But as national connections and the promotion of nationalist sentiments increased throughout the antebellum era, tensions emerged over the cosmopolitan worldview promoted by foreign missions organizations and their agents around the world.

## Chapter 4

### MISSIONARY MODELS OF EVANGELICAL MANHOOD

Though periodicals were the first and most reliable form of promotional print for the foreign missions movement, missionary biographies—also known as posthumous memoirs because their writers, usually labeled editors, included long excerpts from the missionaries' own journals and letters—became popular in the antebellum era. The genre of biography in general assumed increasing importance in the early nineteenth century, as writers developed a new definition of character. Didactic and nationalistic writers alike began to link people's public success and civic virtues with their private habits of industry or piety (instead of defining character solely through public actions and reputation, as earlier republican theorists had done). Biographies offered models of character formation to help American readers cultivate or redefine their own selves. Evangelicals in particular were staunch believers in the power of its influence to spread their religious beliefs and values through the example of Christian character. The preface to the London edition of Samuel Mills' memoir claimed that “of all the methods by which pure and undefiled religion may be recommended to the attention of mankind, Biography may be classed amongst the most efficient. In the lives of good men we see the principles we profess in the powerfully constraining influence they exercise over the conduct and behaviour. Religion becomes, as it were, personified, and appeals, even to our senses, in language too energetic to be resisted.” As their primary goal was the spread of ostensibly universal religious principles, American evangelicals enthusiastically published and

praised British evangelical biographies and memoirs—most famously that of East India Company chaplain Henry Martyn—alongside those of colonial-era heroes like David Brainerd.<sup>104</sup>

Within book production generally, British imports and reprints outnumbered American creations for several decades after independence. But as the domestic publishing industry grew and transportation networks expanded, books became more widely available, and many cultural elites worried about the need for an American literature that did not simply reproduce or emulate British works. Some were motivated by a “literary nationalism” to provide opportunities for American authors and establish a respectable reputation for American arts in the Anglophone world, but others emphasized the need for American biographies to provide models for emulation. Nationalist writers and teachers tried to encourage young people to use their abilities and energies on behalf of the new republic, connecting individual enterprise with the success of the nation. After 1820 numerous role models appeared in the biographies of commercial and political leaders, as well as the writings of self-

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<sup>104</sup> Scott E. Casper, *Constructing American Lives: Biography & Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 4-7; T. James, Preface, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel J. Mills, Late Missionary to the South Western Section of the United States, and Agent of the American Colonization Society, Deputed to Explore the Coast of Africa*, by Gardiner Spring (London: Printed for Francis Westley, 1820), vi. Because biographies and memoirs served the same function within evangelical culture, the distinction between the two genres was usually blurred in the nineteenth century. While evangelical hagiography focused on “ordinary” models instead of canonized saints, biographers and editors readily “reshaped the experiences of their subjects in order to provide useful models that any Christian could and should emulate.” Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 88.

made men that proliferated in the 1830s and 1840s, all of which attempted to reconcile republican civic virtue with the individualistic ethos of a growing middle class.<sup>105</sup>

The promoters of foreign missions, too, increasingly published American missionary memoirs and biographies during the period between 1820 and 1860, even as they continued to venerate British evangelical pioneers. American missionary memoirs could serve overlapping purposes: they could help recruit participants for the cause of foreign missions as well as provide evangelical models of character formation to their readers. The published memoirs or biographies of missionaries presented missionary work as a prime career option for religious young men in the context of new educational and professional opportunities. They also offered guidance for navigating the competing ideas about ambition, benevolence, and masculinity that evolved throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century. The missionary character offered an alternative not only to secular images of male character that circulated in the early republic, but also to opposing viewpoints within the often-divided world of evangelicals.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Sam W. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 54-55; Casper, *Constructing American Lives*, 21-31, 77-79, 89-90; J.M. Opal, *Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 75, 97, 127.

<sup>106</sup> According to Edwin Munsell Bless in his *Encyclopedia of Missions*, 70 American missionary memoirs were published before 1870, 27 of which had female subjects. Cited in Lisa Joy Pruitt, *A Looking-Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2005), 29.

### **The Ambitious Missionary**

The development of a national market economy and the erosion of colonial-era institutions led to new career opportunities becoming available for young men in the early republic who wanted (or needed) to leave behind their family farms. One of those career options was the ministry, and new kinds of men became preachers and sectarian leaders, challenging the cultural authority of traditional elites. Missions promoters used biography to recruit volunteers from among the sons of the ministerial elite as well as the new generations of ministers who had not been born and raised in elite families or trained in genteel manners at Harvard and Yale.<sup>107</sup>

Most of the subjects of missionary biographies were products of the provincial colleges and new theological seminaries that New Englanders created to train men for the ministry as a professional career, as they worked to expand the clergy in order to evangelize a growing (and increasingly individualistic) nation. Adoniram Judson, one of the first cohort of missionaries to leave America, was the son of a respected minister and a graduate of Providence College (later Brown University) when he entered the new Theological Seminary at Andover. One of the first men to follow Judson to Burmah, George Dana Boardman, was the son of a Baptist minister in Maine who attended various academies before becoming a member of the first class of Waterville College. David Stoddard, a descendant of Puritan divine Solomon Stoddard, had a more illustrious pedigree than many of his fellow missionaries, and he eventually did study at Yale. But he also spent time at Williams College, where he

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<sup>107</sup> Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989).

developed a close relationship with his tutor, Simeon Calhoun, who later became a missionary to Syria. Stoddard's biographer pointed out that this "familiar intercourse between a tutor and any portion of the students is possible, in an American college, only where the number of students is small, and the custom prevails of boarding in clubs or in private families, without distinction of class or station." The advantages of such a democratic situation could be seen in the appreciation Stoddard had expressed for his teacher, "both of whom afterward became the principals of missionary seminaries in the East."<sup>108</sup>

Some biographies described missionaries entering the field with even less classical and more practical training. Asahel Grant, who became a missionary physician in the Middle East, only "spent two or three terms at an academy, and one at college in the study especially of chemical science." At age sixteen he went to work as a teacher before finishing his own studies, which he concluded by working in the offices of prominent doctors and attending lectures at nearby medical colleges in central New York. His first biographer emphasized the fact that "he was not, what is termed *liberally educated*, in a regular course of study and graduation at college; though it is believed he attained an education equivalent to it, by his habits of constant and close application, industry and perseverance, from childhood to manhood." David Abeel had intended to enter the military academy at West Point but was unable to get

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<sup>108</sup> Donald M. Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 52; Francis Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson, D.D.*, Vol. I (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Company. 1853), 25-26; Alonzo King, *Memoir of George Dana Boardman, Late Missionary to Burmah* (Boston: Gould, Kendall & Lincoln, 1835), 28; Joseph P. Thompson, *Memoir of Rev. David Tappan Stoddard, Missionary to the Nestorians* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, & Company, 1858), 33.



accepted. He studied medicine instead, until a conversion experience sparked his interest in theology. He spent three years at the Theological Seminary in New Brunswick and became a pastor in Athens, New York, before pursuing an interest in foreign missions.<sup>109</sup>

Many were in their twenties, as opposed to their teens, when they went to college and seminary, like a growing number of ministers-in-training in the early republic. The demographic composition of New England's ministry was changing, as older young men from humble backgrounds pursued higher education for the specific purpose of joining the ministry as a vocation, and missionary biographies reflected this shift. Judson's colleague and seminary classmate Gordon Hall, the son of a Massachusetts farmer, tutored with a local minister before entering Williams College at age twenty-one. There he met Samuel Mills, another farmer's son, who had attended Litchfield Academy and entered college with the intention of preparing for the ministry. Later they both pursued theological training at Andover, where they met Judson and eventually pursued an interest in foreign missions together. William Crocker, a Baptist missionary to Africa, was the son of a shoemaker in Newburyport, Massachusetts, and was twenty-six by the time he entered the Theological Institution

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<sup>109</sup> A.C. Lathrop, *Memoir of Asahel Grant, M.D., Missionary to the Nestorians* (New York: M.W. Dodd, 1847), 12; G.R. Williamson, *Memoir of the Rev. David Abeel, D.D. Late Missionary to China* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1849), 10, 13. Grant's second biographer, in 1853, added that Grant had considered his lack of liberal education "to be a disadvantage, though his early habits of reading were never intermitted, when books were within his reach; and he himself would have warned impatient youth that, though it may seem a waste of time, yet a regular, thorough education is a real saving, in the better qualification it gives for doing good." Thomas Laurie, *Dr. Grant and The Mountain Nestorians* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1855), 16.

at Newton. He had worked at a number of jobs, including teaching at a public school as well as his own private school for a year. His love of books and a desire to further his education had even led him to go to work for a printer for two years. After receiving the patronage of the Northern Baptist Education Society, he was able to spend a year at the academy in South Reading to prepare for his theological training.<sup>110</sup>

A number of missionaries similarly worked hard to put themselves through college or depended on support from new charitable organizations that New Englanders created to help fund new recruits for the ministry. Pliny Fisk's family was unable to help with the expenses of his education, and he entered Middlebury College before any societies existed to support the training of poor students for the ministry, so he taught schools during breaks and relied on help from friends. After college, he spent a year paying off debts before he entered the Theological Seminary at Andover in 1815. There he received “the benefits of the charity-fund” while he pursued his interest in missions. In the 1820s, local fund-raising societies coalesced into the

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<sup>110</sup> Scott, *Office to Profession*, 62; Horatio Bardwell, *Memoir of Rev. Gordon Hall, A.M., one of the first missionaries of the Amer. Board of Comm. for Foreign Missions, at Bombay* (New York: Dayton and Saxton, 1841), 14; Gardiner Spring, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel J. Mills, Late Missionary to the South Western Section of the United States, and Agent of the American Colonization Society, Deputed to Explore the Coast of Africa* (London: Printed for Francis Westley, 1820), 9; R.B. Medbery, *Memoir of William G. Crocker, Late Missionary in West Africa among the Bassas*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1860), 16, 18. David W. Kling discusses Mills's decision to go to Williams College and its rural, affordable status as “emblematic of the New Divinity social identity” that characterized most ABCFM missionaries. “The New Divinity and the Origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,” in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*, ed. by William R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 33.

American Education Society, which supported young men like Henry Lobdell. He was the son of a poor but pious Connecticut father who worked in manufacturing. At age sixteen he began teaching and, after experiencing some success, “began to entertain thoughts... that he might have a different career before him from that which his situation in earlier boyhood had seemed to promise.” He participated in village lyceums and debating societies, became assistant teacher at Danbury Academy, and eventually joined Amherst College in 1845. He had to continue teaching as well as receive aid from the American Education Society for his support. He later attended the theological seminary at Auburn as well as pursuing medical studies in the interest of becoming a missionary physician. He also took a job at Danbury Institute, a boarding school for boys, so that he could pay off his debts before offering himself to the American Board. Samuel Munson, who led an ill-fated exploration of the Indian Archipelago for the American Board, also relied on teaching as well as charity to support his training. He was orphaned at age ten and relied on free tutoring from a local minister to prepare him for academy training. He taught school and accepted support from the AES in order to enter Bowdoin College at age twenty-one. His biographer noted that Munson was constantly distracted by his financial difficulties, but quoted him as claiming “I did not complain, though compelled to make a thanksgiving dinner on bread and milk. The object I had in view made me willing to submit to any measure of privation which would ensure ultimate success.” He had already developed an interest in foreign missions, and this desire was “sacredly cherished in the deep places of his soul” as he worked to complete his education for the ministry. After five years at Bowdoin, he finished college and entered Andover

Theological Seminary, where he met his future colleague, Henry Lyman, a graduate of Amherst College, who had also developed an interest in foreign missions.<sup>111</sup>

In their depictions of missionaries' humble beginnings, these biographies sent the message to young men from poor or middle-class backgrounds that becoming a missionary was a way to become a member of a new cultural elite—a member of the evangelical sainthood. In the nineteenth century, training for the ministry had become a career option even for men who were not born into elite families, and one could move his way up the hierarchy by seeking jobs at larger or wealthier churches (instead of staying in the same town or village for a lifetime). In many evangelical minds, missionaries came to occupy the top tier of the ministerial profession. Missionary memoirs encouraged this reorganization of the ministerial hierarchy and veneration for missionaries by emphasizing their talents and contributions. Henry Lobdell's biographer described missionaries as “among the choicest jewels of the church,” the “martyrs of these latter days,” and the closest imitators of Christ—the “first great Missionary, who was 'sent' into our world for its redemption.” David Abeel's biographer claimed that the “amount of intellectual and moral strength” missionaries had to possess in order “to preach the Gospel in opposition to the force and insults of heathenism, and to bear up under the multiplied cares and vicissitudes of missionary

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<sup>111</sup> Scott, *Office to Profession*, 55; Alvan Bond, *Memoir of the Rev. Pliny Fisk, A.M., Late Missionary to Palestine* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1828), 25-26, 31; W.S. Tyler, *Memoir of Rev. Henry Lobdell, D.D., Late Missionary of the American Board at Mosul* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1859), 18-20, 35-37, 69, 73, 76; Wm. Thompson, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Munson, and the Rev. Henry Lyman, late missionaries to the Indian Archipelago, with the journal of their exploring tour* (New York: Appleton & Co., 1839), 13, 16, 18, 24, 52.

life,” would be enough to qualify him for a high-ranking position as a minister “in an enlightened Christian community.”<sup>112</sup>

Missions promoters thus used these memoirs to recruit among the new crop of ministers that emerged in the early republic, demonstrating that the heroes of the mission field mostly came from humble backgrounds and rose, through their devotion to foreign evangelism, to become members of a new cultural elite. But, importantly, men were not depicted pursuing missions for the purpose of seeking acclaim or elite status. Their biographies spoke to tensions between individual ambition and public spirit that had emerged in the early years of the republic, “a prolonged collision of social priorities and moral viewpoints, both of which drew from the ideology of the Revolution and the opportunities of independence.” While some Americans eagerly pursued wealth and political power in the hopes of making themselves into new-world aristocrats, many residents (of the northeastern United States especially) looked skeptically at men who wanted to leave their family farms and communities to start careers in commerce or politics. In the eighteenth century, ambition had been associated with selfish impulses and desires for power or individual wealth that were incompatible with the welfare of communities and families. External forces like commerce and government on a national level were presumed to undermine the economic independence of ordinary households. But by the 1820s and 1830s, national leaders had created transportation networks, promoted national commerce, and cultivated a more positive connotation for personal ambition. To those who

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<sup>112</sup> The new ministerial hierarchy—with missionaries at the top—is described in Scott, *Office to Profession*, 68. Also discussed in Opal, *Beyond the Farm*, 130-152. Tyler, *Memoir of Lobdell*, 11; Williamson, *Memoir of Abeel*, 38.

encouraged emigration and enterprise beyond local villages, “the self and the nation rose or fell together.” In the formulation of nation-builders, personal striving for success became a civic virtue.<sup>113</sup>

The colleges that most missionaries attended were part of a new crop of institutions for higher education that emerged to train the youth of the new republic around the turn of the century. Most of these schools, and the teachers who ran them, looked to “initiate the expansionary process, to broaden self-assessments beyond home and locality.” For liberal reformers, the goal was to encourage identification with peers and emulation of public figures, as opposed to maintaining a focus on local community and family. They “assumed that individual ambitions, rightly cultivated, served national ends.” But to those who believed in the Calvinist idea of human depravity, youthful enterprise was still associated with pride and rebellion. Most orthodox religious leaders feared the implications of individual ambition, but the promoters of foreign missions tried to channel it towards their cause. At the same time, they used missionary biographies to demonstrate a proper path young men could follow in order to navigate the temptations of education and broadened horizons.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Opal, *Beyond the Farm*, 42-45, 75-76. Similar tensions existed before the Revolution for people who wanted to engage in the Enlightenment concept of “improvement.” For a case study from New Jersey, see John Fea, *The Way of Improvement Leads Home: Philip Vickers Fithian and the Rural Enlightenment in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). For an example of one family's striving to create an aristocratic legacy for themselves, see Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Random House, 1996).

<sup>114</sup> Opal, *Beyond the Farm*, 75, 110. The number of New Divinity ministers doubled in the 25 years after the Revolution and promoted beliefs in original sin in opposition to rational Christianity. They reinforced “the conventional fears of youthful pride and

The first American missionary biography, published in 1820, claimed that at age sixteen Samuel Mills had “discovered a zeal in the Missionary cause, an eagerness in the pursuit of Missionary intelligence, and an enlargement of thought in his plans, to become acquainted with the true state of the unevangelized world.” His parents, who were also staunch evangelicals, gave their blessing for him to go to college with a career in the ministry in mind. But the editor of his memoir cautioned young pious men that they should maintain a focus on religious and moral activism while in college, lest the environment “prove a snare.” He criticized those who “appear to feel that they have discharged their obligations, while irrespective of the present, they only prepare for the future; and it does not come within the scope of their plans to do good, but only to obtain it.” For Samuel Mills the pivotal move was finding a group of pious friends to associate with. Like many students who trained for the ministry in the nineteenth century, he and his friends developed a group consciousness and encouraged each others' ambitions, focusing outward, beyond home and community. But for them the result was not commercial or political ambition, or even desires for prestigious pulpits, but an intensification of the “missionary spirit,” following “a peculiar visitation of the Spirit of God that turned all the solicitude and affection of his heart to this object.” He and his friends formed a club devoted to the pursuit of foreign missions, and later (while at Andover Theological Seminary) they helped inspire the founding of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.<sup>115</sup>

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ambition,” but “no common understanding of that passion and its implications held sway.” (76)

<sup>115</sup> Spring, *Memoirs of Mills*, 9, 11, 19; Opal, *Beyond the Farm*, 130.

Thus, the ability of higher education to expand young men's horizons beyond home and family could not only prepare them for ministry in a distant parish, it could also inspire them to look beyond America. George Dana Boardman's biographer described his institution's transformation from Waterville Seminary, where Boardman initially pursued literary studies, into a college that could prepare young men to serve the growing villages and increasing number of churches throughout the region. "It was also hoped," claimed the author, "that an institution of the kind, established in that region of country, might eventually send forth men, whose religious influence should be felt on other continents." Boardman, "one of her first and ablest sons," had gone on to India, "gladdening the dwellers amid the mountains of Tavoy," while another "of her most meek and godly pupils" had gone to serve in Africa. Such an institution could be proud to produce graduates who left farm and village, and even New England, if their ambitions were to spread New England's belief system overseas.<sup>116</sup>

Missionaries could even be intellectually ambitious, with a desire to learn and see more of the world beyond what they learned at college. But they were not motivated by "a worldly ambition;" rather, they were "anxious to store their minds with useful knowledge." Such desires were presented as healthy when incorporated into the pious character of a missionary. Samuel Munson was described as having a balanced and "beautifully symmetrical" character in college, as he studied a variety of subjects in the interest of achieving "the highest possible usefulness as an ambassador of Christ to the heathen." His desire to become a missionary motivated him to explore the depths of "the sacred text" as well as "the field of physical science... It was his

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<sup>116</sup> King, *Memoir of Boardman*, 28.



firm belief, that the minister and the missionary should be the last men to grow remiss in stated efforts to invigorate and enrich their minds.” Pliny Fisk's biographer described him as an avid student of mathematics and philosophy who “became more and more deeply interested in this department of science, the farther he pursued it.” At one point, Fisk turned his focus away from his liberal education because “he feared the influence which intense application to the sciences might have on his piety,” but his biographer claimed that he later realized it was a “mistaken notion that vigorous and persevering application to the sciences was necessarily unfavorable to the cultivation of the religious affections.”<sup>117</sup>

Some of the editors of missionary memoirs debated the extent to which missionaries should expect to engage in activities beyond strictly preaching the gospel or translating the Bible. The memoir of missions pioneer Adoniram Judson, published in 1853, suggested that a missionary should not devote time to gathering different kinds of knowledge. Judson was so devoted to his mission of preaching to “the heathen” that he would not even preach before congregations of English people in India. His biographer, leading Baptist divine Francis Wayland, claimed that he “looked upon a missionary as consecrated to a peculiar work, a work of incomparably greater importance than any other on earth, and he believed that it can only be successfully prosecuted by consecrating to it exclusively the entire energies of the soul.” Wayland added that he wished to see “this exclusive devotion to substantially the same object governed the lives of ministers at home as well as of missionaries

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<sup>117</sup> Daniel O. Morton, *Memoir of Rev. Levi Parsons, Late Missionary to Palestine* (Poultney, VT: Smith & Shute, 1824), 43; Thompson, *Memoirs of Munson and Lyman*, 25; Bond, *Memoir of Fisk*, 21-22.

abroad.” The pursuit of knowledge in the sciences or antiquities was not sinful for Christians to undertake, but “Dr. Judson believed that he who has undertaken to deliver a nation from the thralldom of sin has objects in view more important” than research or academic discussions.<sup>118</sup>

But Wayland and Judson clearly held the minority opinion. Walter Lowrie's 1854 memoir included many of his observations of nature, like his star-gazing and drawings of constellations while on board ship. He also analyzed birds, flying-fish, and even the rain that fell on the ocean. He wrote “how admirably do the book of nature and the book of revelation agree, when they speak of our heavenly Father.” Even the mysteries of the earth's atmosphere were testament to God's providence, and its creatures all “proofs of the wisdom and goodness of God.” After spending time in China, he wrote there was “hardly an item of general knowledge of any kind that I ever acquired, which I have not already found occasion to bring into use,” specifically including the fields of history, geology, and botany. Henry Lobdell, a missionary physician, was described as having a keen interest in the advancement of literature, science, and the study of the ancient world. He investigated such historical subjects as the “composition and significance of the names of the Assyrians and Babylonians which we find in the Scriptures, and the relations of the liturgies of the Nestorian and Jacobite churches to that of the ancient and venerable church of Syria, or Antioch.” During his travels he gathered not only information, but “curiosities in literature; also coins, cylinders, and other relics of antiquity.” He sent most of the artifacts he collected to the American Oriental Society, of which he was a corresponding member,

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<sup>118</sup> Wayland, *Memoir of Judson*, 161-162.

and some of his observations appeared in the Society's publications. But Lobdell's memoir recounted his wrestling with the question of how much energy he should invest in activities other than preaching, especially after reading Judson's biography. He consulted his senior colleagues, Justin Perkins and David Stoddard, who advised him to maintain the opposite point of view. Though he still "greatly admired Dr. Judson's singleness of aim," and resolved to devote more of his time to his ministry, he "could never see it to be his duty... to renounce such incidental services to the cause of literature and science, as, in the providence of God, fell in his way," though he tactfully maintained that "the missionary can only sip at these fountains, and leave the full draught to the professed devotees of science." His biographer pointed out that missionaries, like all men, possessed varying talents and opportunities, and so "no one missionary should be set up as a standard for all other missionaries." In his own book, *A Residence of Eight Years in Persia*, Justin Perkins advocated more scientific education for missionaries precisely so they could take better advantage of their exposure to different parts of the world. He expressed regret that he was not more qualified to discuss the geology he observed, arguing that it "and the other natural sciences have peculiar claims on foreign missionaries, who, visiting, as they do, all parts of the world, enjoy opportunities for contributing to the advancement of this department of knowledge... which are possessed by no other class of American citizens." He took for granted that such knowledge of the world was "neither hostile nor foreign to the missionary's grand object. For it can hardly now be doubted, that it is the combined light of *all truth*, scientific as well as religious, which is to usher in, and indeed constitute, the radiant effulgence of millennial day." His attitude reflected the belief, common among Protestants in the early republic, that studying the physical

world and disseminating scientific knowledge was a way to deepen Americans' understanding of God, whom they saw as the creator and designer of the earth and the laws of nature.<sup>119</sup>

Most missionaries and their biographers thus portrayed their accumulation of information as of a piece with their theological training and efforts to spread the gospel. They were intellectually ambitious, but not for the sake of their own interests. And the information missionaries accumulated would only serve to attract more attention to the cause. A collective biography published in 1854 emphasized the value of missionary memoirs as sources of practical information about other countries and cultures for readers outside as well as inside the church. Missionary accounts were even more reliable than popular travel narratives, the author claimed, because “their observations are the result not of a transient sojourn, but of a permanent residence among the people,” and because the missionaries themselves were trustworthy characters.<sup>120</sup>

So, the career depicted by missionary biographers worked hand-in-hand with the broadening of horizons and educational opportunities that liberal reformers and

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<sup>119</sup> Walter Lowrie, ed., *Memoirs of the Rev. Walter M. Lowrie, Missionary to China* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1854), 36, 78, 203; Tyler, *Memoir of Lobdell*, 259, 308, 340, 345-346; Justin Perkins, *A Residence of Eight Years in Persia, among the Nestorian Christians; with notices of the Muhammedans* (Andover: Allen, Morrill, & Wardwell, 1843), 394-395; Lily A. Santoro, “The Science of God's Creation: Popular Science and Christianity in the Early Republic” (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 2011).

<sup>120</sup> Lucius E. Smith, ed., *Heroes and Martyrs of the Modern Missionary Enterprise: A Record of their Lives and Labors. Including An Historical Review of Earlier Missions. With an Introduction by Rev. William B. Sprague, D.D.* (Hartford: P. Brockett & Co., 1854), 12.

nation-builders promoted in the early republic, as they encouraged young men to put their talents to use outside their towns and villages. But the ministers and missionaries who published these memoirs also tried to assuage the fears of rural New Englanders by showing that ambition could be turned toward unselfish ends, if combined with the piety and commitment of the missionary character. In fact, by the 1830s, commercial expansion and urban growth had produced a new host of problems, including poverty, alcoholism, and crime in northeastern cities. Many different religious reformers began urging young men to reject the self-interested acquisitiveness and entrepreneurial striving of their fathers, and tried to channel their energies into activism on behalf of reform efforts like temperance, tract or Bible distribution, and anti-slavery. The promoters of foreign missions shared many of the same values as other reformers, and they too sought to channel the zeal of ambitious young men into religious activism that could allow them to feel useful as well as pious. But missionary biographies offered an alternative career path, rather than just a productive way to use free time. This career would allow young men to leave home, reject the lifestyle of their parents, seek education and adventure, and simultaneously become cultural elites and evangelical role models. It also encouraged them to adopt a more cosmopolitan understanding of benevolence, one which brought the promoters and participants of foreign missions into conflict with more nationalistic evangelists and reformers.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 104-112.

### **The Cosmopolitan Missionary**

The memoir of Samuel Mills, published first in 1820, reminded Americans that foreign missions was an issue of national pride for those concerned about their reputation on the international stage. In recounting the early discussions of foreign missions in the United States, his biographer argued, “If there are any who at this late hour are backward to engage in this glorious enterprise, let them know, that the deliverance of the Pagan nations is sure... If we do not choose to engage in this work, other nations, more faithful, will go forward and be crowned with success; but, 'we and our father's house shall be destroyed.'” But more importantly, the life of Mills provided evidence “that the more you do for the heathen, the more will be done at your own doors.” The man who had worked to see his college friends become the first American foreign missionaries under the ABCFM had also undertaken a tour of the southern and western frontiers in order to distribute Bibles and determine the religious needs of towns and settlements throughout the Louisiana territory. His biographer emphasized his role in the creation of the American Bible Society, as well as his efforts to distribute Bibles among the poor in New York City and spread Christianity among Africans in America as well as in Africa. Ultimately he accepted a commission from the new American Colonization Society to visit England, Sierra Leone, and the adjacent African kingdoms to explore the possibility of establishing an American colony in western Africa. His biographer highlighted his success in this role and the importance of his work for the ACS before his illness and death during his homeward voyage. The variety of his activities made the life of Mills the perfect advertisement for foreign missions, as it demonstrated the different ways in which the

“missionary spirit” could contribute to reform on the American continent as well as overseas.<sup>122</sup>

Similarly, a few years later the biography of Levi Parsons went into great detail about his ministry in New England before he went overseas. His memoir was divided into three parts, the first devoted to his education and interest in missions, the second devoted to his missionary work in the United States, and only the third section devoted to his travels and evangelistic work overseas. After graduating from Andover Theological Seminary, he accepted an appointment from the Vermont Missionary Society, “having had unusual desires to be useful in this state before his departure from his native land.” His biographer emphasized the importance of spreading the gospel at home at the same time as Americans were sending missionaries abroad: “shall the dwellers on our mountains and in our vales, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, descend into the grave in cheerless ignorance and stupidity for the want of our prayers and contributions?” Parsons made clear his love for his homeland, but argued that his duty to leave was certain. He wrote that all men had different duties from God, some to care for families, and others to care for whole populations. “*One* must work in a *distant* part of vineyard; *another* cultivate before his own *door*. Yet in all this vast variety of operations, there is one entire whole, one indissoluble chain; one system so regular and harmonious, as to include the motion of an atom, or the failing of a sparrow!” Any Christian who performed his duty to spread the gospel, whether at home or abroad, was participating in the divine governance of both America and the world.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Spring, *Memoir of Mills*, 18, 44.

<sup>123</sup> Morton, *Memoir of Parsons*, 157, 187, 247.

It was on this basis that many evangelicals were motivated to support the foreign missions movement in its early years—promoters argued that it was entirely compatible with the sense of nationalism that many New Englanders were trying to cultivate in the early republic. Not only could foreign missions be a source of national pride, but it involved the promotion of religious principles that could benefit Americans themselves in tangible ways. Foreign missionaries focused on spreading the Bible and preaching or translating tracts about basic tenets of evangelical Protestantism, such as individual conversion through faith in Christ—and encouraging departure from the traditions and structures of what they called “nominal” versions of Christianity, like Catholicism. British and American missionaries from different denominations often cooperated with each other in pursuit of their common goal, even as they established separate mission stations under the authority of their specific organizations. This kind of collaborative spirit and focus on overarching orthodox principles was an ideal that many religious leaders wanted to encourage in America as well, hoping that a united evangelical movement could combat less orthodox varieties of Christianity, such as Unitarianism, and other threats to New England's social order. Some early founders of the foreign missions movement were motivated to get involved in overseas missions precisely because they believed that the cause could united a fractious religious population in New England.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Charles I. Foster, *An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 26, 63; John A. Andrew III, *Rebuilding the Christian Commonwealth: New England Congregationalists and Foreign Missions, 1800-1830* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1976), 79; Jonathan D. Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 137.



Missionary biographies not only provided motivation for orthodox Protestants to rally together on behalf of world evangelism, but they also offered illustrations of evangelical cooperation. The biographer of Samuel Mills pointed out his “liberality of sentiment” in that he had cooperated with Christians of all denominations and was respected by all varieties of Protestants. Mills understood the difference between essential and non-essential doctrines—he was no “latitudinarian” who would yield to those preaching doctrinal heresy, but “while he understood and loved the truth, he manifested great candour and forbearance toward those whose prejudices or whose ignorance led them to the adoption of views in some respects different from his own.” He tried to “cultivate harmony among different sects and denominations of christians, as well as different parties of the same denomination.” He believed that Christians should emphasize the points on which they agreed rather than those upon which they differed, and he “enjoyed high satisfaction in holding fellowship with christians of every name.” In his concern for “heathen lands,” especially, he could not afford “to be obstructed in his progress by the minor points of difference which agitated churches that had long enjoyed the blessings of the great salvation. He lived and died as though the salvation of the heathen was an object important enough to unite the thoughts and affections, the prayers and labours of the great family of believers throughout the world.”<sup>125</sup>

Subsequent biographies of several ABCFM missionaries depicted them as exemplars of an ecumenical evangelical attitude that prioritized basic evangelical Protestant principles over denominational or sectarian loyalty. David Abeel, the first

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<sup>125</sup> Spring, *Memoirs of Mills*, 206.

American missionary to China, came from a Dutch Reformed background. But when he first became a minister, his biographer claimed he “was eminently catholic in his views of Christian intercourse,” and would serve “whithersoever his services as a preacher of truth were needed.” The biographer, Abeel's nephew, linked this catholic attitude with “that spirit which afterwards led him to leave all, and consider the world as the field of his exertions for the glory of God, and the good of souls.” Not long after offering his services to the American Board, Abeel spent a winter in the West Indies for the sake of his health, where he was able to preach for a couple of months. The only fellow Christians he found were the Moravian missionaries from England working on a neighboring island. He claimed to “have seldom, if ever, enjoyed communion of saints more than in the society of these brethren.” Their agreement on important subjects overshadowed any points of minor difference, and “nothing interrupted the warm and mingled current of our feeling.” During Abeel's later travels to and from East Asia, he encountered a variety of other Christians. In Singapore he ministered to the English chaplain, Reverend Burn, whom he admired and described as ecumenical, magnanimous, and humble, welcoming missionaries “of every name and from every country” into his house. At other times he worked with missionaries from the London Missionary Society and served in the pulpit of English chapels. When forced to visit England on account of his health, Abeel joined forces with a Baptist minister to form the Society for Promoting Female Education in China and the East, which had supported nearly forty female teachers of different denominations serving in mission schools by the time his biography was published fifteen years later. Abeel's biographer explained that his work overseas “led him to feel the wants of the world, and the necessity of united prayer and action to secure its evangelization; and

he wept over the divisions and disputes between denominations, because professing Christians thus wasted precious time, and perverted their talents, while thousands and millions were passing into eternity, and none came to help or save them.” As a result of his “charitable and catholic spirit” he became an influential figure “among all denominations.”<sup>126</sup>

Henry Lobdell actively promoted a cooperative Protestant worldview in some of the writings published in his memoir. In appealing to his fellow New Englanders to send more missionaries, he reminded Americans that they themselves would reap benefits if they shared their blessings and promoted the cause of the gospel. He encouraged his church back home to transcend boundaries that divided them from other believers and see the core of the evangelical message as a unifying force. “Let us be neither Greek, Jew, Turk, English, or American, if we must forget our relationship to the universal brotherhood. Let demagogues be partisans, but let Christians be philanthropists.” He then begged his American brethren, especially those in New England, to “send a hundred laborers this year. New Englanders are generous, but they can afford to be more so.” Asahel Grant also appealed for greater cooperation back home, on behalf of the cause of global evangelism. He wrote that Christians' goal should be “to get more of the spirit of Christ infused into all parties in the church, and then, as each of his true followers reflects *his image*, each will be recognized by the others as a branch of the same 'vine.’” Many churches agreed on “the fundamental principles of faith” and shared “one common object to accomplish—the conversion of the world—one common enemy to encounter, with whom all our

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<sup>126</sup> Williamson, *Memoir of Abeel*, 26, 28, 48, 115, 205, 145, 282.

united energies are required in the conflict.” David Stoddard's biographer pointed out that when he had gone before a board of Congregational ministers to receive ordination into the ministry, he was “regarded by some members of the body with suspicion” because of his New Haven education and his embrace of Nathaniel Taylor's theology. The biographer reminded ministers in positions of authority that Stoddard, “with his intellectual culture, his mature piety, his ardent love of truth, his high-toned consecration to Christ, was well-nigh refused a certificate of approbation to preach the Gospel, because his metaphysical theory of depravity and regeneration differed, in points not affecting the integrity of the doctrines, from the theory of some of his examiners.” These finer points of Calvinist theology had obviously not affected his ability to preach the basic principles of the Gospel, but the church had almost lost one of its heroes as a result of a minor difference.<sup>127</sup>

Missionaries like Lobdell and Stoddard served as perfect representatives of a broad and cooperative evangelical movement as they were portrayed preaching basic tenets of evangelical Protestantism, demonstrating personal piety, and spreading the Scriptures to people who did not have access to them (usually without any theological commentary, following the example of the interdenominational British and Foreign Bible Society). But the appeals for evangelical cooperation belied continual conflicts among the Protestant population back home. In addition to the theological, regional,

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<sup>127</sup> Tyler, *Memoir of Lobdell*, 113; Lathrop, *Memoir of Grant*, 153; Thompson, *Memoir of Stoddard*, 87. The editor of Grant's memoir, Rev. A.C. Lathrop, emphasized the importance of the views expressed in Grant's letter, adding that “true spiritual union is devoutly to be desired. But every effort at formal external union and uniformity has failed, and must fail, until God pours out his Holy Spirit from on high, to sanctify and cement the hearts of his people by the love of Christ.”

and organizational conflicts that increased from the 1830s on, tensions also emerged between the supporters of foreign missions and evangelicals who wanted to prioritize the conversion of Americans. In 1835, the American Tract Society complained that “Christians of our country are more ready to contribute donations for the heathen than to labor in connection with Tract distribution for souls at home.” A degree of competition had developed between foreign missions promoters and domestic efforts to Christianize the United States and its territories, as different organizations bombarded American congregations with demands for money.<sup>128</sup>

Foreign missions had become a popular cause in its early decades, thanks to sensational missionary literature supplemented by church tours by missionaries and other agents. The American Board, for one, saw its income nearly double between 1830 and 1835. Some evangelicals did try to use the enthusiasm for foreign missions to inspire commitment to other branches of the so-called “evangelical united front.” The American Bible Society and American Tract Society began working with Bible societies abroad and devoting funds to the translation efforts of overseas missionaries. Even the American Sunday-School Union took collections for a “foreign fund” to help overseas missions and investigate the possibility of a Sunday-school association among Catholics in France.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Tenth Annual Report of the American Tract Society, quoted in Foster, *Errand of Mercy*, 211. Foster argues that “this competition was superficial; the foreign outlook supplied the logic and energy of the internal regime.” But foreign missions promoters clearly felt a need to defend their cause, as more evangelicals focused on reforming American society and evangelizing the frontier.

<sup>129</sup> Foster, *Errand of Mercy*, 210-217. The American Education Society, which raised money for the training of potential missionaries, saw its income rise from \$30,000 a year in the late 1820s to \$84,000 in 1835.

But decades of fund-raising and nation-building had left many evangelicals divided over whether to emphasize the importance of spreading universal Christian principles throughout the globe or to focus on reforming and converting people within the United States and its territories (just as reformers in England became divided over foreign missions versus domestic reform). In fact, the Old School Presbyterians who established the *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* in 1833 eventually split from the New School Presbyterians partly because of the excesses of evangelists like Charles Finney and Lyman Beecher who felt an urgent need to convert the nation. Beecher had been a proponent of the American Board and its activities in his early years, founding the first auxiliary society to the ABCFM in Connecticut, but he became most famous for his efforts to “save the republic,” including his *Plea for the West* that begged American Protestants to save their western territories from Catholicism. Beecher came to believe by the 1830s that the most urgent cause for American evangelicals was the spread of Protestantism throughout North America, because he saw the Catholicism of Mexicans and European immigrants as inherently incompatible with and threatening to America's republican institutions and religious freedom.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Andrew, *Rebuilding the Christian Commonwealth*, 79; Sassi, *Republic of Righteousness*, 141; John C. Pinheiro, *Missionaries of Republicanism: A Religious History of the Mexican-American War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 17-21. Simultaneously in England, “a sustained critique of overseas missions developed, as radicals contested the focus on overseas at what they perceived to be the expense of the poor at home. Criticism also emerged within the middle class, where the assault came from two directions: within evangelicalism, from those domestic philanthropists keen to prioritise reform at home; and from medical men and urban philanthropists, many of them Unitarian, who issued a profound challenge to the focus of missionary philanthropy on a moral locus of change and its pre-eminent position in civic culture and politics.” Home and foreign missions became separate projects in the 1840s and 1850s. Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle*

In contrast, the early issues of the Presbyterian *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* set out to demonstrate the importance of funding missions overseas rather than focusing solely on the spread of Protestantism in America. The second issue of the Presbyterian periodical presented a long “vindication” of foreign missions in the face of arguments that “the moral and religious necessities of our own country are so great.” The authors offered a contrast between the “pagan world” and America, first by stating that the population of the “anti-christian world” was forty-four times as large as the population of the United States. The character of the population was different as well, because most Americans were at least “correct in their external conduct, and live more or less under the influence of religious truth.” Catholics and unorthodox sectarians were greatly outnumbered by the members, organizations, and publications of established Protestant denominations. In contrast, they depicted the population of non-christian countries as being covered in darkness: “Justice is disregarded; mercy is trampled under foot; woman is degraded and unpitied; children are reared amidst ignorance and vice.”<sup>131</sup>

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*Class, 1792-1850: The 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 144.

<sup>131</sup> “Missions to the Heathen Vindicated,” *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 1:2 (May 1833), 18-19. The Old School Presbyterians were not alone in rejecting Beecher's version of religious nationalism, which was really orchestrated to raise money for his Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati by appealing to supporters of westward expansion. Others challenged his conflation of cultural and religious concerns, and when the war with Mexico took place it was opposed by Congregationalists as well as Old School Presbyterians. Mark Y. Hanley, *Beyond a Christian Commonwealth: The Protestant Quarrel with the American Republic, 1830-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 64-65.

Subsequent issues of the periodical aimed at demonstrating this contrast between conditions in the U.S. and those in other nations. Elisha Swift's essay on the "Spiritual Wants of our Country" pointed out that the "essential elements of the religious prosperity of our country are not wanting," but that "while, for a population of ten or twelve millions, they retain from eight to ten thousand ambassadors of Christ, their present entire quota for six hundred millions is less than two hundred!" Numerous articles and excerpts from missionary writings focused on the negative effects of "heathenism" on various groups of people. One of the more influential works of the 1830s was *Polynesian Researches* by William Ellis of the London Missionary Society, which was excerpted to cover such topics as "Female Degradation," "Infanticide Practised by the South Sea Islanders," and "Cruel Customs of the Fejees." But the promoters of foreign missions did not want their supporters to think the global cause too daunting, so they often coupled their descriptions of spiritual need with signs of progress and potential in specific places. An essay on the "Conversion of the World" encompassed ten installments published off and on throughout 1834 and 1835. It dissected various Scriptural prophecies discussing the extension of the Gospel throughout the world, a process which had begun with the early church and was "now fulfilling in our American land, in Great Britain, and some other countries, where the true Gospel is made known."<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> "Spiritual Wants of our own Country," *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 3:8 (August 1835), 118; Condition of the Heathen, *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 5:2 (February 1837), 31; 5:3 (March 1837), 45-46; 5:4 (April 1837), 61-61; 5:5 (May 1837), 72; *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 2:7 (October 1834), 326; 3:4 (April 1835), 49; 3:5 (May 1835), 65. An entry of "Testimonies of Different Writers, as to the Character and Moral Condition of Heathen and Antichristian Nations, and the Results of Missionary Effort among Them" pulled quotes from the writings of British Baptist William Ward, LMS agent William Ellis, and several periodicals as well as William



Promoters of foreign missions also began publishing memoirs of the first cohort of missionaries to India and repeatedly stated their arguments in favor of foreign missions. The writings of Gordon Hall, for example, presented the difficulties he experienced in India as even further evidence that overseas missions were necessary. He wrote to his brother that he often thought about the contrast between “this dry and thirsty land” and his home country, “where so many cooling streams are continually flowing to refresh the weary pilgrim.” Though he felt deprived of many advantages, he did not regret his decision to go abroad. “I verily thought it was the will of my Master, that I should leave you, and as yet, I see no reason for changing my views. No, I believe the American church ought to multiply her missionaries to the

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Carey to attest that “Heathenism reduces society to such a condition, that it is incapable of any other than a government of force and of terror; and hence its victims groan under the bondage of ruthless oppression.” *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 1:9 (December 1833), 139; 1:10 (January 1834), 151. The periodical often quoted Gutzlaff on the “secular and moral state” of the Chinese, and in 1835 it printed excerpts from a published journal of David Abeel (of the American Board) that “exhibit the present deplorable condition of the Chinese in reference to their immortal interests.” “Moral Character of the Chinese,” *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 3:5 (May 1835), 70. An entry on “Moral Aspect of Pagan Lands” quoted a number of British and American missionary sources on hopeful signs in their fields of labor. *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 1:12 (March 1834), 189. After several Americans died trying to set up a mission in Africa, the periodical published excerpts from the *Missionary Register* of London to show that “in various parts of that extensive continent, missions have not only succeeded, but remarkably prospered, with the blessing of God upon the labors of his servants.” *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 2:6 (September 1834), 289. A “Call for Missionary Laborers” in 1833 said that “By a large and striking combination of circumstances, extending to all parts of the known world, we are led to the conclusion that the *universal spread of Christianity* is soon to be the all absorbing and controlling object of human thought,” meaning that whoever joins the cause need not “fear that the missionary fire will go out,” but “is now called to march with rapid step, if he would not have other hosts treading upon his heels.” *Foreign Missionary Chronicle* 1:8 (November 1833), 113.

heathen an hundred fold.” He told Samuel Mills that so far, “there is not in India, *one* Protestant missionary to a *million* of heathen! yet many Christians at home seem to think that India is furnished with ministers and Bibles. Whence this delusion? A delusion so fatal to the souls of the perishing heathen.” His biographer reminded readers of the tract Hall and Newell had written together in 1815, *The Conversion of the World*, which had laid out their analysis of religious needs throughout the world in contrast to the needs of people in America. Its publication in the United States as well as in England had “contributed more than any modern production of the same size, to sustain and carry forward the missionary cause.”<sup>133</sup>

The memoir of Walter Macon Lowrie, published in 1854, directly confronted the conflict that had intensified over the preceding decades. His father, Walter Lowrie, was the secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, and his brother, John Lowrie, had already spent several years overseas as one of the Presbyterian Board's first missionaries to India, so his writings included extensive opinions on a wide variety of issues related to mission work. While in China he read of many efforts “to set the claims of foreign and domestic missions in array and in opposition against each other, or to say that too much attention has been given to the one, to the neglect of the other.” He did not dispute the claims “of the vastness of the domestic field, of the favourable openings, of the need of labourers,” and of the sense of brotherhood to be shared with men on the American frontier. But he argued that the same applied to the foreign field—that new opportunities had opened up, numerous populations had become easily accessible, few laborers had yet been sent, and “these,

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<sup>133</sup> Bardwell, *Memoir of Hall*, 103, 116, 118.

too, are our brethren, seeing God hath made us all of one blood to dwell on all the face of the earth.” He argued that the problem was not an overemphasis on foreign missions, but rather an underemphasis on missions generally among the majority of churches. He complained that the articles he had seen published criticizing the resources sent abroad were problematic because they credited the idea “that the interests of the foreign and domestic fields are not the same.” He claimed that the hearts of missionaries “rejoice within us when we hear of the extension of the cause of Christ at home, and that the gospel is preached to the poor and the destitute... because we know that thus new funds, and new men, are raised up for the foreign field, and additional prayers ascend on our behalf.” He urged his readers to once again view evangelism at home and abroad as mutually reinforcing processes.<sup>134</sup>

Henry Lobdell had hoped that by the 1850s no one would any longer question the idea that “every able-bodied, energetic, devoted, hopeful foreign missionary accomplishes more good than he possibly could in America.” Regardless of the number of converts he made, the missionary “lays the foundation of a glorious temple, destined to embrace the entire population among whom he dwells.” He stated in a letter to Rufus Anderson, “I often feel that if we should simply *sit* here, doing very little actual labor, we should accomplish as much for Christ as we could by our utmost exertions in America.” He also appealed for more missionaries by arguing that America's own salvation depended on its commitment to spreading the gospel abroad, reinforcing earlier contentions that foreign missions were good for America itself. He assured his countrymen that his love for America had only increased since his arrival

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<sup>134</sup> Lowrie, *Memoirs of Lowrie*, 216-218.

in the East; indeed “She seems to me to be the star of hope for the nations.” But the source of America's prosperity was “the religion of the Puritans,” which he equated to the beliefs of Protestant evangelicals. Thus America's “own salvation depends upon her attachment to the Bible, and her zeal in its propagation. There is no worse enemy to his own country, than he who would hoard its blessings like the miser. True philanthropy and true patriotism are inseparable.” Once again, the spread of the gospel overseas was presented as reinforcing the religiosity—and thus the many benefits—that Americans enjoyed at home, not undermining them.<sup>135</sup>

The memoirs also commonly described the process that men went through in deciding to become foreign missionaries, to show their reasoning for favoring work abroad rather than ministry at home. Many, of course, were desirous of a vocation that would make them feel useful, as many of their readers likely were as well. These men argued that their lives would serve a greater purpose overseas than they would as clergymen at home. Walter Lowrie claimed that the main question driving his interest in foreign missions was, “Can I do more abroad than at home?” He felt that the leadings of Providence as well as his own desires pointed toward the foreign field, and if “I have piety to fit me for being a minister at home, I might hope to have it for being a missionary abroad.” Pliny Fisk was a recently converted teenager when discussions of the first American foreign mission began. His biographer claimed that the idea immediately “arrested his attention, engaged his feelings, and led him to determine, should he become qualified, to go 'far hence to the Gentiles.’” His “ardent piety, vigor of mind, unyielding fortitude, and a physical constitution naturally robust,” were all

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<sup>135</sup> Tyler, *Memoir of Lobdell*, 337, 333, 111-112.

indications that his youthful decision to become a missionary “was the result of sound judgment and enlightened zeal.” His biographer also included excerpts from his journal in which he reflected on his “duty respecting missions,” which he continually revisited throughout his years in college and seminary.<sup>136</sup>

The thought processes of such men usually echoed many of the early apologists for foreign missions, demonstrating how individuals could engage their arguments in their pursuit of purpose and calling. In contemplating his desire to undertake missionary work, Samuel Munson wrote that “a warm attachment to missions” was not the only factor to be considered; rather, he wanted to find “evidence of duty” in a more objective fashion. He proceeded to do what so many other proponents of foreign missions did: compare the size of the population in America with that of other countries, and contrast the number of ministers and religious resources available. “In the United States there are perhaps four millions, out of the twelve millions, destitute of the means of grace. But among those four millions are employed about four hundred missionaries,” whereas the number of American missionaries serving “the five hundred millions of perishing heathen does not exceed seventy; and the number of missionaries from all Christendom now employed among the heathen does not exceed five hundred, or, one missionary to a million of souls. The most destitute parts of the United States, compared with the heathen have, at this moment, a supply of ten to one.” Only thirty-three of the 422 students trained at Andover Theological Seminary by 1827 had become foreign missionaries, “yet this institution, by way of eminence, has been called the Foreign Mission Seminary;

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<sup>136</sup> Opal, *Beyond the Farm*, ch. 5; Lowrie, *Memoirs of Lowrie*, 15; Bond, *Memoir of Fisk*, 20, 41-42, 72.

because it has sent out more missionaries than any other institution in the land.”

According to Munson, the numbers proved “that theological students, in general, have not imitated the first missionary to the Gentiles, who strove 'to preach the Gospel where Christ had not been named.” The perceived need abroad gave even greater purpose to the vocation of the foreign missionary than to that of a local clergyman.<sup>137</sup>

While promoters of foreign missions tried to present their cause as connected to the evangelism and well-being of America, their arguments ultimately represented a cosmopolitan strain of evangelicalism, one that had come into conflict with the nationalistic worldview of many Americans by the 1830s. In its early years, many evangelicals leaders had supported the global promotion of Protestant principles, even as they rejected cosmopolitanism in the political realm, precisely because those principles were perceived as healthy for American society itself and they expected to enjoy reflexive benefits. They had tried to use foreign missions to help create an interdenominational evangelical identity by unifying different factions of Protestants behind the spread of the gospel abroad as well as at home. But in doing so they carried forward a tradition of transatlantic discourse and universal ideals similar to that established by cosmopolitan political radicals in the early 1790s. Conservative evangelical Protestants had rejected the promotion of universal political principles espoused by transatlantic democrats, especially after the radicalism of the French Revolution. But some had, perhaps unwittingly, maintained a religious version of cosmopolitanism, one which involved not only transatlantic discourse with evangelicals across the ocean, but also promoted the spread of ostensibly universal

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<sup>137</sup> Thompson, *Memoirs of Munson and Lyman*, 27-28.

evangelical principles throughout the world. “Could the statesman say, ‘Where liberty dwells, there is my country?’ With equal ardour can I say, where the field of usefulness is, there is my country, my home; I desire no other,” claimed Henry Lyman upon sailing.<sup>138</sup>

These evangelicals also built on the definition of benevolence that early nationalists had cultivated. Federalists in particular had argued for the importance of leaders who could see beyond the interests of their locality and look out for the interests of the entire republic. Many religious leaders, including the moderate Calvinists who cultivated evangelical ideas, also adopted an expansive version of benevolence as a desire to do good for people both near and far. Rather than focusing on families and neighbors, enlightened leaders argued that benevolence should be “extensive and free, not tribal and instrumental.” The promoters of foreign missions took this ideal to its logical extreme, arguing that religious benevolence should extend to other nations as well as different regions of the United States. “True benevolence” did not discriminate but produced an equal amount of concern for everyone—as Henry Lyman's biographer claimed, benevolence manifested in “the great and uniform concern which he showed for the salvation of his impenitent relatives and fellow-students” as well as for “the salvation of the heathen.”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Thompson, *Memoirs of Munson and Lyman*, 68; Seth Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011). Cosmopolitans “espoused a vision of citizenship that implied a sense of obligation to the entire world as well as to one's nation... [and] that the good citizen's commitment to universal principles should trump their allegiance to any particular nation or temporary set of leaders who claimed to speak for it.” (51)

<sup>139</sup> Opal, *Beyond the Farm*, 12-13; Thompson, *Memoirs of Munson and Lyman*, 54.

Some conservative nationalists, like Daniel Webster, had argued that citizens needed to focus their admiration on specific leaders and respect their authority figures over abstract principles. The promoters of foreign missions, in keeping with this principle, used missionary biographies to promote their religious version of cosmopolitanism, providing concrete figures that religious cosmopolitans could venerate. But these figures differed from their contemporaries in that they left behind family, home, and nation to spread what they viewed as the universal principles of the Gospel to foreign populations. Missionaries and their cause were presented as both cosmopolitan and benevolent. As the biographer of Pliny Fisk stated, “Mr. Fisk possessed a spirit of benevolence expansive as the spiritual wants of mankind.” This combination of benevolence and cosmopolitanism in the missionary character represented the evolution of these republican ideals since the early days of the republic, as foreign missions promoters presented them in opposition to the rise of a more insular nationalism. As Fisk himself argued, Christians should ultimately cultivate a greater sense of enthusiasm for their citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. He wrote, shortly after reaching the Mediterranean, that a Christian “is a citizen of Immanuel's kingdom, and as such ought to cultivate patriotism, to a high degree. What could be more suitable, than the glowing fire and the burning zeal of political enthusiasm *consecrated* to Christ, and baptized into his spirit?”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Bond, *Memoir of Fisk*, 413, 111. The editor even compared Fisk directly to his British predecessor in celebrating his benevolence: “In his character there was a combination of qualities which, under the direction of enlightened and active piety, must render a person eminently useful. Decision, perseverance, intrepidity, judgment, modesty, patience, and benevolence, are traits which have been developed in the preceding pages—traits which were harmoniously combined in him, forming a well-proportioned, and truly consistent character. As was said of Henry Martyn, ‘the *symmetry* of his stature in Christ was as surprising as its height.’” (436) In the late



In 1852, the annual report of the Baptist Missionary Union (Northern successor to the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions) offered an exposition on the Great Commission to justify its need for more money. “It is said, that the enterprise of foreign missions already receives too large a proportion of the contributions of the people... But let it be remembered, that great as is our country in its territory and in its present and prospective population, other countries lying beyond it, embracing yet wider territories and larger population, are included within the field described in the commission of our Lord.” The promoters of missions to distant populations celebrated the prosperity and religious resources that already existed in America, but they tried to convince American Protestants that if they truly loved and appreciated the blessings of their nation, they would look to share them by spreading the tenets of Protestantism abroad.<sup>141</sup>

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eighteenth century, moderate Calvinists and liberal theologians alike argued that people “could develop and extend their benevolence... The real 'spirit' of Christianity, they declared, was 'social' and 'cheerful,' imbued with the idea that self-love was the origin of the Golden Rule, not its antithesis. Instead of the complete surrender of selfish desire, benevolence became the gentle wish to make other people—different and distant people—happy. It necessarily reached past family members and near relations, for what sort of man only did good to those he knew would reciprocate? Benevolence should be extensive and free, not tribal and instrumental.” Opal, *Beyond the Farm*, 13. Cotlar points out that nationalists had actively combated cosmopolitanism in the 1790s, as well as localism, in their efforts to cultivate a national identity. *Tom Paine's America*, 85, 90. Conservatives like William Cobbett depicted “universal benevolence and domestic affection as mutually exclusive.” (100)

<sup>141</sup> Proceedings of the Missionary Union, *Missionary Magazine* 32:8 (August 1852), 223.

### The Heroic Missionary

Published in 1824, the memoir of Levi Parsons highlighted his personal piety. His biographer emphasized that “A *pious* man is a *useful* man,” and claimed that it was “better to be *pious*, than to be *great*.” Parsons' writings upon reaching Smyrna discussed the various religious groups he encountered—mostly Jewish, Catholic, and Greek Orthodox—and his efforts to distribute Greek and Italian translations of English tracts as well as Bibles. He largely described interactions with religious leaders, academics, and European consuls, with whom he tried to cultivate alliances. Eventually he made it to Palestine, where he toured Jerusalem and the “holy land,” usually accompanied by local priests or other allies. When war broke out between the Greeks and the Turks, he sought refuge under a French flag. Parsons' approach to missions was cautious and strategic. He relied heavily on local religious leaders to help distribute literature, and he expressed great faith in the power of tracts and Bibles to be the engines of conversion (as an alternative to preaching, which might provoke hostility, especially among Muslims). He died, like so many missionaries, from illness after just a couple of years overseas.<sup>142</sup>

But as missions promoters published more American biographies in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, they described more daring feats being undertaken by less reserved American missionaries. Henry Lyman's 1839 biography described him as having been a troublemaker in college, before his conversion. The president of the college observed “that he had within him the elements of energy and enterprise,” though he could not yet tell whether his ambition would be used for good or for ill purposes. After experiencing a revival and becoming religious, he immediately gained an

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<sup>142</sup> Morton, *Memoir of Parsons*, 328.

interest in going overseas, while he never expressed a desire to join the clergy at home. “My duty, my happiness, my all depend upon my laying down my life among untutored savages.” He studied theology at Andover in order to become a missionary, but he was never an “exceptional student, even at seminary.” He prepared for his ministry by depriving himself of sleep and physical comforts. “Endowed with almost Herculean strength, and dauntless courage, united with glowing benevolence, he longed to enter the region of toil, of danger, and wretchedness.” Lyman's biographer did not focus on his piety or prayer habits but on his physical strength and courage. His spirit of adventure was indulged when the American Board appointed him and Samuel Munson to undertake an exploratory tour of islands in the East Indies, “precisely such as their own choice would have selected. Mr. Lyman, in particular, often expressed a desire to go where no missionary had been sent.” After arriving in Batavia, where they were welcomed by Reverend Medhurst of the London Missionary Society, they petitioned the Dutch colonial government for permission to explore neighboring islands, leaving their wives behind in Batavia. Lyman claimed that their expedition represented a whole different level of daring than those undertaken by most previous missionaries: “To separate from one's family in the midst of a heathen country, and to plunge still further into the depths of heathenism, is quite another thing from leaving home to enter upon a foreign mission.” The Nyas tribe they wished to visit was “said to be treacherous,” constantly fighting amongst themselves and with their neighbors because of the Dutch slave trade. British missionaries and Dutch officials even persuaded them to take weapons and ammunition just to serve as a deterrent. But the missionaries were greeted peacefully by both slavers and local chiefs, at least partly on account of their being American. So they decided to travel

beyond Nyas territory and visit the Batta country. A Dutch official as well as several native chiefs warned the missionaries not to venture too far because of potential unrest in the area. A group of five armed Batta people met them and told them to retreat, but they would not heed the warnings, and sent the five scouts off with some tobacco and a message to their chief that the missionaries “saw no danger in prosecuting their journey... since they came to visit them as friends and not as enemies.” Eventually they were ambushed and murdered, while most of their servants fled and brought word to the Dutch of the Americans' fate. The Dutch official thus reported “that however great this misfortune has been, the gentlemen themselves have been much to blame, because neither here nor in the Batta country, would they give ear to any one's warning or good counsel.” Medhurst came to their defense, arguing that “it is exceedingly difficult for travellers to know how to act on the advice given them,” and that they must use their own judgment in order to fulfill their duty. Their biographer also disputed claims that their actions were imprudent, and pointed out that the American Board had sent other missionaries to follow in their footsteps. He also asserted that Munson and Lyman had made a perfect missionary team in the eyes of those who knew them. “Munson was placid, deliberate, and firm” while “Lyman was ardent, fearless and active,” and this combination of characteristics made the perfect missionary.<sup>143</sup>

Munson and Lyman were the first missionaries to be killed in the field, but they were not the only ones who risked danger and experienced violence for the sake

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<sup>143</sup> Thompson, *Memoirs of Munson and Lyman*, 38, 53, 60, 61, 88, 116, 182, 183, 194. The memoir also included the account of a servant who had witnessed the ambush and reiterated the warnings they had received.

of exploring new territory. In the 1840s, Walter Lowrie wanted to go to West Africa, an area that many people considered risky. The Church Missionary Society of England had sent over a hundred missionaries to the region over the previous three decades, and most of them had died within months of arrival. But Lowrie argued that the climate of western Africa was not that different from that of India, and just needed to be approached strategically—Europeans should not expect to work constantly during the hottest part of summer. He also rejected the contention that India—site of his brother's mission, the first of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions—offered more potential for converts, questioning, “is Africa to be left until India is evangelized? Perhaps, also, we do not at all know what the prospects are in Africa.” One of his reasons for being attracted to Africa was the fact that so few men were willing to go there. His father was an executive of the Presbyterian Board, and the younger Walter challenged him that if he did not agree, “would it not give some captious spirits the opportunity of saying, that the Corresponding Secretary was willing to let others go there, but not to let his own son expose himself?” But the Presbyterian Board decided to send him instead to China, a field that was also less populated than the southern parts of Asia.<sup>144</sup>

In 1841, when the Presbyterian Board appointed Lowrie to their mission to China, the Chinese government did not allow Western missionaries in their territory. The Board had recently sent several couples to Singapore to learn “the language of China,” start schools, and make translations. Lowrie was initially resistant to the idea of going to East Asia, because he thought it would take too long to master the

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<sup>144</sup> Lowrie, *Memoirs of Lowrie*, 30, 37.

necessary language skills. Even after setting sail, he expressed concern that he might not live long enough to have a tangible impact on the Chinese mission, but he decided that his adventure had been providentially ordained. “If I might but give some proof that the religion I profess is not in vain, if I might but glorify in some feeble degree the Saviour who has so graciously redeemed me, then I could rejoice and die.” He was very aware of his potential to become a public figure, and wrote his mother, upon reaching the South China Sea, that he did not want the journal of his voyage to be published in the *Missionary Chronicle* yet. “The less I am known for a while—at least until it is known whether I am likely to be of any use in this part of the world—the better... My coming to this part of the world is but an *experiment*. If it succeeds, there will be time enough to become as prominent as is needful; if it does not, it will be better by far, both for myself and the Church, that as little be said about it, and as few expectations disappointed, as possible.” But Lowrie arrived at an auspicious time for the Chinese mission. Britain had been at war with China, and in 1842 that conflict was concluded with the Treaty of Nanjing, which allowed Westerners to do business in certain cities on the Chinese coast. While traveling to Hong Kong during his first year in Asia, trying to investigate potential locations for new missions, he survived a shipwreck and identified a number of ways in which he sensed supernatural protection. “When I look back and consider how many wonderful circumstances conspired to secure our safety in the midst of most imminent danger, it is hard to believe that it has been a reality. It seems, even now, like some terrible dream from which I have hardly yet awaked.”<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Lowrie, *Memoirs of Lowrie*, 13, 72, 97, 150.

Lowrie's misadventures did not stop there. In 1843, he and a colleague explored some of the cities that had been opened to Western influence by the Treaty of Nanjing. In Amoy, after observing opium smugglers at work, they ventured upriver to another city that had been unseen by Westerners since the work of Jesuit missionaries centuries before. Afterward they were censured by a British official who published a condemnation of their journey into territory that had been made off-limits to Westerners by the agreements between Britain and China. The governor of Canton responded by telling the American consul to ensure that his countrymen abide by the treaty. The consul claimed that the missionaries had no knowledge at the time that they were in forbidden territory, but the missionaries wrote their own defense, arguing that their "American citizenship and freedom from the surveillance of English authorities, were important circumstances in our favor in carrying on the work of missions here, and were to be defended and maintained." Lowrie did eventually settle down for a couple of years and focus on language studies and the administration of missions in some of the cities that were open to missionaries. But in 1847, during a journey from Shanghai to Ningpo, pirates captured his passenger ship. He tried to intimidate them by showing an American flag, but to no avail. He then cooperated with them as they attacked the sailors and plundered the passengers' goods. Witness accounts claimed that the pirates never actually touched Lowrie or the belongings on his person, but they feared his testimony before the authorities in Shanghai and decided to throw him overboard rather than kill him outright. Thus, he was presented as experiencing supernatural protection even as he became a victim of violence. When they seized him, he was reportedly reading his pocket Bible, and as they "were in the act of casting him into the sea, he turned himself partially around, and threw his

Bible upon the deck,” the same Bible he had preserved during a previous shipwreck. He was portrayed as facing death without fear and retaining a focus on his religious identity until the end.<sup>146</sup>

Lowrie's biographer, his father, filled the last part of his memoir with testimony from Lowrie's former classmates and colleagues (from his own as well as other denominations), some of which emphasized his attention to personal piety as a first priority. But they also discussed his reputation as “as a faithful ambassador for Christ, in perils often,” and his opinions on the importance of missionary deaths. One missionary reported that Lowrie had not viewed the early death of a missionary—so often “removed from his field of labour in the prime of early manhood, when he gave promise of daily increasing usefulness”—as tragic. Instead, he thought that “there was something peculiarly cheering to survivors in such a death.” It was a reminder that “God's children are employed in services infinitely more glorious... in the sanctuary above, than any employments entrusted to them on earth.” Christians should assure themselves that no matter how much potential for usefulness men appeared to have on earth, “God has called them to a more than common post of usefulness in the Church triumphant.” Lowrie's biography thus laid out—and justified—his penchant for adventure, his desire to explore lesser-known territory, and his willingness to put his life at risk.<sup>147</sup>

Such missionaries had the potential to become heroes among evangelical readers who were trying to navigate their way through competing concepts of

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<sup>146</sup> Lowrie, *Memoirs of Lowrie*, 220, 380.

<sup>147</sup> Lowrie, *Memoirs of Lowrie*, 391, 385.



masculinity in antebellum literature. Within the genre of biography, Americans published the lives of “Napoleon and Washington, felons and saints, local ministers and internationally renowned divines, shoemakers and statesmen,” demonstrating a paradoxical variety of paths to—and definitions of—personal success. At the same time, urban reformers published a range of advice literature, based on their perception that urban problems of crime and vice were linked to a crisis of young manhood. They urged urban young men to join reform societies (Bible, temperance, anti-vice, and colonization as well as missionary societies) and specifically encouraged men to associate a compassionate, temperate, disciplined character with masculinity as opposed to aggression or aspirations of gentility, wealth, and political power. But the “frontier myth” in American literature offered a persistent image of the American hero as a fearless man who ventured into wild territory, learned to identify with the “uncivilized” people he encountered, but ultimately remade both the wilderness and himself through violent conquest. The missionary character embodied by Walter Lowrie or the team of Munson and Lyman overlapped with the ideals of manhood promoted by other religious or moral reformers—missionaries were temperate, disciplined, pious, and they expressed pity for people they considered ignorant and unconverted. But the foreign missionary also tapped into the mythology of the frontiersman and his “regeneration through violence.” Many missionaries saw themselves as agents of civilization who ventured into uncharted territory with great risk to their own lives. But they were not the perpetrators of violence; rather, they saw their exposure to potential violence in other societies as a way of spiritually regenerating themselves as well as the societies they entered. Those who died in the

field were made, through the publication of their memoirs and biographies, into martyrs whom readers back home could venerate and emulate.<sup>148</sup>

Even missionaries who did not die violent deaths like Munson, Lyman, and Lowrie often exposed themselves to violence through their efforts to reach people previously untouched by Christianity and Western civilization. Their stories showed that adventure and danger went hand-in-hand with the life of a foreign missionary. Adoniram Judson, one of America's first missionary pioneers, survived over three decades (and two wives) in Burma before dying of illness in 1850. Frances Wayland published his memoir in two volumes in 1853. Wayland pointed out that Judson believed missions should be conducted by “*scattering* missionaries, and sending them in every direction to establish new stations,” rather than building large mission stations where missionaries tended to work comfortably on tasks other than preaching. “He believed them to be adverse to that spirit of self-denying effort” that should characterize mission work. He also described how Judson initially focused on soliciting the good favor of Burmese government officials and petitioning them, unsuccessfully, to allow the practice of Christianity within their territory. But Wayland repudiated this early strategy by arguing that people should not seek permission to worship God. “By asking such a permission, we seem to admit the authority of a ruler to grant or to refuse it, and hence, in some sort, promise to be governed by his decision.” In the case of Burma, a church was ultimately “sown amid

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<sup>148</sup> Casper, *Constructing American Lives*, 81; Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women*, 104-108; Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (New York: Atheneum, 1985); *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

persecution almost unto death,” and “took root, and bore fruit” in ways it would not have “under the fostering care of government.” Wayland claimed that Judson, “in the later years of his life, would have looked upon this subject in the light in which I have now presented it” and not wasted his time looking for government approval.<sup>149</sup>

In spite of his efforts to win over the government of Burma, Judson ended up in a life-threatening situation when Burma went to war with British India. He was in the process of moving from the missionaries' initial outpost in Rangoon to the capital city of Ava, where he felt optimistic about the potential for winning over the monarch and obtaining religious toleration for his future converts. Rumors did exist at the time that Britain might go to war with Burma, but the missionaries were confident that as Americans they would be able to maintain a stance of neutrality. But by the time they arrived in Ava, Burmese forces had left to invade British territory, and they found themselves under suspicion as foreigners. Judson was soon imprisoned, along with his male American colleague and any other Europeans in the region. He only survived because his wife, Ann, brought food to the prison, destroyed all evidence of their correspondence with British evangelicals, and followed the prisoners from place to place as they were moved throughout the war. Wayland included her letters describing the harsh treatment of Judson and the other prisoners being “confined in the *death prison*, with three pairs of iron fetters each, and fastened to a long pole, to prevent their moving!” She tried continually to petition the government for her husband's freedom, bribe various officers for leniency, and appeal to the women of the emperor's family, all to little avail. The prisoners' situation only worsened, with

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<sup>149</sup> Wayland, *Memoir of Judson*, 96, 249.

“above a hundred prisoners shut up in one room, without a breath of air... [looking] more like the dead than the living.” At one point the prisoners were moved to a different city, where they expected to be executed, and the journey was so painful that “as they were crossing the little river, he ardently longed to throw himself into the water to be free from misery. But the sin attached to such an act alone prevented.” After a few months at a remote location, Judson was taken away to serve as an interpreter, an act that relieved his family's fears for his life as he now had value to the Burmese. Finally the British forces advanced far enough to force the Burmese into negotiations, which included the release of all prisoners. After almost two years of imprisonment, the Judsons were released into British custody. Ann declared that her description could provide “but a faint idea of the awful reality.” Wayland then added details of their sufferings based on recollections of Judson and his colleague.<sup>150</sup>

Wayland also praised Judson's efforts to help the Burmese negotiate their peace with the British, claiming that it was a challenge for him “to set forth to unaccustomed ears and hearts those high principles of honor which actuate civilized nations.” One of the British officers reportedly described Judson as being “possessed of a quick, chivalrous sense of honor, which made him a noble representative of the English character, and which could not fail of impressing even the rude barbarians among whom he was thrown.” Wayland then described the terrible conditions in which Judson found his wife and child, who had both contracted smallpox and endured much deprivation during his imprisonment. Rather than risk their safety and the success of their mission once more, the Judsons decided to set up a station within

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<sup>150</sup> Wayland, *Memoir of Judson*, 340, 351, 356, 373.

Burmese territory that the British had taken possession of. Wayland compared him to the apostle Paul, whose “eye was ever fixed on 'the regions beyond.' He desired to go where Christ had not been named.” It was this attitude that made him heroic in a way that other kinds of religious reformers were not. And models of heroic masculinity had become increasingly important by the time his biography was published.<sup>151</sup>

By the 1840s and 1850s, as concerns about America's shrinking frontier and the potential for territorial expansion dominated America's political discourse, ideas about masculinity had coalesced into visions of “restrained manhood” versus “martial manhood.” Restrained men emphasized the importance of work, family, and morality. They grounded their identities in their success as fathers, professionals, and responsible leaders. They promoted domesticity, temperance, and often religion. But while their values overlapped with those of evangelicalism, they usually rejected the enthusiasm of the previous generation's revivals and found more fulfillment in their success and self-discipline than in their personal religious practice. This ideology competed with the values promoted by martial men, who prided themselves on their physical strength, excessive drinking, and ability to dominate women as well as other men. They saw strength, aggression, adventurousness, and even violence as characteristics that defined a true man. They tended to celebrate masculine ideals from the past, like chivalry, as well as the expansionist rhetoric of the Democratic Party. Many believed the argument of aggressive expansionists “that new territories offered an exceptional sphere for manly activity, a place where martial men could express their talents, unlike the United States where submission and conformity

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<sup>151</sup> Wayland, *Memoir of Judson*, 391, 395, 327.

seemed to be increasingly rewarded.” Some went so far as to support or join filibustering missions, private operations that attempted to take over regions of Latin America through force of arms and without government sanction or official military cooperation.<sup>152</sup>

But missionary biographies presented an alternative vision, one that overlapped with elements of both ideals. Missionaries were moral, disciplined, temperate, and nonviolent in their personal character. They found personal satisfaction in their religious life and mission the way other men might find satisfaction in a professional career. Yet many published memoirs showed men being adventurous and courageous, even risky. Some biographers downplayed the missionaries' roles as fathers, or described them leaving their children to be raised by other relatives or teachers. Their biographies appealed to readers to emulate the moral and spiritual qualities of missionaries while showing that adventure and danger were not incompatible with the evangelical version of “restrained” manhood.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11-13, 51. Restrained manhood was predominantly but not exclusively an ideology that appealed to the middle class. And while restrained men could be found in both the North and the South, they were usually drawn to the reform-oriented Whig, Know-Nothing, and Republican parties. Martial manhood held special appeal for working-class men who could not take pride in financial success but could cultivate their martial virtues.

<sup>153</sup> They also took advantage of the popularity of travel narratives in the antebellum era, describing exotic parts of the world as they presented missionaries traversing little-known and sometimes dangerous foreign fields. Greenberg argues that some anti-expansionist literature used missionaries to argue that the best way to spread American influence was by spreading Protestantism, trade, and democracy, which would help nations like Hawaii resist the encroachment of European empires. *Manifest Manhood*, 260-261.

Asahel Grant decided to go to Asia as a missionary physician after his first wife died, leaving his motherless two sons with his relatives in the United States. The American Board sent him to Persia, specifically to work among the ancient Assyrian Christians known as Nestorians. In Oroomiah (now Urmia in Iran) he opened a clinic and served both Muslims and Christians, who came “together to receive kindness from the stranger, who ministered to all for Jesus' sake.” He quickly earned a reputation for his skills and attracted a variety of patients, both rich and poor, from a places near and far. Without him, his biographer argued, the missionaries would have had a difficult time making contact with people, let alone surviving the field themselves. According to one of his missionary colleagues, “but for the services of Dr. Grant, the history of the mission to the Nestorians might have been easily written, ending in the sad record of the death of the pioneers, far from the reach of all medical assistance.”<sup>154</sup>

But Grant was not satisfied to stay settled in the city of Oroomiah. He had long been interested in exploring the Nestorian villages up in the mountains, where no Europeans had yet ventured. His biographer claimed that both the “importance of that field, and its difficulty, were just the things to recommend it to his enterprising spirit... For three years Dr. Grant laid siege to the mountains, encamped at their base, watching for the first available point of access to their unknown interior.” He compared Grant to British missionary John Williams, who had explored the South Sea Islands, and “felt that he could not be confined within the limits of a single reef while the wide ocean lay before him.” He also defended Grant's zeal for exploration, which some considered reckless, while maintaining that it was indeed a risky venture: “on

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<sup>154</sup> Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 51, 58.

the one hand, Dr. Grant is charged with 'courting death at every step,' and, on the other, his journey into the mountains is sneered at as an every-day affair... He did not take a single step till he had carefully reconnoitered the whole ground. The event showed the wisdom of his plan, and justified the zeal that pursued it so long, and so steadily.”<sup>155</sup>

First, Grant and his colleague traveled to Constantinople and explored nearby areas as they tried to gather information about the Nestorian and Kurdish tribes living up in the mountains. As they traversed the Ottoman empire, they encountered political unrest as well as “snow, wind, rain, and rivers” that made them fear for their own lives. His biographer (and former colleague) claimed that his “spirit of reliance on God” explained his decisions to take risks that others might find “inexplicable,” because “he was assured that the mountains formed a part of 'all the world' into which the disciples were to go and preach the gospel,” so “he took it for granted that God would take care of the man who should endeavour to do it.” Grant himself wrote that he occasionally felt afraid but believed “that a readiness to face danger, and even death, is implied in the command to take up the cross, and fear not them who can kill the body.” Finally, Grant ventured into the mountains for the first time, where he courted the favor of the Nestorian patriarch and spent five weeks visiting the villages around him. By the time he returned to Oroomiah after this first exploration, he had been away for eight months and had passed through many areas considered hostile to Europeans. The biographer described some of his strategies for not attracting attention: carrying only medicine with him, collecting no minerals or plants, taking no

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<sup>155</sup> Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 70, 75.



notes in public, even checking his compass discreetly. When he arrived back at the mission, he looked so different “in his oriental costume, that he was not at first recognised by his native acquaintance.” The pioneer had learned to blend in with the natives.<sup>156</sup>

In between descriptions of Grant's adventures, his biographer mentioned the status of his family. He had left the two sons from his first marriage with relatives in America, but he had taken a second wife with him overseas, Judith Campbell Grant, who had previously applied to work for the American Board as a single woman. She gave birth to three children before dying in 1839. Grant left their children behind at the mission in Oroomiah while he made his first journey around and through the mountains, but he returned in time to see his two daughters both fall ill and die. He then took his young son to America, where he spent time with his older children before leaving them all behind. His biographer argued that “It is one of the sorest trials attendant on the separation of the missionary from his children, that, while his heart yearns after them, they learn to regard him as a stranger, and transfer to others the affection that, of right, is his.” But the bulk of Grant's memoir (edited by his colleague Thomas Laurie) was devoted to his journeys and adventures in and around the mountains of Persia and Kurdistan. He eventually set up shop in a mountain village, where he spent several years making annual tours of the mountains and working largely alone, even as hostilities brewed among the Nestorians, Kurds, and Ottoman Turks. The mountain tribes had enjoyed independence from Turkish control, but the local emir demanded recognition of his authority, and the Nestorian patriarch

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<sup>156</sup> Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 86, 89, 93, 114-116.

refused. Grant knew that violence was imminent, but “the poor people were so disheartened” by the idea of his leaving that “he resolved to remain as long as his presence could be of any service,” knowing that once he left he might not be able to return. He wrote to Rufus Anderson that he did not know what each day would bring, and he anticipated “war and commotion” but trusted that “a glorious day is at hand... Christians have yet to feel that it is not by might or by power, but by the Spirit of God that the world is to be converted; and if missionaries, even by their death, only awaken more prayer for the Holy Spirit, they will not have toiled in vain.” But Grant's status as a physician had earned him a reputation among ruling authorities, and he was summoned away from his village before the war began. He heard from a distance of the destruction of the patriarch's tribe and village. “The blood of nearly eight hundred of both sexes had stained her valleys and mingled with her mountain torrents,” while survivors were taken into captivity. The situation of the Nestorian tribes only worsened, as they were hemmed in by Ottoman forces on one side and hostile Kurds on the other. Grant reluctantly left the mountains, enabled to escape only by “his intimate knowledge of the country,” and headed to Mosul where his colleagues had established an outpost of their Persia mission station. There he worked to aid refugees of the war, who brought the missionaries stories of the atrocities being carried out against the Nestorians and the oppressive measures taken against those who surrendered.<sup>157</sup>

By 1844, back in the United States several of the people caring for Grant's sons had died. Anderson, the Secretary of the American Board, urged him to return home

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<sup>157</sup> Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 129, 266-270.

and look after his children, believing they needed their father's attention for a period of time. But even after the defeat of the Nestorians, Grant found the prospect of leaving his field difficult to accept. While working with refugees in Mosul, he had “attentive assemblies on the Sabbath of from fifty to one hundred, and many opportunities for doing good during the week.” He did make plans to depart, but a disease he had been fighting among the refugees took his life before he was able to leave Mosul.<sup>158</sup>

Missionaries like Munson, Lyman, Lowrie, Judson, and Grant were all pioneers in their fields, just as many previously memorialized American and British missionaries had been. But concerns about the state of masculinity in America had become more prominent in discourses of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, as urban crime and poverty increased and opportunities for frontier expansion began to seem limited. The figure of the frontiersman was a prominent and enduring, if evolving, image in the American imagination by the antebellum era. Both in literature and in historical narratives, Americans celebrated the myth of the man who paved the way for civilization by fighting wilderness and racial “others,” and remade himself in the process. Later missionary biographies presented missionaries as the kinds of heroes that Americans reading about Daniel Boone or Davy Crockett could recognize and celebrate, and they depicted the mission fields of India or Asia as the new frontiers for Americans to explore. But missionaries were never the initiators of violence, although they were often victims; their conquest was cultural and spiritual. Henry Lobdell's biographer described missionaries as “among the choicest jewels of the church,” the “heroes of modern history, who contend against fearful odds, win bloodless battles,

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<sup>158</sup> Laurie, *Dr. Grant*, 300.

plant the standard of the cross on distant shores, and annex the farthest East with the remotest West to the dominions of the Prince of Peace.” Memorialized missionaries were the pious adventurers—not only did they provide exciting stories that attracted support for foreign missions, but they provided models of evangelical manhood that could compete with popular concepts of masculinity in the antebellum era.<sup>159</sup>

American missions promoters continued to publish and venerate the stories of British missionaries throughout the nineteenth century (and British evangelicals reprinted many American productions as well). But publishing the biographies and memoirs of American missionaries allowed promoters to recruit support and volunteers for foreign missions by speaking to the specific challenges and concerns that American readers faced. They presented the missionary career as an option for pious young men who might have wanted to take advantage of new educational opportunities or improve their social status without being tainted by accusations of selfish ambition. They encouraged evangelicals to adopt an expansive definition of “benevolence,” one which fit the vision of nation-builders initially, but ultimately produced a more cosmopolitan worldview than many nationalists favored. The lives of foreign missionaries, as models of cosmopolitan ideals, became tools for at least attempting to transcend divisions within and among the evangelicals of various Protestant denominations by appealing to their broadest understanding of benevolence. And as debates intensified over the meanings of masculinity in the antebellum Northeast, missionaries served as models of a heroic manhood that manifested a wide variety of laudable characteristics. Their personal piety and temperate habits were

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<sup>159</sup> Tyler, *Memoir of Lobdell*, 11.

consistent with the values of other religious reformers and advocates of “restrained manhood.” But the pioneering impulses and adventurous travels of many missionaries gave them an appeal that could compete with more violent models of masculinity that were popular, not only in literature but in reality, especially in the 1840s and 1850s. The subjects of these biographies had the potential to become both evangelical saints and American heroes.

## Chapter 5

### CRAFTING THE HEROINES OF ANGLO-AMERICAN FOREIGN MISSIONS

When Harriet Atwood Newell, one of the first American women to join a foreign mission, died just months after reaching India, excerpts from her letters and journals were published as the first female missionary memoir. Its popularity confirmed that missions promoters had found an effective new tool for raising money and awareness for their cause: Samuel Armstrong printed seven editions in Boston alone between 1814 and 1817, and by 1840 at least fifty editions had appeared in twelve cities, including New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Lexington, London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Poems were published in her honor, engravings were sold, and ships were named after her. New Englanders even named their daughters after her—almost fifty Harriet Newells appear in genealogies between 1814 and 1818 alone, with at least a few hundred more appearing before 1840.<sup>160</sup>

The successful publication of Harriet Newell's memoir inaugurated a new category of religious literature, the female missionary memoir. But the seemingly universal appeal and promotion of Harriet's story in the Anglo-American evangelical world belies a set of anxieties and disagreements among evangelical clergy. Within

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<sup>160</sup> Mary Kupiec Cayton, "Canonizing Harriet Newell: Women, the Evangelical Press, and the Foreign Mission Movement in New England, 1800-1840," in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, ed. Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 85-87.

the foreign missions movement, arguments continually arose over appropriate roles for women on the mission field. Many of these conflicts were private, known only to the participants and their correspondents. But the missionary memoir provided a public forum for debates over women's contributions to the enterprise, one in which clergy at home could participate as well as missionaries with experience in the field. Ministers and missions promoters used this new sub-genre of pious memoir to promote specific images of women in missions, engaging in an ongoing debate over women's roles throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Even as the broad appeal of female missionary memoirs could encourage connections within the evangelical community, creating heroines across denominational and national boundaries, the publications also highlighted disagreements among missionaries as well as evangelicals back home by challenging or promoting certain images of women on the mission field.<sup>161</sup>

The very idea of Western women participating in overseas missions was a source of controversy from the beginning of Anglo-American activity abroad.

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<sup>161</sup> For example, see the dispute over Roxanna Nott's contributions to the Bombay mission described in Emily L. Conroy-Krutz, "The Conversion of the World in the Early Republic: Race, Gender and Imperialism in the Early American Foreign Mission Movement" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012), ch. 2; also Dana L. Robert, "Evangelist or Homemaker? Mission Strategies of Early Nineteenth-Century Missionary Wives in Burma and Hawaii," in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). Robert specifically argues that the "internal debate within the missionary movement over the role of the missionary wife was the product of the experiences of missionaries in specific contexts, not merely a reflection of stateside arguments over domesticity and women's spheres." (117) Lisa Joy Pruitt, however, argues that the ABCFM's position on missionary marriage was consistent from the 1810s through the 1830s and therefore does not reflect the influence of experiences in the field. *A Looking-Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2005), 49. But the textual dialogue that took place through published memoirs reflects the influence of both.

England's Baptist Missionary Society sent married couples to India in 1793, where they relegated the wives to auxiliary positions. Missionaries were to be engaged in “the preaching of the Gospel, the translation and publication of the Holy Scriptures, and the establishment of Schools.” Women like Joshua Marshman's wife, Hannah, primarily assisted through the teaching of children, and they were permitted to help with translation work if they had the skills, but they did not participate in public meetings or official correspondence. Within a couple of years, Baptist missionary William Carey confirmed privately to his directors the importance of wives for helping the missionaries in their work, but he emphasized that they should be well-prepared—his first wife, Dorothy, was barely literate and unable to help (and also appears to have suffered from a debilitating mental illness).<sup>162</sup>

In 1794, missions pioneer Melvill Horne, a Sierra Leone chaplain and author of *Letters on missions; addressed to the Protestant ministers of the British churches*, argued that European women did not belong on the mission fields of Africa and Asia at all. Taking a wife and children along would only make life harder for the missionary, not easier. Horne believed that if a missionary wanted a wife, he would be better served to marry a native convert who was already accustomed to the lifestyle and climate of the region. Missionary societies seem to have universally rejected his recommendation regarding native wives, later rationalizing this stance with the argument that missionary wives needed to be raised in a Christian culture in order to

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<sup>162</sup> Constitution of the Baptist Missionary Society, quoted in Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 94; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 95-96; Pruitt, *Looking-Glass for Ladies*, 46.



be suitable witnesses to native women. But the London Missionary Society, formed in 1796, did try to discourage missionaries from taking wives overseas. As their secretary told the nascent American Board in 1811, they did not forbid married men from joining missions in “a civilized country,” as they considered British India to be. But “where *new* stations are attempted” they did feel it “safest and best for a missionary to go alone.”<sup>163</sup>

The founders of the American Board had solicited the advice of the London Society on the issue of missionary marriage, but in the end they decided to reject it and emulate the British Baptists instead. Several members of the first ABCFM cohort wanted to take wives with them, so the Board agreed to send three women to India as assistants to the work being carried out by their husbands. But as Reverend Jonathan Allen's farewell sermon to the young wives made clear, supporters held high expectations for the potential contributions of American women on the mission field. While the male missionaries focused on preaching the Gospel and translating the Scriptures, their wives would be responsible for instigating a complete “social transformation” through their work with other women. Americans assumed, from their reading of publications like *Christian Researches in Asia* by Claudius Buchanan, that women in the East were both degraded in social status and secluded within their

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<sup>163</sup> Melvill Horne, *Letters on missions; addressed to the Protestant ministers of the British churches* (Bristol, 1794), 66-71; Conroy-Krutz, “Conversion of the World,” ch. 2; Letter from Burder to Worcester, *The Panoplist* 4:4 (September 1811), 182. In its early years, the LMS actually hoped to see its missionaries become self-sufficient in the field, but they had to abandon this goal once their missionaries decided to take on the support of wives and children. Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895* (London: Henry Frowde, Oxford University Press Warehouse, 1899), 85.

households by traditions like purdah or foot-binding. Not only would missionary wives be responsible for sharing the Gospel with half the population, since the male missionaries would “have but little, or no access” to native females, but they would also need to “enlighten their minds,” since women of India were accustomed to being treated “like irrational creatures.” Missionary wives would attempt nothing less than the elevation of “the female character in the east,” even as they assisted their husbands, birthed and raised children, and managed a household in a foreign environment. How they were to go about accomplishing all of these goals was unclear, leaving the door open for disagreements over the best use of a woman's time and energy in the field.<sup>164</sup>

American mission promoters found yet another role for the missionary wives when they began to use their writings in the “missionary intelligence” that was so important for raising support on the home front, taking advantage of a growing evangelical public sphere that increasingly incorporated female readers and writers. In the decade or so before Harriet's departure, evangelical women in New England had formed cent societies and fund-raising auxiliaries to male-led missionary societies, revealing their potential as a base of support for evangelical operations. Missions promoters, through the new religious periodical press, had begun publishing women's

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<sup>164</sup> Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 3; Jonathan Allen, “The Farewell Sermon,” in *Pioneers in Mission: The Early Missionary Ordination Sermons, Charges, and Instructions*, edited by R. Pierce Beaver (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), 276-277. The image of secluded Asian women was a potent trope in missionary literature throughout the nineteenth century. See Pruitt, *Looking-Glass for Ladies*, and Joan Jacobs Brumberg, “Zenanas and Girlless Villages: The Ethnology of American Evangelical Women, 1870-1910,” *Journal of American History* 69:2 (September 1982): 347-371.

poetry, letters, and conversion narratives, as well as memorials in honor of pious females. By 1812, the “evangelical press invoked women, courted them, printed their work, and relied on them for support.” The *Panoplist and Missionary Magazine* had thirty-five hundred subscribers, many of whom shared its contents with the members of mostly female religious and benevolent societies. Women who participated in revivals or in charitable associations, which were becoming increasingly evangelical in their focus, could record their own experiences in letters and diaries with the hope that they too might be the subjects of pious memoirs someday.<sup>165</sup>

Following the missionaries' departure, promotional periodicals like the *Panoplist* and the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* printed long excerpts from the emotional and detailed accounts that Harriet Newell and Ann Judson provided of their travels and experiences. They offered vivid impressions of India's landscape and inhabitants, descriptions that “provided readers with a public world in which women existed and acted beyond the household, in scenes of unimaginable exoticism.” The periodical publication of Harriet's letters and journal extracts, followed shortly by her husband's dramatic account of her death and last words, primed readers to consume the edited collection of Harriet's journals and letters that appeared as a memoir in 1814. Though the memoir was evidently popular with men as well as women, its publication coincided with a rise in the number of female missions supporters. Within a few years, women came to form the majority of

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<sup>165</sup> Cayton, “Canonizing Harriet Newell,” 76-79; Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 112-113.

contributors to foreign missions, through the purchase of Harriet's memoir and portrait as well as more traditional avenues of donation.<sup>166</sup>

In some ways the pious memoir of Harriet Newell, and the many female missionary memoirs that followed, continued a long-standing Protestant tradition of spiritual autobiography. In addition to inspiring support for missions, evangelical writers and ministers envisioned these works encouraging personal piety in their readers. But the spiritual experiences and female activism portrayed in the memoirs of Harriet and her successors also suggested that evangelicalism offered new opportunities to women in post-Revolutionary America. A major component of the memoirs were conversion narratives, which during this period often presented “an androgynous model of regeneration” that brought men as well as women into “a mature union with God” that included, for both men and women, “the recovery of moral agency and spiritual potency.” Harriet Newell and her successors set an example for others to emulate not only through their piety, but by discerning their individual relationship with God and going “where God calls them.” Whereas earlier missionary hagiographies all had men as their subjects, Harriet's memoir told Anglo-American readers that the role of missionary martyr was available to women as well.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Cayton, “Canonizing Harriet Newell,” 83, 85. The Boston Foreign Mission Society described the desired effect, reporting of their meeting in 1815 that when the speaker “represented the holy ardour and pious zeal manifested by the Missionaries, who have left all and followed Christ into those remote regions; and especially, when he named Mrs. Judson, and Mrs. Newell... a very sensible impression was produced upon the assembly, and the missionary spirit seemed to vibrate in every heart.” *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 4:5 (March 1815), 149.

<sup>167</sup> Susan Juster, “‘In a Different Voice’: Male and Female Narratives of Religious Conversion in Post-Revolutionary America,” *American Quarterly* 41:1 (March 1989):

But while serving such broadly evangelical purposes as raising support for missions, modeling personal piety, and promoting spiritual agency, the genre of female missionary memoir could also serve narrower interests. Missionaries and clergy used the memoirs of missionary women to debate the appropriate roles for women on the mission field, discussing various dangers as well as the benefits they considered to be present within each woman's story. Even as promoters capitalized on the popularity of Harriet's memoir, they asserted varying perspectives on the contributions women could make to the global spread of Protestant Christianity.

### **Harriet Newell and Missionary Martyrdom**

Harriet Newell's memoir combined a youthful conversion narrative with a heroic melodrama and a triumphal funeral sermon. Leonard Woods, one of the founders of the American Board as well as Samuel Newell's professor at Andover Theological Seminary, compiled the extracts from Harriet's writings along with her husband's account of her deathbed and Woods' own sermon written in her honor. The edited work presented a specific model of a martyr, a female who suffered physical

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36-37; *The Weekly Recorder* 7:41 (June 1821), 4, reprinted in the *Christian Secretary* 1:11 (April 1822), and *Boston Recorder* 7:16 (April 1822); Cayton, "Canonizing Harriet Newell," 83. According to Clare Midgley, the British edition published in 1815 showed readers that while women were not considered fully "missionaries" in their own right, the label of "heroic missionary martyr was not exclusively reserved for men." *Feminism and Empire*, 100. On conversion narratives, see also Virginia Lieson Brereton, *From Sin to Salvation: Stories of Women's Conversions, 1800 to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Daniel B. Shea, Jr., *Spiritual Autobiography in Early America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968); Joanna Bowen Gillespie, "'The Clear Leadings of Providence': Pious Memoirs and the Problems of Self-Realization for Women in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5:2 (Summer 1985): 197-221.

and emotional anguish for the sake of the cause, even though she did not actually participate in the work of the mission in any practical ways. Excerpts from her diary and letters described her conversion experience, as well as the spiritual struggles of her teen years as she expressed guilt for her perceived failings and a desire to spread religion among her friends. She also expressed concern to know “to what purpose do I live? Why am I supported in this world of hope, when I am daily transgressing the laws of a holy God, and grieving his blessed Spirit?” When her friend Ann Hasseltine shared “her determination to quit her native land, to endure the sufferings of a Christian among heathen nations,” Harriet expressed conviction about her own responsibility to unsaved populations: “How dreadful their situation! What heart but would bleed at the idea of the sufferings they endure to obtain the joys of Paradise? What can I do that the light of the Gospel may shine upon them?” After receiving her own offer to marry a man she barely knew and become a missionary's wife, she grappled with the decision. “Should I... refuse to lend my little aid in the promulgation of the Gospel amongst the Heathen, how could I ever expect to enjoy the blessing of God, and peace of conscience, though surrounded with every temporal mercy?” Much of the memoir was devoted to her process of deciding to go “where Heathens dwell, far from the companions of my playful years, far from the dear land of my nativity... among females degraded and uncivilized, who have never heard of the religion of Jesus.” Her writings from after their departure confirmed the pain of leaving behind family and friends, but she always claimed that her spiritual satisfaction outweighed emotional trials, and affirmed her belief “that females greatly promote the happiness and usefulness of Missionaries.” The story closed with Samuel Newell's letter to Harriet's mother, telling of the death of their newborn baby on board

ship, followed by Harriet's death a few weeks later. He expressed hope that "Harriet's dying entreaties, and tears, and sighs, may be carried by the Spirit of truth to the hearts of the children, and of her other young friends, and may fasten conviction on their minds, and engage them to follow her, so far as she followed Christ."<sup>168</sup>

The compelling image of the young woman who sacrificed her community and ultimately her life for the sake of the Gospel became a valuable tool for defending the presence of women in missions, regardless of their practical contribution to the work in the field. In his attached sermon the memoir's editor, Woods, drew attention to Harriet's role as a martyr for the cause. Though she had not lived long enough to serve any practical function on the mission field, Woods argued that her commitment alone had served a valuable purpose by providing an illustration of self-sacrifice. His sermon defined the "Christian Missionary" as "he" who "forsakes all for Christ, in a remarkable sense." Harriet might not have been a true missionary like her husband, but as a missionary wife her "evidence of self-denial and devotion" was even "more remarkable, because for her to forsake friends and country is an instance of greater self-denial... Her mind is more delicate in its construction; more sensible to the tenderness of natural relations, and to the delights of domestic life." Thus her decision to become a missionary's wife offered "more conspicuous proof that her love of Christ transcends all earthly affection" than even the commitment of her husband. Woods compared this attitude of self-sacrifice to "the spirit and practice of the first Christians," who "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ."

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<sup>168</sup> Leonard Woods, *Memoirs of Mrs. Harriet Newell, Wife of the Rev. S. Newell, American Missionary to India. Also, a sermon on occasion of her death*, revised edition. (London: published by John Mason, 1833), 37, 57, 74, 104, 162, 203.

Harriet's death represented God's "favour" in "permitting her to be the first martyr to the Missionary cause from the American world," and "carrying her so quickly through a course of discipline" to "a crown of distinguished glory." Woods provided evangelical Protestants with their own version of a female saint, a woman to venerate alongside David Brainerd and other heroes of the faith, and demonstrated that Christian martyrdom could be a status for women as well as men.<sup>169</sup>

But some early missionaries challenged the image that Harriet Newell's memoir provided of female contributions to missions. In 1824, John Philip of the London Missionary Society published a contrasting memoir of Mrs. Matilda Smith of the Cape Colony. He presented her as a model to British women of an "active character" in contrast to the "contemplative" spirit exhibited in previous biographies (and Anglicized her name, Machtelt Smit, as she was Dutch in ethnicity). He depicted Mrs. Smith as a leading figure in the mission to southern Africa, a missionary wife who "not only undertook missionary work independently of her two successive husbands, but actually played a *leading* role in the promotion of missionary work in southern Africa: a powerful example of independent female agency." William Harvard, one of the first Wesleyan Methodist missionaries to Ceylon, also drew a contrast between Harriet Newell and his wife, Elizabeth. He did want to capitalize on Harriet Newell's popularity, so to an extent he encouraged comparisons between his wife's character and that of the martyred Harriet. He quoted lines from Harriet's memoir to illustrate Elizabeth's feelings toward leaving her family in 1813, and he recalled time they had spent with Samuel Newell in Bombay, where the widower had

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<sup>169</sup> Woods, *Memoirs of Harriet Newell*, 214-215, 217, 229.



observed similarities between Elizabeth and the late Harriet, “on which account her company and conversation were highly valued by him.” But while Harvard hoped that readers would see his late wife as someone worthy of the same veneration as Harriet, he departed from her memoir by presenting Elizabeth Harvard as an example of someone who successfully balanced domestic duties with more public missionary work alongside her husband. Within the memoir he pointed out the “admirable blendings of a public and private spirit in her character.” He ascribed to her a “noble and adventurous spirit,” exhibiting “zeal and firmness” in her decision to marry a missionary, and credited her with being the first “female missionary” who “had the honour to be the first female who *put her hand to the plough*” of the mission in Ceylon. After arriving in Colombo in 1814, Clare Midgley points out that “despite coping with four pregnancies, the loss of two children in infancy and bouts of illness and depression, Elizabeth accompanied her husband on his missionary excursions around the island, learned Singhalese and superintended the female departments of Sunday and Day schools catering for over 160 pupils.” Thus she demonstrated a broad array of characteristics for emulation, including the piety of Harriet Newell as well as practical skills in a variety of contexts.<sup>170</sup>

But even as missionaries began to offer varying images of missionary wives, the example of martyrdom that Harriet Newell's memoir provided became increasingly

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<sup>170</sup> Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, 100-101; W.M. Harvard, *Memoirs of Mrs. Elizabeth Harvard, late of the Wesleyan Mission to Ceylon and India: with extracts from her diary and correspondence*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: John Mason, 1833), 26, 38, 59. According to Midgley, “Early female missionary memoirs, while not as widely read as accounts of the leading male missionaries of the period, frequently ran into several editions of several thousand copies each” in Great Britain.

important. Other missionaries used the example of her influence to justify the sacrifices of missionaries who died in the field, especially given the rate at which females in particular died from childbirth or tropical diseases. When a member of the first Presbyterian cohort, Louisa Lowrie, died just weeks after reaching Calcutta in 1833, the editor of her memoir used Harriet's example to justify Louisa's sacrifice: "Like Harriet Newell she was only permitted to see the wretched beings whom she went to teach; and her prayers for their conversion ascended from the midst of the heathen; and like the same sainted missionary (whom in many respects she much resembled) it has been her lot to seal, by an early death, her testimony to the unspeakable importance of the enterprise for the conversion of the world." Elisha Swift, the secretary of the Western Foreign Mission Society, wrote an introduction to the volume in which he elaborated on the value of female missionary martyrs. First he described three ways in which an individual's "act of consecration to the work of Foreign Missions" could contribute to the cause: by providing an illustration of the "*practical influence of real piety*," by aiding and promoting the spread of the Gospel, or by having a direct influence on the unconverted herself. According to Swift's logic, women like Louisa Lowrie and Harriet Newell—who died before engaging in the actual work of missions—were still accomplishing the first two of these goals and therefore contributing to the cause. "The moral *effect of her example* as a Christian will not be lost," he predicted, so she had not died in vain.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Ashbel G. Fairchild, *Memoir of Mrs. Louisa A. Lowrie, of the Northern India Mission*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: William S. Martien, 1837), 219, viii, x. The model was actually applied to men as well as women. When Gordon Hall, Samuel Newell's partner in Bombay, died in 1824, the editors of the *Philadelphia Christian Advocate* compared his "dying legacy" to Harriet's. They believed that "Harriet Newell probably served the cause of missions a hundred fold more by her death, than she

By the 1830s, women's involvement in missions was increasingly under fire in the United States. The high mortality rate of females abroad combined with the challenges faced by women who lived on the mission field led critics of the enterprise to focus their ire on women's participation. So, as he commended Louisa Lowrie's specific character to young American women for emulation, Swift defensively argued that females in general possessed unique qualifications for mission work. They had “a patience of endurance, a buoyancy of hope, and a fervour of devotion” that were so important to the work “as to make it manifest that *they* are to sustain an important part in this honoured enterprise.” Of course, he referred to women as “assistant missionaries,” not missionaries in their own right, but he claimed that the “millions of pagan lands perishing without the land of revelation” were appealing directly to them for help. The British edition of Louisa's memoir included a second introduction by the W.H. Pearce, a Baptist missionary working in India. He too hoped that the example of Lowrie's character would work in conjunction with the examples of Mrs. Newell and others to demonstrate “the mental and spiritual qualifications which render fit for missionary labour.” It was still true that the women who joined foreign missions needed to be adequately prepared and qualified, but American leaders as well as British Baptists were convinced that their involvement was necessary.<sup>172</sup>

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could have served it by the longest life,” and they hoped that Hall's writings would equally inspire the support of churches and the commitment of young missionaries.” *The Christian Advocate* 4 (October 1826), 470. See also *Literary and Evangelical Magazine* 9:9 (September 1826), 498.

<sup>172</sup> Fairchild, *Memoir of Louisa Lowrie*, xxii, xxv, xxvii; Pearce quoted in Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, 100. An example of criticism, a review of Ann Judson's memoir in the Unitarian *Christian Examiner* claimed that few results had appeared from all such deaths and sufferings, that “the whole enterprise was uncalled for, and

Other American defenses of missionary wives also reflected concerns about the roles of women in evangelism more generally in the United States. By the 1830s, many clergy in the United States had become worried about the spread of female evangelism, especially under the influence of Charles Finney, who encouraged women to pray and exhort publicly before men as well as women. Growing numbers of New School Presbyterians and Congregationalists allowed women to speak aloud during prayer meetings, and a few even permitted female preachers temporarily into their pulpits, in spite of denominational rules to the contrary. Many ministers feared that female preaching would become increasingly accepted in the established denominations and lead to even more radical forms of female activism.<sup>173</sup>

Reflecting these concerns, in 1836 Rufus Anderson, a formative leader of the American Board, argued that women's participation was crucial to male missionaries' success in the field. But he specifically emphasized their value as wives to missionaries, rather than as assistant translators or female evangelists. He chose Mary Ellis, a British woman who had spent years in Tahiti, to hold up as evidence for his argument. William Ellis, her husband and the editor of her memoir, was an agent of the London Missionary Society and longtime correspondent of Rufus Anderson.<sup>174</sup>

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that these immense labors, expenses, and sufferings... might have been spared.” Quoted in Brumberg, *Mission for Life*, 40.

<sup>173</sup> Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 275-278.

<sup>174</sup> Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 67. Ellis himself “was a highly influential figure who, in producing this memoir, gave important endorsement to the concept of public recognition of the lives and work of missionary wives, stressing evidence of the salutary influences of the biographies of other missionary wives in promoting ‘the interests of missions abroad.’” Ellis also referred to the examples of Harriet Newell and Ann Judson in his wife's memoir. Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, 102. As

Anderson wrote an introductory essay for the Boston and New York editions of the Ellis memoir in which he laid out a number of arguments for the importance of missionary wives. The first point focused on all of the reasons why ministers at home needed wives—to provide companionship, render assistance, and preserve them from fleshly temptations. Anderson claimed that a missionary in a foreign context would feel these needs even more keenly, and no doubt he worried that unmarried missionaries would engage in the kinds of relationships with native women that European sailors and tradesmen did. Though he could envision particular circumstances where it might be wise for a man to go alone, he insisted that singleness be a voluntary state, as the freedom to marry was a key Protestant principle: “The holy and blessed enterprise of protestant missions must not be spoiled by introducing into it

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Foreign Secretary of the LMS from 1831 to 1841, Ellis played an important role in developing Anglo-American networks. “George Burder, LMS Secretary from 1803 to 1827, had established a correspondence with his opposite number at the ABCFM in Boston, Jeremiah Evarts, which continued to grow under their successors... Ellis was originally sent in 1816 to join the LMS's Tahitian mission and first made acquaintance with the Americans when he accompanied an LMS deputation in 1822 to visit the recently established ABCFM Sandwich Islands mission in Hawaii. Ellis was so well liked and his linguistic skills so valuable, that he was invited to stay by the American missionaries and the local rulers and the two mission boards agreed to his transfer to Hawaii. Ellis returned to Britain from the Sandwich Islands in 1824 on account of his wife's serious illness and found it necessary to travel eastwards, first taking ship via Cape Horn to New Bedford, Massachusetts. He spent four months in Boston and New York, preaching and lecturing at the request of the American Board and forming important friendships, especially with Rufus Anderson, about to become the Board's Foreign Secretary.” Andrew Porter, *Religion versus empire? British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 117-188.

the monastic principles of the Romish church,” where celibacy was demanded of priests and missionaries.<sup>175</sup>

Anderson's second reason for sending missionary wives was so that they could model Christian family life for their native neighbors. British and American evangelicals, by the 1830s, had come to believe that “the character of society is formed in the family.” If eastern societies were to be Christianized, their women must learn how to be “virtuous” and “useful” wives and mothers. Missionary wives could teach and exemplify “domestic order, neatness, comfort, and whatever else sheds beauty and sweetness over domestic life” in “pagan and Mohammedan countries”

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<sup>175</sup> Rufus Anderson, “Introductory Essay,” *Memoir of Mrs. Mary Mercy Ellis, Wife of Rev. William Ellis, Missionary in the South Seas, and Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society. Including notices of heathen society, of the details of missionary life, and the remarkable display of divine goodness in severe and protracted afflictions. With an introductory essay on the marriage of missionaries, by Rev. R. Anderson, one of the secretaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, by William Ellis (Boston: Crocker & Brewster; New York: Leavitt, Lord, & Co., 1836), x. For example, encounters between European traders and Hawaiian women had become common as a “means of barter” in the early 1800s (and resulted in the spread of venereal disease). Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), xviii. Americans like Anderson typically discussed this issue in vague and euphemistic terms, while British societies were less squeamish about stating the dangers of carnal lust. Emily Conroy-Krutz, “‘The Greatest Blessing or the Greatest Hindrance’: British and American Perspectives on Missionary Marriage” (paper presented at the twenty-ninth annual meeting of the Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture, Baltimore, Md., June 2013). Later, in his history of the Board, Anderson declared, “The experience of the Board favors the marriage of missionaries, as a general rule, and always when they are going to a barbarous people. Wives are a protection among savages, and men cannot long there make a tolerable home without them. When well selected in respect to health, education, and piety, wives endure 'hardness' quite as well as their husbands, and sometimes with more faith and patience.” Rufus Anderson, *Memorial Volume of the First Fifty Years of the ABCFM* (Boston: The Board, 1861), 272.

where “the wife is a degraded slave.” Mary Ellis, the subject of the memoir, exemplified this approach. She had taught other missionary wives in the Pacific to make this goal a priority after experiencing island culture, encouraging missionary wives to see household management and the rearing of children as a form of mission in itself. Though many of the arguments he raised in defense of missionary wives were reminiscent of principles elaborated decades earlier, Anderson's emphasis on specific marital and maternal duties reflects the debates that had emerged over the uses of women's time and energy in the field.<sup>176</sup>

Miron Winslow, one of the first American Board missionaries to Ceylon, confirmed Anderson's message that women played an important role, specifically as wives and homemakers on the mission field. Within the memoir of his late wife, Harriet Lathrop Winslow, he quoted letters in which she described her daily routine: spending time in prayers and meetings, tending to household chores, overseeing the servants, and supervising the studies of native children who had come to stay with them (thus incorporating teaching into the domestic sphere). She had worried that these domestic duties might be less exciting than what her friends back home envisioned her doing. But her writings, excerpted in the memoir, presented such domestic work as so necessary for the survival of the missions, that “no judicious person who ever saw them can question, and others have not the means of judging.”

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<sup>176</sup> Anderson, “Introductory Essay,” *Memoir of Mary Ellis*, xi; Robert, “Evangelist or Homemaker?”; *Women in Mission*, 66. Pruitt, *Looking-Glass for Ladies*, argues that Anderson's essay repeats earlier principles in favor of missionary marriage (laid out in *The Panoplist* in April 1815), instead of reflecting the practical experiences of missionaries, as Dana Robert suggested. (49) But Anderson's arguments on behalf of wives are more specific than those laid out early in the movement, reflecting years of discussion on this topic.

She also emphasized her role as companion and supporter of her missionary husband. After all, he “is to find all his society” in his wife. “He is to be encouraged and strengthened by her prayers, sometimes aided by her counsels, and always relieved as much as possible from worldly cares,” by her running of the household. She assured her readers, though, that even with all the responsibilities of a wife and homemaker, “there is time to do much for the female sex, which all find must be done almost exclusively by females.” Her husband confirmed that “the employment of a female missionary, if married, will centre very much in her family and the care of the temporal concerns of the station, that she may relieve her husband, and enable him with less interruption to pursue his appropriate work.” He added (with somewhat less conviction) that “she will also have opportunity for making known the Gospel, especially to those of her own sex, and superintending female schools, or perhaps making useful books for the natives.” His wife had, in fact, recruited girls for a school and taught twenty-four students, all of whom “had then become hopefully pious, and were members of the church.” But clearly he prioritized the value of women as wives and homemakers, perhaps to enhance the acceptability of female missionaries in the minds of an American public that was increasingly concerned about the scale of women's activism at home as well as abroad.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Miron Winslow, *Memoir of Mrs. Harriet L. Winslow, Thirteen Years a Member of the American Mission in Ceylon* (New York: American Tract Society, 1840), 274, 382, 288. (First published in New York by Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1835.) Female moral reformers in the urban northeast had also encountered controversy by the 1830s, as they pushed the boundaries of acceptable public activism, and had developed a strategy of at least appearing to prioritize their domestic responsibilities over their associational activities. Boylan, *Origins of Women's Activism*, 75-76.



Other evangelicals confirmed the importance of Winslow's message. The first British edition of Winslow's memoir included a preface by James Harrington Evans, a supporter of the Baptist Missionary Society, who expressed confidence in "this production of the pen of a beloved Transatlantic brother." He commented on the memoir's value as a depiction of personal piety, but he especially drew attention to the way it "showed 'how high and holy may be that station' which missionary wives might occupy as 'fellow laborers [sic] in the missionary work', undertaking work that 'though apparently less responsible' than that of their husbands, 'may be equally important.'" The American Tract Society reprinted it and highlighted Evans' praise for the memoir as not only exemplifying "patient, self-denying activity and perseverance in the service of Christ," but providing an "illustration of the usefulness, responsibility and encouragements of christian mothers, and especially the wives of missionaries." Such authors clearly envisioned a circumscribed role for women on the mission field, but at the same time they claimed "equal importance" for their work as wives and mothers in order to encourage more female participation.<sup>178</sup>

But while Miron Winslow was anxious to confirm the importance of wives on the mission field, he also wanted to warn potential missionary wives to consider realistically the sacrifices it would require. The opposition facing the first women in the 1810s had been replaced by "the smiles of friends" and "the approbation of all the churches," causing women now entering the field to forget that they would soon be

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<sup>178</sup> James Harrington Evans, "Introductory Essay," *Memoir of Mrs. Harriet L. Winslow, Thirteen Years a Member of the American Mission in Ceylon*, by Rev. Miron Winslow (London: John F. Shaw, 1838), vii; Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, 100; Winslow, *Memoir of Harriet Winslow*, 4.

“amidst a people of strange speech” without those voices of encouragement nearby. In such circumstances “nothing but a thorough conviction of being in the path of duty, nothing but the approving smile of heaven can keep them from despondency.” He hoped to end “the *romance* of missions,” because “no attraction from its novelty, no impulse from its moral dignity, will bear up and carry forward any one, amidst long-continued labors of almost uniform sameness, which,” in reality, could be “most humble and forbidding.” A young woman teaching in a large seminary, or leading benevolent causes, “should either chasten her imagination, or invigorate her principles, before she goes forth to teach a few heathen children, or to exert an uncertain, it may be acknowledged influence over a handful of degraded and dark-minded female idolaters.” Otherwise she might find her potential for usefulness reduced rather than expanded, and in the absence of Christian community, find herself “in danger of sinking into hopeless inactivity.”<sup>179</sup>

Winslow specified that a commitment to foreign missions must be made “from *principle*, and not mere *impulse*.” Again he presented his late wife as a model, this time of steady and principled decision-making. She had written a treatise on the ‘Question of Duty Respecting Missions,’ in which she wrote out all of her concerns about entering missionary work and the reasons why she concluded ultimately to go, and Winslow included this in the memoir as an example for readers to follow. But the dramatic image of missionary sacrifice and martyrdom that had captured the imaginations of evangelical readers through Harriet Newell’s memoir continued to animate female readers in particular, in spite of his warnings. As foreign missions

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<sup>179</sup> Winslow, *Memoir of Harriet Winslow*, 67-69

reached its height of popularity in the late nineteenth century, and women established their own missionary societies, the “romance of missions” would become the subject of novels depicting women and girls consumed with missionary dreams and ambitions.<sup>180</sup>

### **Ann Judson and Female Missionary Work**

By 1854 when William Dean, Baptist missionary to China, published a memoir of Lucy Lyon Lord, he assumed that his readers would not question the appropriateness of women in the mission field. But he echoed some of Winslow's concerns about the “romance of missions,” using Lord's memoir to question the many roles that missionary wives expected to take on. In his introduction, he presented a long list of wives who had served and died in Protestant missions to China, a relatively new sphere of operations. This list included women from both America and Europe, many of whom were also featured within Lucy's memoir as her colleagues in the mission to China. He described them as “the noble band of departed women who were once employed on a mission of mercy to the Chinese,” including “Mrs. Morrison, Mrs. Milne, the first and second Mrs. Gutzlaff, Mrs. Boone, the first and second Mrs. Dean, Mrs. Ball, the first and second Mrs. Johnson, the first and second Mrs. Shuck, Mrs. Doty, Mrs Pohlman, Mrs. Stronach, Mrs. Hobson, Mrs. Whilden, Mrs. White, Mrs. Speer, Mrs. J. Johnson, Mrs. Jenks, Mrs. Jarram, Mrs. Legge, Mrs. Wylie, etc.” All of them had departed “before the Chinese mission is fifty years old,

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<sup>180</sup> Winslow, *Memoir of Harriet Winslow*, 85-89; Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 8.

and while it numbers but about fifty men.” Rather than praising and justifying their martyrdom in the tradition of Harriet Newell, Dean complained that so many women had died prematurely.<sup>181</sup>

Dean had already lost two wives himself, the second of whom had recently been memorialized by Boston minister Pharellus Church. Church had mounted a vigorous defense of Theodosia Barker Dean's martyrdom at the age of twenty-four. Like many such authors, he compared her death to that of Christ and of the early Christian martyrs: “Did not our blessed Saviour die young? Did not Stephen come to an early and tragic end? And, yet, in their death they accomplished more than in their life.” He then criticized Christians who did not want to see their friends and relatives die in the mission field, accusing them of undermining Christianity's influence in the world: “When the Church becomes miserly, and over-cautious of her blood... and too fearful of sacrificing treasure to attempt aggressive movements upon the empire of darkness,—then, we may be sure, she has outlived the period of her triumph and her glory.”<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Edward Lord, *Memoir of Lucy T. Lord, of the Chinese Baptist Mission. With an introduction by William Dean, D.D.* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1854), 5. An article from William Dean on the deaths of missionary wives in China had previously been published in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* in 1845. The first two wives of German missionary Karl Gutzlaff were both British women who had traveled to Asia as single teachers, one under the LMS and one with privately donated funds, in the years predating official missionary work in China. Before Europeans were allowed to enter mainland China following the Treaty of Nanjing, they tried to establish schools in surrounding areas like Malacca. R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission: History of the First Feminist Movement in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 77.

<sup>182</sup> He drew a parallel with the example of Adoniram Judson, one of the earliest and most successful American missionaries of the era, identifying his success in his very willingness to sacrifice everything in the face of uncertain outcomes. “This is the

But after losing two wives and numerous colleagues, William Dean was not convinced that such early martyrdom was necessary. He attributed the deaths of all the missionary wives in China to the amount of work they had tried to do, and he criticized the magnitude of their ambition. Because of the public perception of missionary wives as teachers and assistant missionaries as well as homemakers, many were going abroad “to attempt what is called a missionary's work, instead of attending to the duties of a missionary's wife. Thus attempting to do what they can not perform, they sacrifice health and life in the vain endeavor, and what is more, neglect the duties of their sacred calling and domestic relations.” He blamed “public sentiment” for suggesting that women should expect to work in a “high and romantic sphere,” making them think that to “come down to the common duties of the wife, was lowering the dignity of their calling, and that these domestic services would not be called “missionary work.” Thanks to the public images that had been circulating for several decades, following the lofty goals laid out by ministers like Jonathan Allen, American and European women alike saw the purposes of missionary wives as including so much more than just the domestic support of their husbands. After being widowed twice on the mission field, William Dean felt that their ambitions needed to be curtailed.<sup>183</sup>

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secret of that mighty influence which Judson for many years wielded over the Christian world. It is the influence of powerful endurance rather than of brilliant action, of self-sacrifice rather than of eloquent appeal, of the might of will rather than of word.” Pharellus Church, *Notices of the Life of Theodosia Ann Barker Dean, Wife of Rev. William Dean, Missionary to China* (Boston: New England Sabbath School Depository, 1851), 285-288.

<sup>183</sup> Dean, “Introduction,” *Memoir of Lucy Lord*, 8-10.

The most famous example of a “high and romantic sphere” for missionary wives was that of Ann Hasseltine Judson. Her memoir, first published in 1829, was the most popular antebellum missionary memoir (either male or female). Ann Judson spent nearly fifteen years on the mission field, during which time she became famous as a proponent of the Baptist mission to Burma, an advocate of native female education, and a hero for keeping her husband and his work alive during the Anglo-Burmese War. She was an Anglo-American celebrity even before her death, an unusual status for missionary wives, and when her memoir was published it became an instant classic among evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic. Ann Judson modeled an extremely active and important role as wife, teacher, translator, and assistant to her husband's work on many levels, as well as eventual martyr. Though some individuals clearly preferred to see women occupy a more limited sphere on the mission field, Ann's ambitious array of activities inspired many women to aspire to roles other than homemaker.

Ann Judson's voice, though mediated, was an integral part of the American Baptist mission from its inception. When the Judsons converted to the Baptist denomination after being sent to India by the American Board, Ann's writings provided a defense of her husband's reputation and an appeal for interdenominational sympathy and understanding. Pious women were often seen as transcending the partisan and sectarian differences that divided religious men, and the Baptist Board must have hoped that her perspective would help shield them from accusations of stealing an American Board missionary. They published Ann's letter to a female friend in Boston emphasizing the common beliefs that remained between them, assuming “that my differing from you in those things which do not affect our

salvation, will not diminish your affection for me, or make you unconcerned for my welfare.” She presented a detailed account of their experience—Judson's examination of the subject of Baptism on their ship, her attempts to keep him from changing his mind, their examination of books and Scriptures on the subject, and their conviction that the Baptists had more truth on their side. She tried to persuade her reader that “we are confirmed Baptists, not because we wished to be, but because truth compelled us to be,” even though it meant “the loss of reputation and of the affection and esteem of many of our American friends,” not to mention the painful separation from their “dear Missionary associates” of the American Board.<sup>184</sup>

Once the Baptist mission in Burma was underway, Ann participated in her husband's missionary work in a variety of ways. When Adoniram tried to call on the Viceroy of Rangoon, hoping to secure toleration for Christian converts, he was hardly acknowledged. But Ann, who was studying the language alongside her husband, called upon the viceroy's wife “and was much better received” in what would be the first of many of her diplomatic efforts. By 1820 Ann could report some success as an evangelist with the baptism of her first convert, a woman who helped recruit students for the mission and brought her sisters and friends to visit Ann “every Wednesday, for the purpose of reading the scriptures and religious conversation.” Ann also engaged in

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<sup>184</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:10 (May 1813), 294. Joan Jacobs Brumberg argues that the perception of pious women as “disinterested” enabled them to transcend sectarian boundaries more easily than men, thus allowing Ann and her successors to attract more attention than Adoniram Judson himself. “The patriarch still had the power to evoke sectarian feelings; the women were simply outside or above denominational politics.” *Mission for Life: The story of the family of Adoniram Judson, the dramatic events of the first American foreign mission, and the course of evangelical religion in the nineteenth century* (New York: Free Press, 1980), 13.

a variety of literary pursuits, writing and translating tracts, books of the Bible, and a catechism into Burmese as well as Siamese for Burma's Thai community.<sup>185</sup>

Ann's reputation as an invaluable member of the mission to Burma was firmly established among British as well as American readers of missionary periodicals by the time she made a tour of Britain and the U.S. in 1821. She ended up on a ship to England after spending several months with the English missionaries in Calcutta waiting for a voyage to the U.S., where she hoped to receive medical attention for a "liver ailment." She reached England to discover that she had become a well-known figure in the decade since her journey to India. She was invited to stay at the home of Joseph Butterworth, Esq., a Member of Parliament who introduced her to William Wilberforce, among other individuals "distinguished for literature and piety." She was also invited to spend time with "friends" in Scotland, who donated the funds for her traveling expenses. After "several weeks in that land of Christian hospitality," she proceeded to Liverpool, where a group of women paid for her to take "a much more commodious vessel" to New York.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 4:5 (March 1815), 147; *American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer* 3:7 (Jan. 1822), 251. Ann Judson was reportedly the first Protestant to work among the Thai. Robert, "Evangelist or Homemaker?" 119. She also translated a Siamese sacred book into English.

<sup>186</sup> Mrs. Thomason, wife of the East India Company's chaplain, advised her to take an English ship "on account of the superior accommodations, medical advice, and female passengers, in English ships." *American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer* 3:9 (May 1822), 345. Her arrival in London was announced in publications like the *London Missionary Register*, which the American Baptist Magazine quoted to inform American readers of her location. *American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer* 3:11 (Sept. 1822), 440; James D. Knowles, *Memoir of Ann H. Judson, late missionary to Burmah, including a history of the American Baptist Mission in the Burmese Empire*, revised edition (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1845), 226-227. The *American Baptist Magazine* published an



After leaving England, Ann cultivated further support among the British public by writing a complete history of the Baptist mission, which she publicly dedicated to Joseph Butterworth, M.P., who was providing financial support for her projects in Burma. Her professed goal was “to give to my friends, not only in England, but America, that information relative to the Burman Empire, which my state of health forbids my verbally communicating.” She also used the book to promote a personal cause, the education of Burmese women. Though she personally spent more time assisting in her husband's work than in running her own schools for girls, she chose to highlight the issue of female education to raise money for the mission. By this time, evangelicals in England (and to some extent in America) would have associated female education mostly with individuals like Hannah More, who was devoted to inculcating Protestant beliefs and to reconciling intellectual equality with patriarchal values. Ann seized upon this model of circumscribed female cultural leadership to validate her own public activism. The London publisher then rendered it more politically salient by linking it to the cause of abolition. The advertisement for the book included a description of slavery in the Burmese empire, a system that ensnared debtors and their wives and children, as well as orphans who were sold to pay creditors or taxes. And it stated that “To redeem a few female orphan slaves of this description, is an object which Mrs. Judson proposes to herself, in order to commence with them a system of instruction.” Her goal was to educate a handful of former slaves and use the success of these first pupils to “convince the Burmans of the utility

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obituary upon Butterworth's death in 1826, praising his “piety and catholicism,” given his efforts on behalf of the Baptist Missions in India, although he was a member of the Methodist Church. *American Baptist Magazine* 6:10 (Oct. 1826), 311.

of female education.” Any profits accumulated by the Butterworths, who published the British version, would go toward the redemption of female orphans under Ann's supervision (and presumably, Ann's public affiliation with such a prestigious figure would encourage others to donate as well).<sup>187</sup>

Even before her book was published, Ann received donations merely by virtue of her reputation in both England and America, for the purpose of establishing schools for women in Burma (including a bequest from the estate of Hannah More). During a stay in Boston, Ann solicited more such contributions with an “Address to Females in America, Relative to the Situation of Heathen Females in the East.” To her fellow American women she wrote, “Favoured as we are from infancy with instruction of every kind, used as we are to view the female mind in its proper state, and accustomed as we are to feel the happy effects of female influence, our thoughts would fain turn away from the melancholy subject of female degradation, of female wretchedness.” Her description of American women reflected the belief among many Anglo-Americans that advanced civilizations were characterized by a relatively elevated

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<sup>187</sup> Knowles, *Memoir of Ann Judson*, 236; Ann H. Judson, *An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire. In a series of letters addressed to a gentleman in London*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Joseph Butterworth and Son, 1827). She offered the proceeds from her book in America to the national Baptist convention in the U.S., in anticipation of “considerable pecuniary advantages.” *Latter Day Luminary* 4:6 (June 1823), 179. By the 1830s, the discourse of republican motherhood had rendered female education acceptable and even necessary in the eyes of many Americans. Frances Willard, founder in 1821 of Troy Female Seminary, would use this concept of educated womanhood to justify her own international activism with the creation of a female seminary in Greece, in the hopes of increasing women's influence both in America and in the original home of western civilization. Angelo Repousis, “The Trojan Women: Emma Hart Willard and the Troy Society for the Advancement of Female Education in Greece,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 24:3 (Fall 2004): 445-476.

status for women. She then emphasized the difference between American women and those she labeled “our tawny sisters” in the East, whose situation would “fill us with gratitude to Him who has made us to differ, and excite to stronger exertion in their behalf.”<sup>188</sup>

She also invoked the developing idea of women's unique moral qualities in asking, “will our feelings of pity and compassion; will those feelings which alone render the female character lovely, allow us to turn away—to dismiss the subject altogether, without making an effort to rescue—to save?” Ann's appeals to her Anglo-American sisters to use their privileges and virtues on behalf of Eastern women echoed the language of William Ward in the campaign to end *sati* in British India. He

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<sup>188</sup> *American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer* 4:4 (July 1823), 137. She received word in Baltimore that Mr. Butterworth had “put to interest” 100 pounds sterling, and “much more is collected.” Knowles, *Memoir of Ann Judson*, 240. In the U.S., many donations came via Judson Societies, groups of women in different cities formed for the purpose of supporting Ann's enterprises. *Latter Day Luminary* 4:5 (May 1823), 154. Americans shared with their British counterparts a belief in “European Enlightenment stadial theory. In the 1770s, French and Scottish theorists created conjectural histories of the world that linked stages of economic development, from an original state of nature through hunter-gatherer, pastoral, agricultural and then commercial stages, to levels of social and cultural development from savagery to civilisation, and levels of political development from despotism to liberty. The treatment of women by men was taken as an index of the stage of progress.” Midgley, 14. See also Brian Stanley, ed., *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001). Promoters of foreign missions presented similar arguments throughout the nineteenth century in efforts to encourage female participation. “In their attempts to show the immensity of the difference between Christian and heathen women, ministers rose to eloquence; one went so far as to refer in 1854 to the enfranchisement of the one and not the other. No one ever suggested that the differences between the heathen women and the Christian ones might be in degrees of bondage...” Barbara Welter, “She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women's Missionary Careers in Nineteenth-Century America,” *American Quarterly* 10:5 (Winter 1978): 630.

had urged British and American women to recognize what he called their privileged status, and to fulfill their duty by helping to rescue Indian women from ignorance and idolatry. Ann's public advocacy suggested that Anglo-American women could also play a leading role in such causes, on account of their superior social status, in what became known as the "Work of Women for Women" later in the nineteenth century.<sup>189</sup>

Ann Judson also became known for her efforts to defend and preserve the Baptist mission during a war between British India and the Burmese Empire. The Burmese imprisoned Adoniram and one of his colleagues on suspicion of spying for the British, and kept them on the brink of death for two years. After the prisoners' freedom was finally secured by the British, Ann wrote a detailed account of their trials during the war. She described her continual attempts to convince or bribe the king, his wife, and other officials to release Adoniram, becoming the first woman known to appear in the emperor's court in such a fashion. She took food to the prisoners, contrived to hide his translation work and other valuables from the Burmese soldiers (as well as destroying their extensive correspondence with British missionaries), and followed him when the prisoners were moved to a different town—all in the midst of scarcity and grave illnesses, as well as a pregnancy and childbirth. The *American*

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<sup>189</sup> *American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer* 4:1 (Jan. 1823), 18; Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, 74-75; Welter, "Women's Missionary Careers," 632. Another British Baptist, Eustace Carey (son of William), took up the cause of female education and toured the U.S. in 1825 raising funds for schools. "Devotion to this specific mission within the general mission helped the American women and girls persist in their efforts at stimulating interest, diffusing information, making intercessory prayer, and raising funds, even when allowed no part in directing the denominational overseas concerns." Beaver, *Women in World Mission*, 55.

*Baptist Magazine* celebrated her resourcefulness: “Our esteemed Mrs. Judson who was not imprisoned, recommended herself even to heathen by her discreet conduct, and in consequence of the confidence created in them, she procured such supplies as rendered her an angel of mercy, not only to her husband in his imprisonment, but to Dr. Price and others.” But the years of stress, malnutrition, and various illnesses finally caught up with Ann, and she died shortly after the war in 1826.<sup>190</sup>

Ann's fame among evangelical readers and the excitement of events preceding her death ensured that her memoir would have a ready audience. James Knowles, pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Boston, compiled it on behalf of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions. The original Boston printer had produced three editions by the end of its first year in publication, and at least twenty-five versions of the memoir were produced in the U.S. before 1860. The publishers also sent an early edition of the book to the Baptist Missionary Society in England, in hopes that it would “fan the flame of benevolent effort which distinguishes the land of our ancestors.” The Society published a British edition in 1829, and it was printed every year for nine years. Ann not only had the reputation of being the first American woman “to bear the gospel to the heathen in foreign climes,” but her previous visits to Britain and her publication of the Burmese mission's story for British audiences had primed British readers to receive her memoir enthusiastically. Distribution numbers from both England and the U.S., as well as letters from India, indicated that the

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<sup>190</sup> *American Baptist Magazine* 7:3 (March 1827), 101. Having failed to receive Ann's earlier account of their experience during the war, which was addressed to Adoniram's brother, the magazine reprinted from London a “Narrative of the sufferings and deliverance of the missionaries at Ava, in a letter to the late Joseph. Butterworth, Esq. and published in the Missionary Register.”

memoir was “producing heart-thrilling interest on the subject of missions in both hemispheres,” and ministers reported that the book was facilitating conversions as well as removing “prejudices against missions.” Knowles reminded readers that Ann Hasseltine, considered the first American woman to commit to foreign missions, had entered the field amidst controversy. He emphasized the difficulty of her decision to marry a missionary when “No female had ever left America as a Missionary to the heathen,” and the action “was deemed wild and romantic in the extreme, and altogether inconsistent with prudence and delicacy.” But Knowles praised Ann’s “adventurous spirit and her decision of character,” which equipped her “to resolve where others would hesitate, and to advance, where others might retreat. She did decide to go, and her determination, without doubt, has had some effect on the minds of other females, who have since followed her example.”<sup>191</sup>

Though Ann Judson had participated in the Baptist mission in a variety of ways, Knowles drew attention to her emphasis on teaching, a role that British women like Hannah Marshman had initially established, but that Ann Judson had advocated more publicly and forcefully. Knowles highlighted Ann’s own words on the

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<sup>191</sup> The Baptist Convention reported \$350 profit from the first edition within a few months of publication. *American Baptist Magazine* 9:6 (June 1829), 211, 214; Edward C. Starr, ed., *A Baptist Bibliography: Being a Register of Printed Material By and About Baptists; Including Works Written Against the Baptists*, vol. 12 (Rochester: American Baptist Historical Society, 1967), 204-205; *American Baptist Magazine* 9:9 (Sept. 1829), 328; Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, 100; *American Baptist Magazine* 10:11 (Nov. 1830), 346; *American Baptist Magazine* 10:2 (Feb. 1830), 6; Knowles, *Memoir of Ann Judson*, 42-43. See also *American Baptist Magazine* 14:10 (Oct. 1834), 398. The *Christian Review* credited Harriet Newell’s memoir with inspiring a generation, but it praised Ann Judson’s autobiography for being superior to all others “in point of thrilling incident, and well-sustained interest.” *The Christian Review* 7:25 (March 1842), 104.

importance of women in the field, particularly regarding the contributions they could make through native female education. The issue, he said, was “entitled to much weight, and applies, with equal force, to almost every heathen country: 'Good female schools are extremely needed in this country'.” But the only way to establish female schools was for missionaries to take wives who could teach. As Ann remarked, “I hope no Missionary will ever come out here, without a wife, as she, in her sphere, can be equally useful with her husband.”<sup>192</sup>

As female missionary memoirs proliferated in the 1830s and 1840s, many more emphasized the contributions of women as teachers. Richard Knill, who had worked with the London Missionary Society in Madras, responded to the memoir of Ann Judson with a memoir of Sarah Farquhar Loveless, the American wife of his English colleague. This memoir, published first in London and then in Philadelphia, presented Sarah Loveless as “the first American who engaged in foreign missions.” While traveling in 1804, New Yorker Sarah Farquhar had encountered English missionaries en route to India, one of whom was William Loveless of the London Missionary Society, the first English missionary to Madras. She had married him and joined him in Madras in 1806. Knill devoted a chapter to each of her roles in life, including “Pupil” and “Promoter of Female Education” as well as “Wife” and “Mother.” Sarah's husband had staunchly opposed his society's policy of sending unmarried missionaries into the foreign field. Knill likely wanted to draw attention to

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<sup>192</sup> Knowles, *Memoir of Ann Judson*, 72. Ann had made this observation after visiting the British mission at Serampore: “I presume Mrs. Marshman does more good in her school than half the ministers in America.”

the multitude of roles Sarah fulfilled in order to highlight her importance to the mission.<sup>193</sup>

But he also emphasized her time spent as a student (and surrogate daughter) to Isabella Graham in New York, someone he described as being “half a century before most other people, in her views of Missionary work,” since she encouraged Sarah to seize the opportunity for missionary work several years before other Americans started venturing overseas. After marrying in 1806, Sarah assisted her husband in the instruction of boys (presumably European-descended) at an orphanage under the supervision of East India Company chaplains, so that even in her role as missionary wife she was involved in education. Eventually she helped oversee the building of separate schools for girls, boys, and “heathen children.” As the founder of the first girls' school, Knill depicted Sarah engaging in the elevation of a population of women, both “country-born” English and “heathen” natives, who were “the mere slaves of men” and did not know how to pray for their children. As a model of Christian

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<sup>193</sup> Richard Knill, *The Missionary's Wife, or, A brief account of Mrs. Loveless, of Madras, the first American missionary to foreign lands* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1839). After several years in the field, Loveless wrote to his directors, “I widely differ from you in opinion on this subject; and could I imagine that any thing I might say would be of any use to convince you of the importance of permitting your Missionaries to Marry, I would enter largely into it and fro [sic] every one of your Missionaries I have seen in India, consideration could be brought to prove its necessity. The Baptist Brethren in Bengal are invariably of that opinion, and their Society approves it—all your best friends in India are so convinced of its propriety, that they even wonder you should so strenuously oppose it, and from the observations I have made on the Subject I am of the opinion, that not only the comfort and health, but even in some respects the usefulness of your Missionaries is connected with it.” Wm. Loveless to the Directors of the Missionary Society, Madras, Aug. 23, 1813. London Missionary Society papers 9.3, Box 2, Folder 1, Jacket C. [Courtesy Emily Conroy-Krutz]



character as well as a pioneer in the education of females, Knill argued that Sarah had begun the process of transforming India by teaching girls how to become intelligent and pious mothers.<sup>194</sup>

But even if teaching was an appropriate role for women on the mission field, many missionary wives struggled to balance their domestic responsibilities with the work of teaching school. Rufus Anderson's 1836 differentiation between the role of wives as domestic exemplars and as teachers reflected the tensions that some felt in trying to do both. By choosing Mary Ellis to exemplify the ideal missionary wife, someone who prioritized homemaking and child-rearing, he clearly emphasized the role of wives in the domestic sphere first. Mrs. Ellis had engaged in some teaching of native children, but Anderson acknowledged that most missionaries had barely tapped into the potential that education held for reshaping pagan societies. Yet efforts being made in the United States “to render school-teaching a profession in the same general sense that the preaching of the gospel is one, and to educate a numerous body of male and female teachers expressly for the instruction of schools,” made Anderson profess optimism about the future of this enterprise, and led him to authorize the sending of single women as teachers (though he insisted that they live in the households of missionary couples).<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Knill, *The Missionary's Wife*, 1, 4, 14. Sarah Lanman Smith, who was around age 30 when she married Eli Smith in order to go to Syria with him, also reiterated the idea that educating and evangelizing girls would be the key to transforming the entire society: “Could the females of Syria be educated and regenerated, the whole face of the country would change.” Edward W. Hooker, ed., *Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Lanman Smith, late of the mission in Syria, under the direction of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: Perkins & Marvin, 1840), 214.

<sup>195</sup> Anderson, “Introductory Essay,” *Memoir of Mary Ellis*, xii, xiv. Anderson's mission theory emphasized evangelism and the building of native churches over any

Other memoirs also promoted the idea that missionary wives needed to make motherhood their full-time occupation, both in the interest of protecting their children from unchristian influences and for the purpose of demonstrating Christian motherhood and marriage to native populations. In Elizabeth Dwight's memoir, her husband discussed her experiences in Constantinople, where she found her activities limited both by health problems and by the demands of raising their four children. A stomach ailment first forced her to give up her school, and as her children got older she was consumed by the challenge of educating them and insulating them from native influences. Her letters urged other missionary wives to be moderate in their activities outside the home, for the preservation of their health, and to be vigilant in their protection of their children. She described how easily her sons could watch religious processions outside and then, in their words, start “playing *worship idols*.”<sup>196</sup>

Her husband and editor took the opportunity to discuss the extent to which missionary wives should expect to engage in efforts among the surrounding

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efforts to spread Western culture, but education was valuable to the extent that it served these goals by teaching people to read the Bible and training up native preachers (and pastors' wives). Ann White, “Counting the Cost of Faith: America's Early Female Missionaries,” *Church History* 57:1 (March 1988): 22; see also Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 79-80. The first cohort of missionary wives in Hawaii had felt tension between the burden of their domestic duties and their desire to contribute to the mission through teaching. For a collective biography of the first missionary wives see Mary Zwiep, *Pilgrim Path: The First Company of Women Missionaries to Hawaii* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); and for a critical appraisal of women's roles in the Hawaiian mission, see Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty*.

<sup>196</sup> H.G.O. Dwight, *Memoir of Mrs. Elizabeth B. Dwight, including an account of the Plague of 1837. With a sketch of the life of Mrs. Judith S. Grant, Missionary to Persia* (New York: M.W. Dodd, 1840), 162.

population. He and his fellow missionaries believed that “in the great majority of cases, it must be expected that her principal, direct efforts will be made in her own household.” And though schools were commonly assumed to be the responsibility of female missionaries, he thought it necessary to declare that a wife “may have some sort of a general supervision over schools, but it must not be supposed to be her duty to engage for any length of time personally in the instruction of schools.” Some married women had done it, “but these are rare exceptions, and are not to be regarded as forming a rule.” To prove his point he asked of wives and mothers back in the U.S., “what are the difficulties in the way of their devoting from three to six hours a day to teaching a school?” He added a list of challenges posed by the foreign environment of a missionary family. The climate usually affected their health and limited their exertions, the “filthiness, stupidity and dishonesty of domestics” posed additional challenges to their household labor, and of course the education of their children became a full-time occupation without anyone else around to help. He allowed that there still might be occasional opportunities for a wife to engage the women around her, but “these efforts must be irregular and often interrupted, and she must for the most part be content to be a *keeper at home*.”<sup>197</sup>

The alternative, a policy advocated by Rufus Anderson, was to send children back to the United States or England for education and rearing in a Christian culture. But memoirs like that of Sarah Davis Comstock illustrated the difficulty of such a

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<sup>197</sup> Dwight, *Memoir of Elizabeth Dwight*, 157-159 (italics in original). The phrase “keeper at home” refers to the Apostle Paul's injunction in Titus 2:5 that Christian women be “discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands,” etc. (KJV)

choice. She called the separation from her children “the greatest cross the Missionary is called to bear.” As they boarded a ship to leave Burma, her colleague described her “gazing upon their upturned faces for a little time,” as “she impressed upon their cheeks a mother's last kiss, and turning around, raised her hands, uttering in broken accents, 'This I do for Christ! this I do for the heathen!'" After their departure she wrote to her parents, “Sometimes still the thought that MY CHILDREN, yes, my *own* precious children, are forever riven from a mother's embrace, that these eyes will never more behold, that these lips will never more salute my own offspring, comes to my heart with such a withering, blighting influence, as almost to overwhelm me...” The memoir included excerpts from letters to her children as well, further convincing readers of the painfulness of her situation.<sup>198</sup>

By the 1830s, many missions leaders had come to believe that motherhood on the mission field was a full-time job, just as many American and British evangelicals understood it to be so back home. At the same time, Anglo-Americans were beginning to conceptualize of teaching as a full-time profession. These changes led organizations to send single women to work as teachers in the mission field. The memoir of Myra Wood Allen, who married an American Board missionary to Bombay in 1827, reflected the transition underway within the Anglo-American missionary

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<sup>198</sup> Mrs. A.M. Edmond, *Memoir of Mrs. Sarah D. Comstock, Missionary to Arracan* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1854), 184, 190, 206. While early advocates had seen the children of missionaries as potential laborers, Anderson emphasized the policy (adopted by the ABCFM as well as British societies) of having missionaries' children sent back to the U.S. for education. He favored leaving children with their parents until the age of ten or twelve, giving missionaries time to model Christian parenting to natives but then freeing them for greater focus on evangelism. Anderson, “Introductory Essay,” *Memoir of Mary Ellis*, xvii-xviii.

community. The Massachusetts Sabbath School Union published Myra's memoir and linked her role as an instructor of children in the U.S. with her purpose on the mission field. The editor emphasized her early work in Sabbath schools and described how, shortly after her marriage, Myra gathered the young people in her family's neighborhood to share some parting advice. "With the little group gathered around her, and a heart overflowing with benevolent desires for their salvation, she invited them to Jesus. She drew a contrast between their condition and that of the degraded heathen, and besought them to seek shelter for their souls beneath the cross of Christ," reportedly bringing many of her hearers to tears as they contemplated her upcoming departure.<sup>199</sup>

The Allens and another missionary couple, the Stones, were accompanied by the American Board's first single female agent, Cynthia Farrar, who was appointed specifically to help run the decentralized system of schools the mission had already developed in Bombay. Cynthia and Myra began their time in India with a visit to the schools under the direction of Mary Ann Cooke Wilson, an Englishwoman who had originally come to India single specifically for the purpose of establishing schools for girls. They observed "female scholars" at work spinning and knitting, as well as several classes of children of various ages reading in their native language. Mrs. Wilson appeared "to delight in her work," and served as "an example worthy of

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<sup>199</sup> Cyrus Mann, *Memoir of Mrs. Myra W. Allen*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, 1834), 88. Missionaries' concerns for the proper raising of their children coincided with the growing tendency in New England to see children as "innocents needing protection and nurture rather than as miniature adults needing discipline." Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 74.

imitation.” She reportedly had “met with much opposition at first, but persevered and overcame.”<sup>200</sup>

Soon Myra and Cynthia were helping a couple of other missionary wives oversee the twelve girls' schools in Bombay, most of which were taught by native women trained for the purpose. She explained in her letters home that maintaining the female schools involved “no small care and anxiety. To please the children and their parents, and keep in what appears to be the line of duty, is often found too hard to accomplish. The Hindoos do not value learning much for their daughters, it is therefore difficult to persuade them to allow their attendance at school for a sufficient length of time to obtain any real benefit.” The missionaries resorted to bribery to get compliance from their students, or even to get their parents to let them come to school. As a superintendent, Myra did not spend all of her time in the schools, but oversaw the management of the teachers and then spent the rest of her time teaching girls how to sew in her home, where she gave religious instruction informally. One of the other

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<sup>200</sup> Mann, *Memoir of Myra Allen*, 139. Farrar was a cousin of Rev. Cyrus Stone and was appointed by Anderson's predecessor, Jeremiah Evarts. “Prominent British residents of Bombay, including the governor, encouraged and supported this American missionary. Archdeacon, later Bishop, Carr gave Miss Farrar funds raised by an English society for the education of girls. She established and directed some schools for that society as well as for the mission.” Beaver, *Women in World Mission*, 68-69. When missions boards sponsored single women during the antebellum period, they expected them to live with a missionary family as a member of their household. The Baptist Board did this for the first time with Charlotte White in 1815, but only a handful of single women went abroad before the 1840s. Some women considered going in this way but found missionaries to marry instead. For example, Sarah Davis was a teacher who presented herself as a candidate to the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions in 1832. Grover Comstock applied at the same time and they were both appointed to Burma. He asked her to go as his wife and they married shortly before sailing in 1834. Edmond, *Memoir of Sarah Comstock*.

missionaries, “in speaking with a native recently, was told by him that he was never acquainted with a native female who could read. When informed that twenty or more in our female schools could read the scriptures intelligibly, he said he had heard something of their learning here in Bombay, but it was quite a new thing to him.” These reports demonstrated that even a small degree of success was to be considered a victory against what the editor labeled “the degrading influence of the systems of superstition and idolatry which prevail in India.” Perceived native resistance to the education of females made this work seem all the more important.<sup>201</sup>

The increasing value placed on female teaching, at least among missionaries and female supporters, led to the formation in Britain of the first female-led missions organization, which was created for the purpose of recruiting single female teachers for the education of native women. The “Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East” was established following an “Appeal to Christian Ladies in Behalf of Christian Education in China and Adjacent Countries” from David Abeel, an American Board missionary who urged the provision of Christian education for Chinese women. In 1833, Abeel left China temporarily due to health issues and spent several months in London, where he encountered some enthusiastic female supporters of missions. He, like Ann Judson, saw education as the best avenue for female activity and persuaded them to organize an association, “since the existing societies were so reluctant to move” in the interest of female education. Theodosia Barker, who would eventually become William Dean's second wife, left England for China under the sponsorship of this society. An American memoir published in 1851 celebrated

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<sup>201</sup> Mann, *Memoir of Myra Allen*, 168, 214, 221, 240. The memoir also includes a long excerpt from Myra's journal describing the management of a school. (209)

her intellect as well as her piety (and her decision to leave the Church of England and be baptized in Bangkok). She had inherited a “cultivated mind and studious habits” from her father, a Cambridge graduate, and spent her teen years excelling at a boarding school before receiving her appointment to China at the age of just seventeen. She met Dean, the widowed American Baptist, upon arriving in Asia and married him two months later, giving up her appointment with the Female Society. She first started a boarding school for Chinese boys in Bangkok, and gradually she was able to acquire a few female students as well. Natives mounted strong opposition to the education of girls, but eventually “their prejudices were softened by seeing the few, who were brought under instruction, spending a part of their time in needle-work, and cultivating habits of industry and propriety. Still,” Theodosia opined, “the nations of the East must undergo a great change of views in relation to comparative rank in society held by their wives and daughters, before they can feel any great interest in female education.” In 1842 the Deans moved to Hong Kong, where they again established schools before Theodosia's death a few months later.<sup>202</sup>

But while some missionaries and promoters of the movement celebrated the contributions of women as teachers as well as wives, they were less confident about publicizing the ways in which women engaged in missionary work more broadly.

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<sup>202</sup> Beaver, *Women in World Mission*, 89; Church, *Life of Theodosia Dean*, 5, 129-130. Energized by his reception in London, Abeel then went to New York where he met Sarah Doremus, who eventually founded the Woman's Union Missionary Society of America in 1860. Along the same lines, the Church of Scotland's Ladies' Association for Foreign Missions was created in 1837 and the Indian Female Normal School Society, later named the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, in 1852. Later in the nineteenth century the number of women's societies in America would greatly outnumber those in Europe. Beaver, *Women in World Mission*, 110.



Many American Baptists were open to a broader definition of “missionary wife” than American Board leaders like Rufus Anderson were, and after Ann Judson pioneered a relatively public role for women as writers and assistant evangelists as well as teachers, some of the Baptist women who followed in her footsteps took their evangelistic activities even further. Translation work and other kinds of writing were acceptable as the work of an “assistant missionary,” if a wife had time to pursue it—Adoniram Judson's second and third wives, Sarah Hall Boardman and Emily Chubbock, were both celebrated for their literary activities (and Emily Chubbock was already a published author, under the name of Fanny Forester, when she became Adoniram's third wife). But Sarah Boardman also spent several years as an itinerant evangelist preaching to mixed audiences among the tribal Karens after her first husband, George Boardman, died in the Burmese jungle. When Emily Chubbock Judson memorialized her in the 1840s, she took pains to emphasize the fact that “Mrs. Boardman had always been peculiarly domestic in her character and habits,” finding satisfaction in “administering to her husband's happiness, or unfolding the budding intellects of her children.” It was with great hesitancy and “singular modesty” that she engaged in her late husband's work until his replacement was ready. Emily compared Sarah to the biblical female heroes Miriam and Anna, “not like the wild-eyed priestess of Apollo,” but “meek, and sometimes tearful, speaking in low, gentle accents, and with a manner sweetly persuasive.” In fact, “such was her modest manner” of preaching, even among crowds of two or three hundred, “that even the most fastidious were pleased,” including a high-ranking observer from the Church of England.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Fanny Forester, *Memoir of Sarah B. Judson, Member of the American Mission to Burmah* (New York: L. Colby, 1848), 167-171. Also published as *Missionary Biography: The Memoir of Sarah B. Judson, member of the American Mission to*

Many other Baptist women followed Ann Judson to Burma and actively participated in the work of missionary husbands or even itinerated as single evangelists, but they usually were not memorialized to the same extent. Sarah Cummings and Eleanor Macomber both went to Burma in the 1830s as single women and worked as evangelists to the Karen tribes in villages where no mission stations had been established. The memoir of Sarah Cummings was originally written in Burmese by a convert, Moungh Shway Goon, who had tutored her in the language. It was not published in English until one of her relatives had it translated and printed in 1891. Eleanor Macomber's journey to a remote Karen village was recounted only in a Virginia Baptist magazine in 1856. She had visited Richmond for the sake of her health in 1836, having spent years already working among American Indians, and then left for Burma under the Baptist board. The Richmond editor of the *The American Baptist Memorial* described her "strength" and "irresistable energy in that calm determination which burned in her heart," as "more than moral energy, for 'the love of Christ constrained her.'" He also quoted Adoniram Judson's account of her success at converting an influential family in the remote village where he later conducted the official organization of a church among her converts. But these women's stories did not receive the same kind of widespread publicity as those of their more conventional

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*Burmah*, by Fanny Forester, with an introductory notice by Edward Bean Underhill (London: Aylott & Jones, 1848). The British introduction presented a short history of Emily Chubbock, who had "for some years held a high place amid the literary circles of America," and her marriage to Judson after he recruited her to write the memoir of his second wife. Dana Robert claims that Ann Judson's life "provided a powerful model for the successive Baptist missionary wives. Although Ann's own mission theory made teaching women and girls a personal priority, the reality was that she and her husband were not with other missionaries most of the time and found themselves functioning as a team." "Evangelist or Homemaker?" 119.

(and mostly married) counterparts during the antebellum period. Though some Baptist ministers and missionaries had encouraged their activities, most evangelicals were squeamish about the idea of women teaching and evangelizing mixed audiences, especially unmarried women. After the controversy that had already emerged over the roles of women as wives, assistants, teachers, and martyrs, most missions promoters hesitated to publicize the itinerant preaching of single women in the jungles of Burma.<sup>204</sup>

Harriet Newell and Ann Judson were the most famous women of Anglo-American foreign missions in the first half of the nineteenth century, but they were just two of many who became representatives of a transatlantic enterprise, thanks to the print culture of Anglo-American evangelicalism. In canonizing a handful of Protestant female saints, missionaries and clergy appealed to some of the broadest evangelical characteristics. The legacy of these women is suggested by other publications in the nineteenth century, such as didactic collective biographies of exemplary women. A book called *Heavenly Sisters; or Biographical Sketches of the Lives of Thirty Eminently Pious Females* was published in London in 1820 by

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<sup>204</sup> *Mission to Burma: A Memoir of Miss Sarah Cummings by Moungh Shway Goon: Together with Some Related Matters Set in Order by Ephraim Chamberlain Cummings* (Privately Printed, 1892), American Baptist Historical Society, P.B. 122 no. 28; Rev. B. Manly, Jr., ed., "Miss Eleanor Macomber," *The American Baptist Memorial, A Statistical, Biographical, and Historical Magazine* Vol. 15 (Richmond, 1856): 7-10. When ministers' wives like Elizabeth Finney took on the role of evangelistic partner and public speaker in the U.S. and Britain, they met with resistance from some Calvinistic evangelicals, but their status as ministers' wives actually gave them exceptional latitude in the eyes of many. Leonard I. Sweet, *The Minister's Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelicalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), ch. 7.

Reverend T. Sharp. It included mostly prominent Protestant women in European history, like the Queen of Navarre and the Countess of Huntingdon, but it concluded with the life of Harriet Newell. An American version appeared in 1822 with a couple of other additions. Many of these women, including Harriet Newell, also appeared in *Memoirs of Eminent Female Writers of All Ages and Countries* by Anna Maria Lee, published in Philadelphia in 1827. Later Daniel Clarke Eddy's biographical sketches of specifically American missionary wives, *Heroines of the Missionary Enterprise*, was published in London as well as Boston in 1850. A British collection called *Memoirs of Christian Females*, published several times in the 1840s and 1850s, included Ann Judson and Harriet Winslow alongside Mary Ellis and other women from Great Britain and America. Numerous other books appeared throughout the century that presented American and British missionary wives as international celebrities.

But looking at the full range of the female missionary memoir genre reveals a vibrant debate among evangelicals at home and abroad who shared a variety of perspectives on the roles of women in foreign missions. The editors and publishers of these memoirs argued that women were important to the success of missions, but their opinions on how exactly women should contribute often differed, and the models presented by Harriet Newell and Ann Judson prompted varying responses. By the late nineteenth century, women would occupy a disproportionate part of the foreign missions force from Britain and America, largely because American and British women formed their own organizations to sponsor female missionaries independent of the denominational boards. They were able to do so because earlier leaders and promoters had publicly endorsed various roles for women on the mission field, and

women supporters had responded to their publications with enthusiasm. The controversies provided additional motivation for women to take control of their own participation in the work of global missions.

## Chapter 6

### MISSIONARY MEMOIRS AND THE PROMOTION OF EVANGELICAL WOMANHOOD

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many Anglo-American evangelicals saw foreign missions as a natural extension of their efforts to reach the unconverted in their own societies, and possibly even a way to revitalize those efforts at home. Melville Horne, the Sierra Leone chaplain, argued in his *Letters on Missions* that foreign efforts would revive the state of religion both at home and in other societies. Thomas Chalmers, a leader among evangelicals in the Church of Scotland, envisioned missions at home and among colonists and “heathens” throughout the British empire as contributing to a reawakening of Scottish society. Many supporters of “missionary philanthropy” in England viewed efforts to save Indian women from infanticide and *sati* as of a piece with efforts to Christianize and reform the working classes at home, part of a “global civilising project” that gave definition and purpose to the growing middle class. And in the United States, early promoters of foreign missions saw the cause as one that could unite New England Protestants who were plagued by theological and denominational conflicts.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Hilary M. Carey, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c. 1801-1908* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 215; Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850: The 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); John A. Andrew III, *Rebuilding the Christian Commonwealth: New England Congregationalists & Foreign Missions, 1800-1830* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1976).

The proliferation of female missionary memoirs in the early republic hints at some additional concerns that evangelical Americans shared about the culture of their new nation, especially regarding the roles of women. Memoirs of famous missionary women like Ann Judson were the most popular titles within a larger genre of pious memoirs that included unknown women as well. The overall increase in published female memoirs, relative to male biographies, represented “the biggest change in religious biography that appeared in the nineteenth century.” In the 1810s and 1820s, as conversion narratives and pious biographies proliferated as books and as pieces within religious magazines, women of all ages could see publication of a memoir, missionary or otherwise, as a potential way for their voices to be heard. Such biographical accounts were published posthumously, to avoid the problem of pride, but women who read these narratives could record their own experiences in diaries and letters, according to the established conventions, with the hope of someday being similarly immortalized.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Scott E. Casper, *Constructing American Lives: Biography & Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 115; Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 112-113; Mary Kupiec Cayton, “Canonizing Harriet Newell: Women, the Evangelical Press, and the Foreign Mission Movement in New England, 1800-1840,” in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, ed. Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 77-78. For a more unusual eighteenth-century precedent, see Catherine A. Brekus, *Sarah Osborn's World: The Rise of Evangelical Christianity in Early America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2013). By the nineteenth century, men and women alike had come to see writing of one sort or another as a way of extending revivalism and using their own influence to stem the tide of unorthodox teachings (or gather their own following). But evangelical men could publish sermons, journals of missionary tours, scientific works, and other books or pamphlets of religious importance, and were less likely to leave behind the personal spiritual

In addition to articulating the roles that women could serve within foreign missions, missionary memoirs appealed to American readers by addressing a number of anxieties that many evangelicals shared in the early republic. Pious memoirs provided young American women with role models that evangelicals could respect and admire. They did so at a time when female biographies were relatively scarce and a perceived need for biographies was growing. Whereas in the eighteenth century, character had been equated with reputation and defined by public actions, by the 1820s Americans had come to see personal character as “a cluster of characteristics that could be defined, described, and presumably inculcated,” including private habits of industry, temperance, and piety that could best be demonstrated through biographies. Male biographies generally outnumbered those with female subjects, but some authors argued that girls were more susceptible to such influences than boys were, and thus needed biographical models even more. At the same time, evangelicals expressed concern about the kinds of reading material that were increasingly available to young people, especially novels. Most novels told stories of romance and seduction, and they provoked fears that young female readers would be tempted to follow their own flights of fancy. Conservative critics even equated the very act of engrossed reading itself with a form of seduction, and they worried that reading sensational fiction would encourage women to abandon patriarchal roles and values. For example, Samuel Miller, co-founder of the New York Missionary Society, accused novels of attacking conventional morals and social hierarchies, and he

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narratives that made up a significant portion of female missionary memoirs. See also Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), ch. 5.



attributed their influence to things like suicide, adultery, and other self-indulgent acts. The founders of the American Tract Society, created in 1825, were worried about the spread of “infidel” and “popish” publications, but they too saw novels as the most dangerous influence, likening them to “intoxicants, worse than rum” that would produce “mental dissipation.” While many evangelicals condemned the influence of novels on men as well as women, most cultural critics expressed a greater degree of anxiety about their potential effects on female readers. Certain persistent stereotypes “ranked women's reasoning and analytical capabilities lesser than men's,” causing their adherents to fear that “women who indulged in fiction might become captive to the novel's flights of fancy.” Whereas genres like history, biography, and travel narratives could supplement devotional literature as tools for “moral improvement,” fiction could supposedly destroy a woman's ability to discern between duty and self-interest.<sup>207</sup>

But while the American Tract Society began emulating British tract societies by trying to get compelling, accessible, didactic tracts into the hands of mostly lower-

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<sup>207</sup> Casper, *Constructing American Lives: Biography & Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, 7, 85, 109; Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 43-47; David Paul Nord, “Religious Reading and Readers in Antebellum America,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 15:2 (Summer 1995): 248; Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 157-158. Novels caused great consternation in Britain as well, where novel-reading was attributed to young, uneducated, female audiences. But there anxiety about female readers was not limited to fiction since “almost all genres, however apparently harmless, could be read rebelliously and resistingly rather than compliantly.” Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750-1835: A dangerous recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 196, 43; Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader: 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

class readers, the editors of missionary memoirs were producing a different weapon for the culture war—one that would appeal to young women who had been religiously trained but might be vulnerable to less virtuous influences from the popular press. Religious memoirs not only provided evangelically acceptable role models, but those of missionary women were especially exciting, combining the adventures of travel narratives with spiritual journeys. They told stories of heroic women who were neither political in their public activism nor passive in their femininity, rendering them appealing to ambitious young women yet not too threatening to mainstream patriarchal values. Their dramatic stories of pious life and death, taking young American women who committed to the foreign missions movement as their subjects, provided competition for worrisome fiction and among a segment of the population considered to be especially vulnerable. At the same time, the popularity of missionary memoirs became yet another piece of evidence for the importance of foreign missions.<sup>208</sup>

### **The Power of Reading**

Not only did missionary memoirs serve as competition for sentimental novels and other forms of enticing fiction, but they provided an opportunity for evangelicals to promote within their pages the kinds of reading they wanted to encourage. Editors

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<sup>208</sup> After promoting the Sunday school movement to increase literacy among poor youth, Hannah More had founded Cheap Repository Tracts in the 1790s to imitate popular literature, combining conservative moral, religious, and political doctrine in an entertaining package for the working classes. Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 68-75. Other female biographies, in contrast to those of missionary women, presented a stark dichotomy between public authority and passive, spiritual femininity, through stories of European queens or memoirs of obscure pious women. Casper, *Constructing American Lives*, 112.

counted on the idea that their readers would aspire to emulate the accomplishments of the women whose spirituality they admired or whose adventures they envied. Most of the subjects of missionary memoirs were young women from the northeastern United States whose religious and intellectual experiences were portrayed as having prepared them to respond literally and independently to the appeals of missionary literature. The memoir of Ann Hasseltine Judson, the first woman to join an American overseas mission, emphasizes how integral the act of reading was to her spiritual life—especially the reading of canonical Anglo-American Protestant texts. The first recorded event to make her aware of her need for conversion—or as she put it, to disturb her “sleep of death”—was an encounter as a teenager with Hannah More's *Strictures on Female Education*. The phrase “She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth” was “written in italics, with marks of admiration; and they struck me to the heart.” A few months later, she picked up the classic *Pilgrim's Progress* and found herself engaged in the story and its promise of paradise as a reward for righteous living. She was impressed that “Christian, because he adhered to the narrow path, was carried safely through all his trials, and at last admitted into heaven.” So Ann resolved to focus her attention on matters of piety and seek her own conversion experience. At an aunt's house she encountered an evangelical magazine, which aroused such emotion that she “burst into tears.” After this experience she sought advice from the preceptor, who gave her more religious magazines containing conversion narratives. Ann found emotional comfort in the accounts of “the conviction and conversion of some, who, I perceived, had once felt as I now felt.”<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> James D. Knowles, ed., *Memoir of Ann H. Judson, late missionary to Burmah, including a history of the American Baptist Mission in the Burman Empire* (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1845), 14-15, 17-18.

But Ann still struggled with conversion from an intellectual standpoint—she had a difficult time reconciling herself to the Calvinistic view she had been raised with, a portrayal of God as a judge who condemns those who have not received his grace. With this question she found help from an eighteenth-century treatise by New Englander Joseph Bellamy. His *True Religion*, a defense of orthodox Calvinism, led her to understand God's condemnation of the unconverted as an expression of justice and “regard to the good of beings in general.” She also studied Scripture with the help of older English writers as well as newer American works. Her ever increasing taste for religious literature became evidence itself of a conversion: “I had sweet communion with the blessed God, from day to day; my heart was drawn out in love to Christians of whatever denomination; the sacred Scriptures were sweet to my taste; and such was my thirst for religious knowledge, that I frequently spent a great part of the night in reading religious books.” The biographies of eighteenth-century heroes like David Brainerd, Samuel Hopkins, and Susanna Anthony supplied her with “edification and happiness.” These biographies and memoirs facilitated her transition from a concern for her own soul to a focus on her role in the world around her. She recorded that the examples of these sacrificial individuals tended to “humble me, and quicken my spiritual life,” and increase her desire to “be as much engaged in the service of God” as those saints were. Ultimately they provoked a concern for the plight of Jews, “the church at large, the heathen world, and the African slaves.” While works of theology had aided in her conversion, biographies of early evangelical heroes helped Ann to think about her role as a Christian in the world beyond her own community.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Knowles, *Memoir of Ann Judson*, 19-20, 34, 36. This aspect of Ann's experience,

The memoirs of young women who followed in Ann Judson's footsteps also emphasized the importance of reading in the development of personal piety and worldviews. Many attached spiritual importance to the reading of non-religious as well as religious books, as long as they were edifying in some way. The Bible and classics of theology remained paramount, but studying a range of subjects could be a means of improving oneself, and could be nearly as transformational as conversion itself. Mary Hawes Van Lennep, the daughter of minister Joel Hawes, took advantage of opportunities to continue learning while she stayed with a family in New Haven following her graduation from Hartford Female Seminary. She read “every morning a chapter to Mrs. Fitch in the French Testament, which I find very improving, for she is an excellent scholar in that language. We sew during the morning, when generally someone reads. At half past eleven, we go to the laboratory, where the chemical lectures are delivered.” According to her mother, she also “attended the Philosophical Lectures, and a valuable course on Ancient History; and also some shorter courses, on other subjects.” She and Mrs. Fitch read Shakespeare and Milton together, and critiqued popular new biographies like Marshall's *Life of Washington*. After a few months being mentored by Mrs. Fitch, she told her father she had “thought more this winter than I ever did before in my whole life. I have read more than ever before. I have already begun to think what I shall do this summer, and I hope some plans I have made with regard to reading, may be put into execution.” She felt that her time there

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and other examples discussed below, challenge Scott Casper's claim that missionary biographies, in depicting an active model of evangelical womanhood, did not go as far as ordinary pious memoirs in promoting the power of the genre. Casper, *Constructing American Lives*, 119.

had made her into such a different person, she was “almost disposed to doubt my own personal identity, so different am I now.” If she ever became something “of any use in the world,” it would be owing to Mrs. Fitch, in addition to her own parents, because they encouraged her to read.<sup>211</sup>

To many evangelicals, the way a Christian read was almost as important as what she read, since the “word of God required study, reflection, and prayer” in order to have the most profound effect. Mary Hawes Van Lennep's memoir described how her parents trained her to be an intensive reader—they read the Bible to her on a daily basis for years, over and over, so that she knew the stories and poetry by heart. She learned to internalize theological works, as indicated by a journal entry she wrote as an adolescent: her own version of a list of resolutions by Jonathan Edwards, such as “never to lose one moment of time, but spend it in the most profitable way I can,” and “to think much on all occasions of my dying,” as well as “find out fit objects of my charity.” Fidelity Fiske, writing in the 1850s at the age of thirty-six, reflected on her childhood as one of beneficially intensive reading. She encouraged her niece “not so much to have read many books as to have read a few well. I cannot tell you how much I value having read all my father's books many times when a child.” This included works he brought home from a “Social Library” of which he was a member. While still young, Fidelity read books on Calvinist theology, like Mather's *Magnalia*

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<sup>211</sup> *Memoir of Mrs. Mary E. Van Lennep, only daughter of the Rev. Joel Hawes, D.D., and wife of the Rev. Henry J. Van Lennep, Missionary in Turkey, by her mother* (New York: Anson D.F. Randolph, 1860), 32, 37-39.

and Dwight's *Theology*, in addition to the Bible of course, which her father taught her to value above all the others.<sup>212</sup>

Other memoirs also talked about the importance of serious reading—choosing beneficial material, reading it thoroughly and critically, and internalizing its messages. Henrietta Jackson Hamlin read theology in her spare time—specifically “such books as Hopkins' System of Divinity, Edwards on the Affections, Stuart's, Reid's and Brown's Intellectual Philosophy, the works of Dick and Isaac Taylor.” Her biographer took the opportunity to remind readers that avoiding detrimental books was also important, claiming that Henrietta “had no taste for the ephemeral productions of the day,” and had never “wasted an hour in perusing light, trashy literature.” Just as informative or inspiring literature had the potential to facilitate positive transformations, works of sentimental or licentious fiction were dangerous in the minds of most Protestant leaders for their tendency to cultivate the wrong kinds of tastes and encourage less rational habits of thinking. Poetry and classic literature could be beneficial, though—Henrietta loved Byron and Wordsworth in particular. Shortly before entering the mission field, she told her best friend that “‘Saturday Evening' and 'Enthusiasm' are come to be my favorite books. 'Abercrombie' I read some. I read 'Galt's Life of Byron' not long since, and it made me feel sad enough. Surely he was 'poor, unhappy Byron.'” And Sarah Huntington Smith read fiction, but

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<sup>212</sup> As Nord says, to Protestant publishers the “power of religious reading lay not in a Pentecostal outpouring of the spirit but in careful, studious, intensive reading.” David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 114, 123; Hawes, *Memoir of Mary Van Lennep*, 16, 78; D. T. Fiske, *Faith Working by Love: As Exemplified in the life of Fidelia Fiske* (Boston: Congregational Sabbath School and Publishing Society, 1868), 25.

with a critical eye—she praised the works of Jane Taylor for being “so natural and simple,” not giving “such importance to personal beauty, in her heroines,” as did Mrs. Sherwood and other novelists.<sup>213</sup>

Sarah Huntington Smith was one of many who became so engaged with the literary world as to produce their own work. She wrote a number of articles for religious periodicals, such as an essay in the *Religious Messenger* on the subject of fast days for colleges. She argued that a day for fasting and prayer was justified because of “the neglect of the Bible as a Class book, in the majority of our colleges,” because of “the misimprovement of those superior advantages by many who enjoy them,” and because of “the diversity of theological opinions which divide and weaken the strength of the true Israel of God.” Sarah Hall Boardman Judson was an amateur poet who saw writing as a way to “be useful in the position Providence has placed me.” After becoming interested in missions, she wrote poems to elicit sympathy for

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<sup>213</sup> Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 116-118; Margarette Woods Lawrence, *Light on the Dark River; or, Memorials of Mrs. Henrietta A.L. Hamlin, Missionary in Turkey*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1865), 42, 65, 90; Edward W. Hooker, *Memoir of Mrs. Sarah Lanman Smith, late of the mission in Syria, under the direction of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: Perkins & Marvin, 1840), 70. Other women also defended their ability to read fiction on the basis of “mental cultivation” that they had already pursued through the reading of rational literature. Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, 163. Also, novels that offered wholesome characters and positive messages gradually contributed to the widespread acceptance of the genre. Patricia R. Hill discusses several novels in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries depicting the “romance of missions” with female subjects who joined or supported foreign missions. *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), ch. 1. For more on the changes in nineteenth-century reading habits, see Barbara Sicherman, *Well-Read Lives: How Reading Inspired a Generation of American Women* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).



the unsaved both at home and abroad, as well as pieces to honor fallen missionaries and converts. Her works were published in the *Christian Watchman* and the *Baptist Magazine* for several years before she entered the mission field herself. And of course Sarah's biographer, Emily Chubbock, was well known as the author Fanny Forester before she became the third Mrs. Judson following Sarah's death. The memoirs of these women praised their literary achievements as avenues for service as well as preparation for missionary work.<sup>214</sup>

Within this culture of reading—depicted as critical, intensive, but varied reading—the subjects of memoirs encountered literature specifically about missions. They were prepared to read missionary literature of many forms—periodicals and polemics as well as missionary memoirs—in the same fashion. Mary Hawes Van Lennep was still young when, according to her mother, she saw an account of the “Flat-head Indians... in one of the public prints,” which “had so wrought upon her sympathies, as to lead her to form the purpose of one day going to instruct them herself.” Sarah Hall Boardman Judson read a biography of Samuel Mills, which aroused her interest in missions and inspired her to hope “that I, too, could suffer privations, hardships, and discouragements, and even find a watery grave, for the sake of bearing the news of salvation to the poor heathen!” And Myra Wood Allen credited the autobiography of Harriet Newell with sparking her whole spiritual journey when she read it at age thirteen. She “admired her amiable and engaging disposition, and was affected with her early piety... I believed she was happy, and almost wished

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<sup>214</sup> Hooker, *Memoir of Sarah Smith*, 76; Fanny Forester, *Missionary Biography: The Memoir of Sarah B. Judson, member of the American Mission to Burmah* (London: Aylott & Jones, 1848), 29.

myself possessed of that which could render her so cheerful amidst so many trying scenes.” Reading Harriet's memoir was the first step in a spiritual awakening that would culminate in Myra's conversion and later commitment to missions.<sup>215</sup>

Many of the women sought out reading material about missions after the enterprise was brought to their attention by family members or fund-raising agents, but the promotional literature was integral to their consideration of the subject. Sarah Huntington Smith first became interested in missions when she heard Elnathan Gridley, a visiting agent of the ABCFM, preach about his plans to go to Palestine. Almost two years later she wrote to her sister that she was again thinking about missions, not yet with a desire to go to the “heathen” herself, but with a conviction that she should be supporting efforts on their behalf. She began subscribing to the *Missionary Herald*, which she found “very interesting. Do you not think the missionary cause is constantly gaining ground? What a privilege to be engaged in it!” After becoming interested in a future on the mission field, Harriet Lathrop Winslow pursued training in the Beecher household in Litchfield, Connecticut, in the form of “reading that might promote her future usefulness.” Reading William Ward's description of Hinduism in India caused her to respond with shock and horror: “The enormities of these wretched creatures exceed all that I had imagined. How can it be that christians have slumbered so long, when there is such exceeding depravity in the world?” She assumed that most Christians must not have read information about the non-Christian world, or else they would be more anxious to engage in foreign

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<sup>215</sup> Hawes, *Memoir of Mary Van Lennep*, 29; Forester, *Memoir of Sarah Judson*, 11; Cyrus Mann, *Memoir of Mrs. Myra W. Allen*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, 1834), 10.

evangelism. Those who saw the sacrifices of missionary life as too great “cannot know the state of the heathen, they cannot consider the worth of souls. It would seem that the stoutest heart must melt in reading the accounts of Ward.” Anna Ward Morrison watched an aunt leave for Syria while in her early twenties, and then she read the memoirs of Harriet Newell and Ann Judson, which planted the seeds for her own commitment to missions. Fidelia Fiske also had a relative leave for the mission field—her uncle, Pliny Fiske, left for Palestine when she was young. Afterward she read biographies of Thomas Spencer and Henry Martyn and became an avid reader of the *Missionary Herald*, often reading the new issues aloud to her mother. She even dug up old volumes of the “Herald” as well as the *Panoplist*. Martha Lovell Hamlin became interested in foreign missions while she was working in a Sabbath school, where the superintendent loaned her all of his books on missions as well as many years' worth of the *Missionary Herald*. This reading helped her decide to volunteer her services to the ABCFM.<sup>216</sup>

Mary Hawes Van Lennep, whose father, Joel Hawes, was a minister and active promoter of the American Board, had long been acquainted with the Board's work when she began thinking about joining the foreign mission. She looked to “derive much benefit” from the memoir of Sarah Huntington Smith, as she lamented the need

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<sup>216</sup> Hooker, *Memoir of Sarah Smith*, 106-108; Miron Winslow, *Memoir of Mrs. Harriet L. Winslow, Thirteen Years a Member of the American Mission in Ceylon* (New York: American Tract Society, 1840), 102, 108; Rev. E.J. Richards, *Memoir of Mrs. Anna Maria Morrison, of the North India Mission*. (New York: M.W. Dodd, 1843), 30-31; Fiske, *Faith Working by Love*, 25-28; Mrs. M. G. Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin, late missionaries of the A.B.C.F.M. at Constantinople* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1860), 35.

for “a spirit of benevolence, that shall embrace the whole human race.” She picked up the same book again after making her commitment to the mission field, and it sent her into “an agony of tears.” She “read all about the parting from her parents, and thought about another parting that will come, with such bitter sadness.” Sarah's story had helped inspire her commitment to foreign missions, and it served a cathartic purpose in preparing her for some of the experiences to come. Like many women who read intensively and extensively in the early republic, future missionaries “made books a site for experiments in personal transformation.” Their memoirs provided other women with models of evangelical reading that could not only help them achieve conversion experiences, but also lead them to greater identification with a global enterprise to spread Protestant Christianity in anticipation of a new millennium.<sup>217</sup>

### **Education and Preparation**

Protestant leaders believed that when religious literature landed in the hands of seeking readers, it could facilitate individual conversions to Christianity as well as radical commitments to evangelical values and causes. But even explicitly evangelical works like missionary magazines had to be read in the right way and in the proper cultural context in order to have the most powerful effect on an individual. In their discussions about the backgrounds of missionary women, the ministers and writers who edited their memoirs promoted the ideal educational and cultural contexts for reading missionary literature. By emulating the circumstances and attitudes portrayed

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<sup>217</sup> Hawes, *Memoir of Mary Van Lennep*, 144, 147; Mary Kelley, “Reading Women/Women Reading: The Making of Learned Women in Antebellum America,” *Journal of American History* 83:2 (September 1996): 403.

in the memoirs, readers might be able to replicate in their own lives the spiritual experiences and transformations they read about.

A number of societal factors contributed to the intellectual and spiritual training of young pious readers. The most notable was their access to rigorous education, which the memoirs of missionary women emphasized. Ann Judson's memoir emphasized the importance of her advanced education at Bradford Academy, one of the first chartered academies to accept women as well as men. Education was important partly because it encouraged and prepared her to read both extensively and intensively, a process that facilitated an interest in missions, and it gave her writing and teaching skills that could eventually be useful on the mission field. But it was also a valuable experience because it stoked her ambitions to use her skills in a significant way. Like many of her peers, Ann became a teacher after receiving her formal education. Her memoir stated that she taught at schools in three different towns in Massachusetts, motivated by “the hope of doing them good, by endeavouring to impress their young and tender minds with divine truth, and the obligation I feel, *to try to be useful.*” Ann's Bradford classmate and future missionary colleague, Harriet Atwood (later Newell), also contemplated teaching as a way to be useful: “Can I think of such a responsible situation as that of instructing little immortals?” She echoed Ann's desire to find the most significant occupation possible, wishing to disregard her own comfort and focus on the question, “how can I be most useful in the world? I hope I shall be directed by Heaven.” Ann and Harriet's educational experience at Bradford not only prepared them intellectually for the task of teaching, it trained them to strive for scholastic achievement. The atmosphere of the academy would have taught them to view their peers as competitors as they sought academic excellence.

Friendships that were supportive outside the classroom could be intimidating or challenging in the context of academic successes and failures. Such influences among teachers and classmates at school left them feeling ambitious for important achievements as adults.<sup>218</sup>

The memoirs of women who followed Ann Hasseltine Judson and Harriet Atwood Newell into the foreign mission field depict many similarities in their backgrounds, most notably their level of education. Some received a formal education at new coeducational academies, like Bradford, that were springing up around the turn of the century to train young cultural elites for leadership. Sarah Cummings joined the Baptist mission in Burma after attending the coeducational North Yarmouth Academy in Maine, thanks partly to the encouragement of her brother, who pastored the First Congregational Church in North Yarmouth, as well as her uncle, a Baptist minister. Other young women attended one of the exclusively female seminaries that were established in the early republic, which prepared young women for republican

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<sup>218</sup> The Bradford Academy had separate but overlapping departments for men and women: the men were taught English, Latin, Greek, reading, writing, geography, arithmetic, and navigation, while the women were taught reading, writing, English, arithmetic, geography, needlework, drawing and painting. During winter only the male department convened, but women could actually attend classes for men while their own were not in session. “Between 1816 and 1846, at least twenty Bradford girls became missionaries and hundreds married ministers.” Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 15-16; Knowles, *Memoir of Ann Judson*, 33; Leonard Woods, *Memoirs of Mrs. Harriet Newell, Wife of the Rev. S. Newell, American Missionary to India* (London: John Mason, 1833), 65. On the competitive atmosphere of academies, see Martha Tomhave Blauvelt, *The Work of the Heart: Young Women and Emotion, 1780-1830* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 60-63, 152-153.

motherhood as well as social influence in civil society. Seraphina Haynes Everett of Southbridge, Massachusetts, spent her teen years alternately teaching and studying at village schools, and at nineteen she started attending the Abbott Female Seminary in Andover, where she met her future husband, a student at Andover Theological Seminary. Henrietta Jackson Hamlin was raised by two parents who were praised for their dedication to education—her father, a minister in Vermont, held a leadership position at Middlebury College and raised money for young men's education. Her mother had attended select schools and became a supporter of mission schools, and “at the age of seventy-seven her mental powers were in full activity, and she still kept up that intimate knowledge of the world's history for which she had been distinguished.” They sent Henrietta away to several different schools and academies over the years, and during winters at home she studied Latin and Greek under the supervision of her father, who had prepared many students for college. At one point she wrote a friend about her continuous studies: “I think it important that I should, if I ever expect to know anything or be anything in the world, which is not probable.” Mary Hawes Van Lennep attended the Hartford Female Seminary for about five of her teen years in the 1830s. And the memoirs of Fidelia Fiske and Lucy Lyon Lord both provided publicity for Mary Lyon's Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, founded in 1837 as the first institution to offer women something equivalent to a college education.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> *Mission to Burma: A Memoir of Miss Sarah Cummings by Moungh Shway Goon: Together with Some Related Matters Set in Order by Ephraim Chamberlain Cummings* (Privately printed, 1892), 4, ABHS P.B. 122 no. 28; Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, 23-32; Benjamin, *Missionary Sisters*, 18; Lawrence, *Memorials of Henrietta Hamlin*, 22, 39. Mary Lyon initially planned to train teachers for the American West, but after Fiske, a Mount Holyoke graduate and employee, left for Persia in 1843, Lyon began making a concerted effort to promote missions among her

By presenting education as preparation for missionary work, these memoirs promoted the importance of new academies and seminaries. At the same time, they suggested an appropriate avenue for educated ambitious women to use their training. Many Americans by the nineteenth century believed in the equality of male and female intellectual capabilities, but they were often anxious about the proper uses of education in the lives of women. Even proponents of female education found that “their universal faith in the capacity of women's intellectual abilities came into conflict with their adherence to conventional gender roles.” Missionary work validated the importance of female education without challenging the status quo. Harriet Lathrop Winslow, one of the first young women to follow Ann Judson and Harriet Newell to India, did not receive an academy education, but she cultivated her literary sensibilities in less formal ways, reading and writing on her own. Her father was clerk of the County Courts, and he often sought her assistance in transcribing. Her husband later declared that this experience had taught her to write with “uncommon ease and rapidity, a talent which she not only employed with great advantage in the business of the mission, but at all times felt at liberty to use for the enjoyment and spiritual benefit of herself and others.”<sup>220</sup>

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students. Fiske was just one of more than sixty alumnae serving in foreign missions in the 1850s, not to mention Lyon's own niece, Lucy, who went to China after working as a teacher in the academy. Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>220</sup> Lucia McMahon, *Mere Equals: The Paradox of Educated Women in the Early Republic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 5; Miron Winslow, *Memoir of Mrs. Harriet L. Winslow: Thirteen Years a Member of the American Mission in Ceylon* (New York: American Tract Society, 1840), 23, 16, 32.



The memoirs of Ann Judson and Harriet Newell also describe the role of revivals and religious communities in fostering piety and spiritual commitment, adding another level of preparation to the training of young readers and future missionaries. Ann and Harriet's involvement with a larger group of religious girls began with a revival in Bradford, where they attended school, in 1806. Several students attended "religious conferences," listened to evangelical preaching, and spent their free time reading the Scriptures. Harriet's conversion experience was reportedly initiated by this revival, as the young women around her "were anxiously inquiring, what they should do to inherit eternal life. I began to inquire, what can these things mean?" By the end of the year, Harriet "felt a strong attachment to many" of her fellow students, "particularly to those, who have been hopefully renewed." First at school and later from home, the girls wrote notes to each other discussing their spiritual thoughts and feelings, participating in the communal acts of reading and writing that characterized early evangelical culture. They reminded each other "how careful ought we to be, that religion be our principal concern. Perhaps this night our souls may be required of us—we may end our existence here, and enter the eternal world. Are we prepared to meet our Judge?" They discussed their religious readings, as Harriet asked another friend ("L.K."), "Did you ever read Doddridge's Sermons to Young People? They are very beautiful sermons. It appears strange to me why I am not more interested in the cause of Christ, when he has done so much for us; but I will form a resolution that I will give myself up entirely to him. Pray for me, that my heart may be changed." She also participated in a "Reading Society" with her friends,

where she felt “condemned” if she exhibited “gaiety and light conduct.” Positive peer pressure, intensified by revivals, was an important motivation for religious pursuits.<sup>221</sup>

Many other subjects of memoirs had participated in revivals in their churches or schools, like the one Harriet and Ann experienced at Bradford, that stoked desires for conversion and personal piety. Anna Ward Morrison of Bloomfield, New Jersey, was sixteen when her local church experienced a revival in 1830. An observer counted the new converts at over a hundred, most of whom were young, and the first of whom included Anna. She had been teaching in a Sabbath school already, but the revival marked a turning point as she became interested in pursuing the spiritual well-being of her students and fellow teachers as well as herself. Seraphina Haynes Everett was fifteen and attending school in a nearby village when a revival emerged in her hometown of Southbridge in 1837. After receiving a letter about her sister's conversion experience, Seraphina decided to go home so that she could seek a conversion during the revival as well. She left that very day and made it to the evening prayer meeting, and by the time she returned to school she believed she had begun her “Christian life.” Harriet Lathrop Winslow was twelve in 1808 when her pastor in Norwich, Connecticut, began holding extra religious meetings, and “some special interest in religion was about the same time manifested among a few middle-aged people, and some even among the youth.” Harriet first attended these meetings with her mother and then read religious books that her mother gave her. She then

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<sup>221</sup> Knowles, *Memoir of Ann Judson*, 16; Woods, *Memoirs of Harriet Newell* (1833), 3-4, 40; Leonard Woods, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Harriet Newell* (Lexington: Skillman, 1815), 2, 12, 19; Mary Kelley, “Pen and Ink Communion’: Evangelical Reading and Writing in Antebellum America,” *New England Quarterly* 84:4 (December 2011): 555-587.

voluntarily attended meetings with a group of young women, whose discussions about Scripture brought Harriet's interest in salvation to a climax. She became overwhelmed with anxiety for her soul, but then retreated and sought help from the religious literature she had been reading, and “according to the advice of Doddridge and Hawes, I privately dedicated myself to God in a written form, resolving to be his alone, and his for ever.” Fidelia Fiske was only nine when she heard news of a revival that her older sister experienced at Mary Lyon's school in Buckland. The memory stayed with her, as she later recalled having wept along with her parents upon reading a letter from Buckland about her sister's conversion. Just a couple of years later, she was a student at a “select school” in her hometown of Shelburne, Massachusetts, when she experienced a revival herself. The “Spirit of God” and a “general solemnity” inhabited her school as a number of students pursued conversions, and Fidelia joined the local Congregational Church among nineteen new converts.<sup>222</sup>

Some young women had particularly close friends who encouraged their spiritual ambitions or placed peer pressure on them to pursue certain accomplishments, also often in the context of school. Henrietta Jackson Hamlin was an especially shy girl who attended a number of different schools and reportedly had a difficult time connecting with other young people. But when she was eighteen, in 1829, she met her best friend at the Female Academy in Andover. This young woman (“M.”) persuaded Henrietta to help her start a new school, the Catskill Female Academy. But Henrietta disliked teaching and would only agree to do it for a year.

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<sup>222</sup> Richards, *Memoir of Anna Morrison*, 16-19; Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters*, 12-13; Winslow, *Memoir of Harriet Winslow*, 13, 16; Fiske, *Faith Working by Love*, 31-34.

Then she went back to her family home in the Green Mountains of Vermont, where she struggled with her lack of purpose. She met a missionary from Illinois who was disturbed by the lack of concern among New Englanders for settlers further west, and she proudly told him of her friend M., who had long harbored dreams of teaching “in the valley, among the log houses.” Henrietta felt inadequate when she considered her friend's commitment to teaching, as she told her in 1834: “When I think what an object is before you, I feel dissatisfied with my own course, and wish that I could give up everything else, in my desire to be useful.” Her friend tried to convince her to return to teaching, but Henrietta claimed that her health was impaired. An offer from future missionary Cyrus Hamlin came not much later, and she decided to accept that instead (though impaired health should certainly have been a greater cause for concern when considering the foreign field).<sup>223</sup>

Some memoirs also claimed that the deaths of loved ones, a common experience for many people in the early republic, prompted women to think more seriously about foreign missions. Sarah Huntington Smith hoped to see her youngest brother join the ministry, but instead she ended up nursing him through an illness that eventually took his life. After seeing this potential minister removed from service, she was anxious “to make this event profitable.” It now appeared to her “a more solemn thing *to live*, and a more solemn thing *to die*.” She highlighted the sense of urgency that she and other young women felt to be useful in the place of a male family member who had been intended for ministry work. Harriet Lathrop Winslow had a twenty-year-old brother who died while preparing for ministry at Yale. After his death, she

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<sup>223</sup> Lawrence, *Memorials of Henrietta Hamlin*, 63.

was even more motivated to pursue her “charitable efforts, which it must be borne in mind, she was then pursuing almost *alone*,” as her husband later claimed. Louisa Wilson Lowrie lost her mother at age seven and her father at seventeen, so her brothers took responsibility for her. But when she was twenty-one she lost her brother Eugenius, a lawyer who had also become a church elder at a young age. Not long after, Louisa wrote to a friend that she was “continually wondering at the goodness of God, who blesses me with health, when so many others, more useful and more anxious to live than I, are laid low with disease, and carried to the tomb.” Because she had been spared, she wanted “to know what it is for, that I may perform the service which the Lord has appointed for me.” Martha Lovell Hamlin also lost her mother as a child. She gained a stepmother as a teenager but then lost her father and one of her two brothers at sea. On the one hand, Martha noted her lack of family ties as justification for her to enter missionary work. “That God should choose one so unworthy as I to engage in this great enterprise seems impossible, while I remember how many thousands there are every way better qualified, of eminent piety, and greater love for souls; and then I remember that many of these have strong ties to bind them to their homes and friends, while there but few to detain me here; one after another has been removed, and but very few remain.” She also saw her losses as preparation for the trials of missionary life. She told Rufus Anderson, leader of the American Board, that she “had received many lessons in the school of affliction which had taught me that my home is not here.” These stories implied that young women who similarly lost family members could see their losses as motivation and even justification for devoting their lives to overseas missions.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Hooker, *Memoir of Sarah Smith*, 54; Winslow, *Memoir of Harriet Winslow*, 44;

Reading, conversion, schooling, revivals, activism, family deaths—the themes and messages presented in the narratives of the early lives of missionary women all fit a similar pattern, reflecting the writings of young women who followed established conventions as well as the shaping of editors who wanted the memoirs to serve their own agendas. One purpose of the memoirs' formulaic nature was to suggest that readers who imitated certain reading practices and responded similarly to analogous circumstances in their own lives might experience the same personal transformations as the heroines of the missionary cause—or that leaders who replicated these cultural conditions in their communities might produce the desired reactions within the flock. Serious reading, rigorous education, and revival experiences had prepared the young women in these stories to internalize missionary literature and actively respond to it. Domestic concerns like literature distribution, education, and revivalism were thus vital to the cause of foreign missions, and missionary memoirs could reinforce their importance to readers who admired their subjects. But in the context of missionary lives, these phenomena were cast in the service of foreign missions, the ultimate evangelical cause. Even as missionary memoirs served the interests of revivalists and cultural reformers, they suggested a hierarchy among the causes of the benevolent empire.<sup>225</sup>

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Rev. Ashbel G. Fairchild, *Memoir of Mrs. Louisa A. Lowrie, of the Northern India Mission*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: William S. Martien, 1837), 65; Benjamin, *Missionary Sisters*, 36, 38.

<sup>225</sup> The formulaic tendencies of memoirs were true of more traditional spiritual autobiographies and conversion narratives as well. “The formulaic aspect offered advantages when the narrative was used as a popular teaching and inspirational device. Though the form foreclosed much originality, it did aid in the rapid composition and extensive dissemination of narratives. ‘Inquirers’ and converts could easily grasp the essentials of the narrative and proceed to tell *their* stories in terms their hearers could

### **Missionary Marriage and Careers in Benevolence**

The subjects of most missionary memoirs were women who, following their conversion and educational experiences, sought to use their skills and demonstrate their piety by working in evangelical causes close to home. Academies and seminaries played a pivotal role in preparing women for roles in benevolent associations by teaching them “the values and vocabularies of civil society,” and helping them forge “connections between education, individual subjectivity, and social engagement.” The young women who also experienced conversion or revival had the additional motivation that came from seeing themselves “as protagonists with God in a cosmic drama.” Harriet Lathrop Winslow was inspired by the news of Harriet Newell's early death on the mission field to pursue a “useful” course with her life. She asked in 1814, “Why was Harriet Newell taken from life, and a creature of so little worth as I am, continued here? Am I reserved for similar usefulness?” She did not yet presume to think that God had called her to missionary life overseas, probably because she would feel prideful if she compared herself to a venerated martyr like Harriet Newell. Instead she was involved in the formation of a Society for the Relief of Poor Women and Children, and taught at a voluntary school for poor children. She also promoted tract distribution, which “was then in its very beginnings in this country.” One day described in her journal was “spent in soliciting charity with my friend L., and in visiting the poor and sick,” followed by an evening “spent at the

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understand and recognize immediately.” Virginia Lieson Brereton, *From Sin to Salvation: Stories of Women's Conversions, 1800 to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 18. Religious biographers actually “inverted the usual mission of biography” by stressing the typicality of their subjects and the ability of ordinary readers to relate to them. Casper, *Constructing American Lives*, 116.

reading meeting.” She made numerous unsuccessful attempts to found a female prayer meeting in Norwich, and then a “praying society,” and felt disappointed by her inability to advance God's work among the friends of her hometown. But her motivation was restored by a visit to friends in New York, where she read the memoir of Isabella Graham and visited a meeting of their Sunday-school Society. Upon returning home, “she soon resolved on attempting *what she could*,” and established the first Sabbath school in Norwich.<sup>226</sup>

Almost all of Harriet's fellow future missionaries spent time teaching in a Sabbath school, an institution that increased in evangelical significance as Americans came to see children as ripe candidates for ministry. But after teaching and working in other various benevolent efforts, these women displayed the ambition to claim a call upon their lives to a cause they saw as being even more significant. First, workers were more numerous on the domestic front, so they felt more needed in the foreign field. Sarah Davis Comstock had enjoyed teaching her Sabbath school class, and had successfully pushed a number of students toward conversion, but when she received an offer from Rev. Comstock to join him in the Baptist foreign mission, she could not refuse. She explained to her parents, “Some places are more destitute than others; some situations require the exercise of greater self-denial... And as the number is small of those who are disposed to bid adieu to friends, home, etc., for the cause of

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<sup>226</sup> Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak*, 32-33; Brereton, *From Sin to Salvation*, 40; Winslow, *Memoir of Harriet Winslow*, 44-45, 65. Graham was part of the first generation of female reformers in the post-revolutionary northeast. She was a teacher, an early missions promoter through the New York Missionary Society, and the co-founder of the New York Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children. Boylan, *Origins of Women's Activism*, 96-112.



their Redeemer, is it not the imperative duty of the few whom God has endued with this disposition, to cherish and exercise it?" She and others like her expressed confidence in her belief that God had commanded her to leave home and country altogether, regardless of cultural or family expectations.<sup>227</sup>

Women like Sarah Comstock also expressed a belief that the sacrifices required by labor in a less civilized country would help them achieve a greater level of piety as individuals. Henrietta Jackson Hamlin imagined that "a missionary might get away beyond all ambitious motives, and labor purely for the sake of doing good, that I should almost like to go myself." Yet at the same time as she was condemning "ambitious motives," Henrietta expressed a desire to make her life more important. She told her sister, who was making plans to go to Africa, "I am making too little of my life; I know it and feel it too sometimes. How could you be making more of yours than to be a missionary to Africa?" Missionary work was about self-sacrifice, personal righteousness, and the ultimate spiritual devotion expressed through disinterested benevolence. But it was also about directing their ambitions into a movement that would give their lives greater significance. Louisa Wilson Lowrie bemoaned her lack of accomplishments on her twenty-first birthday, writing in her journal that "I cannot but mourn to think that I have lived to so little purpose... Lord, I

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<sup>227</sup> Mrs. A.M. Edmond, *Memoir of Mrs. Sarah D. Comstock, Missionary to Arracan* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1854), 35; The new emphasis on evangelism in Sabbath schools reflects modern ideas about childhood—if children were vulnerable and needed to be nurtured and protected, they were also open and malleable subjects for evangelism. It also represents a departure from the British model, as British Sunday schools continued to serve primarily as institutions for spreading literacy among the lower classes, a job that Americans turned over to common schools. Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), 14-15.

am the most unprofitable of all thy servants. Help me, henceforth, better to fulfil the great end of my being.” Foreign missionary work was a way to pursue self-denying piety and accomplished, important lives at the same time.<sup>228</sup>

Young women like Louisa Lowrie spoke of foreign missions as an opportunity to participate in a worldwide millennial drama where even the slightest bit of action on their part would take on eternal significance. The tone of print culture produced by missionary and publication societies in the early republic often had a millennial cast, and many memoirs reflected this perspective. As she departed for India, Harriet Newell placed her own sacrifices at the center of the millennial drama that evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic saw unfolding. She expressed optimism regarding the spiritual progress of the world, in spite of the vast territory still unconverted: “When will the millennial state commence, and the lands which have long lain in darkness be irradiated by the calm sunshine of the Gospel? ...Though darkness and error now prevail, faith looks over these mountains, and beholds with transport the dawning of the Sun of Righteousness, the reign of peace and love.” Harriet could imagine the world becoming a unified body of Christians as a result of the work she was joining.<sup>229</sup>

From these stories, readers learned that through missionary work they could use their talents and skills to have an impact on parts of the world where they could feel their labors were especially needed. Many of these memoirs told readers that

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<sup>228</sup> Lawrence, *Memorials of Henrietta Hamlin*, 73; Fairchild, *Memoir of Louisa Lowrie*, 53. Amanda Porterfield emphasizes the goals of personal piety and internal spiritual achievement in *Mount Holyoke*, ch. 3.

<sup>229</sup> Woods, *Memoirs of Harriet Newell* (1833), 114; Nord, *Faith in Reading*, ch. 2.

even marriage was not the ultimate goal for a Christian female, but that marrying missionaries and becoming their assistants could be a means for fulfilling their own calling in the world. When Adoniram Judson first presented a proposal for American foreign missions to the Massachusetts Association meeting in Bradford, he boarded with Deacon Hasseltine and met his daughter Ann. Not long after, she informed Harriet Atwood (later Newell) that she had decided “to quit her native land, to endure the sufferings of a Christian among heathen nations; to spend her days in India's sultry clime.” As a result, Harriet “*felt* more for the salvation of the Heathen this day, than I recollect to have felt through my whole life,” and was challenged to ask “What can *I* do that the light of the Gospel may shine upon them?” She also contrasted the spiritual condition of India with that of the United States: “They are perishing for lack of knowledge, while I enjoy the glorious privileges of a Christian land. Great God, direct me! O make me in some way beneficial to their immortal souls!” Only a few days later Harriet was introduced to Samuel Newell and wrote that if he “has determined to labour in the most difficult part of the vineyard, and is willing to renounce his earthly happiness for the interest of religion,” then “what shall I say of myself?” Upon only brief acquaintance with Judson and Newell, then, Ann and Harriet married members of America's first foreign missionary cohort, and days later they were the first American women to board a ship for India. The memoirs portrayed their commitment as being to the cause of missions first and foremost, rather than to the men they married, whom they barely knew.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Woods, *Memoirs of Harriet Newell* (1815), 75; Woods, *Memoirs of Harriet Newell* (1833), 56-58. Their desire to find a significant calling could only have been heightened by the declining opportunities for single young women in antebellum New England. Economic production was moving out of the home, and eligible young men

One of the first women to follow in their footsteps was Harriet Lathrop, whose opportunity to join a foreign mission came with an offer of marriage from missionary-in-training Miron Winslow. But she had been contemplating the subject ever since reading Harriet Newell's memoir and was determined to commit to the cause independently, regardless of even her suitor's influence. She told Winslow, that "the subject has been much on my mind for months, more perhaps than any other," but "I have never thought there was a necessity for *immediate* decision, until about six weeks since, when it appeared to me important to ascertain what were *my* feelings and opinions before knowing yours, lest I should be too much influenced by you." She, like Ann Judson, faced more opposition than encouragement, as those around her held that missionary work was plentiful in America and need not be sought overseas. As her interest in foreign work was deepening, Harriet wrote to a friend that she had "heard a little too much this afternoon about my desire to be useful in the world—and the first duties being in my own country." She insisted that she wanted to make her own decision on the subject: "Were it proper that I should follow altogether the opinion of friends, in a case of this importance, I would thank them for counsel; but my own conviction of duty must determine me." People accused her of being overly excited by the appeals of missionary literature. She sent Hall and Newell's pamphlet on "The Conversion of the World" to a cousin, who responded only that she wished

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were moving west in search of fertile land. Young women increasingly found themselves reaching their twenties without prospective husbands or any means of profitable employment, other than teaching. Teaching at an academy like Mount Holyoke would have brought just enough compensation to live on, but even career teachers were expected to accept satisfaction as a large part of their payment. Porterfield, *Mount Holyoke*, 30.

Harriet would “view the *facts* with *coolness*,” prompting Harriet to feel “censured, pitied, and condemned.” Her parents brought up the argument that women were a hindrance rather than a help to men on the mission field. They began reading *Horne's Letters* together, and her father noted Horne's opposition to missionaries taking wives overseas. But she countered with the example of the Judsons and their cohort, pointing to “what missionaries, better qualified to judge, say.” He tried to discourage her by suggesting “that I shall, or shall not, want such and such things... in a manner which implies that he does not think seriously of my ever leaving this country.” Her friends also expressed opposition, but it did not prevent Harriet from pursuing her own ambitions. The “hackneyed objection is offered, 'we have so much to do at home,' not remembering that 'he that watereth, shall be watered also himself.' Has not this been exemplified in the *outpouring of the Holy Spirit* in this country since a spirit of missions was first excited in it?” She found examples in the New Testament history of the early church to support her own impulses: “What was the conduct of the primitive christians when Christ commanded them to go forth and preach the Gospel...? Did they say, 'Lord, we would obey thee, but have dear friends at home who would be grieved to part with us, and whom we cannot leave.’” Her intellectual and religious training had given her the tools to argue her own point of view, to the extent of contradicting her father.<sup>231</sup>

While considering Winslow's proposal, Harriet wrote out a treatise on the 'Question of Duty Respecting Missions.' She started by analyzing the “*disposition*” of her mind, which had for over four years been devoted to usefulness in the cause of

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<sup>231</sup> Winslow, *Memoir of Harriet Winslow*, 80, 70, 72, 74, 84.

Christ. Reading Buchanan's *Researches* had inspired her “warmest interest for the salvation of the heathen,” and Harriet Newell's memoir had convinced her that the most satisfying work would be among the “thronging millions” of the East. In spite of the suffering that Mrs. Newell's memoir described in “glowing colors,” Harriet found it “alluring,” and could see no potential for life in New England to be “so capable of affording me substantial happiness.” But she attempted to observe the “*leadings of Providence*,” so that she could be certain not to mistake her personal desires for a true calling. Circumstances had certainly indicated the “*leadings of Divine Providence*” toward foreign missions. She added to that the “*teachings of the Holy Spirit*,” referring to “the impressions on my mind, which accompanied the examination of duty, from time to time... at length dissipating every doubt, and enabling me by the eye of faith to discover the finger of God pointing to the East.” In light of all these factors combined, she declared her conviction that God had called her to be a missionary, and that she considered herself “as devoted to that service,” which meant that she would marry Miron Winslow and accompany him to Ceylon.<sup>232</sup>

Sarah Huntington Smith's memoir offered another vivid example of a woman who pursued her own course within evangelical reform efforts and accepted marriage to a missionary as a career move. As a single woman, she engaged in missionary work among the Mohegan Indians of New England. She raised money through subscriptions to build a church for the Mohegans and led prayer meetings on behalf of all tribes threatened with removal, even writing to Jeremiah Evarts, the secretary of the ABCFM, to solicit the Board's patronage of the Indians in Connecticut. She and a

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<sup>232</sup> Winslow, *Memoir of Harriet Winslow*, 85-89.

friend began a Sabbath school for Indian children, noting that their situation “was as romantic as real life can be... The Indians have a fine spot of 2,700 acres; and if suitably trained, might become a respectable, happy community.” She even appealed to the state legislature as well as the federal government for funds to provide more education, presenting a signed petition in May 1831. She justified her direct appeal (as a woman) to the government on the basis that her “own sex are sometimes successful in the cause of humanity, while others are 'turned empty away.' Should the inquiry arise, upon what ground I assume this prerogative, I would answer, that I prefer no claim, but a friendship for the Indians.” After this effort yielded no results, Sarah solicited aid again, this time through her relative, Congressman Jabez Huntington, who saw money appropriated to support a teacher and a school for the Mohegans. In October of the same year, after attending the annual meeting of the Foreign Missionary Society, she “made the resolution, that whenever my dear parents want me no longer, if unfettered as I am now, I shall devote myself personally to a mission among the heathen.” She discerned this calling upon her life apart from any decisions about marriage or even, apparently, the prospect of a husband. But joining foreign missions as a single woman would be difficult, given that organizational policies at the time favored married couples.<sup>233</sup>

When Sarah was presented with an offer of marriage from Reverend Eli Smith, who was planning to work in the Middle East, the question of becoming a missionary had “been long settled” in her own mind. She then had to decide if her entrance into the work should be the course “Providence now seems to point out,” becoming the

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<sup>233</sup> Hooker, *Memoir of Sarah Smith*, 110, 112, 118, 120, 109.

wife of Eli Smith, and expected to base this decision on “the course which my feelings shall take towards the individual who has presented the inquiry.” She reminded her siblings that their father had dedicated his children to God, and that her mother had always encouraged her “spirit of enterprise” and “stronger points of character.” She recalled a sermon mentioning “that in this country, there is many an unbroken chain of pious ancestry, reaching from its first settlement down to the present time. May we not find our own family forming one of the links, which will extend into the eternal world? How high then are our obligations!” Sarah was confident in her view of foreign missions and merely had to decide if Smith's offer of marriage presented her the best opportunity for extending her work beyond New England.<sup>234</sup>

Sarah Huntington Smith and Harriet Lathrop Winslow were just two of many women who saw marriage to a missionary as simply a means for fulfilling their own calling—a way to achieve a greater level of significance with their lives than they could as single women in New England. Henrietta Jackson Hamlin had decided that teaching was not her strong suit, and was looking for something else to do with her life when a proposal came from Cyrus Hamlin, a theology student she met while visiting siblings in Bangor, Maine. He had been recently appointed to teach at a school for Armenians in Constantinople. When she wrote her parents about Hamlin's offer, she noted the lack of purpose she had been feeling, and suggested that missionary work was the solution: “During the past winter I have reflected much upon my waste of life, and have desired—I hope with some sincerity and earnestness—to devote what shall remain of it more entirely to the service of Christ. I have more than ever desired that

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<sup>234</sup> Hooker, *Memoir of Sarah Smith*, 128, 132, 137.



consecration, that elevation of Christian feeling and principle, which shall raise me above the influence of selfish and worldly motives.” Foreign missionary work was the ultimate example of self-sacrifice, and therefore the best option for women seeking both piety and usefulness. Missionary memoirs presented it as the ultimate vocation for a young evangelical woman, and their message clearly had an effect. Many single women applied to the American Board for service in the years before they would even accept such volunteers, and a number ultimately took on the role of “missionary wife” in order to enter the foreign field.<sup>235</sup>

Louisa Wilson Lowrie first pursued her interest in foreign missions by assembling a group of women for regular prayer meetings on behalf of the cause. The group would meet once every couple of weeks and “spend the afternoon together in some kind of work, making articles which may meet a ready sale, and appropriate the money to some benevolent object, perhaps to the education of heathen youth... We design not to give it much publicity, as societies of every kind encounter opposition.” She continued to teach in her Sabbath school and find much satisfaction from the progress of her pupils, including a “woman of color” who appeared to be converted.

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<sup>235</sup> Lawrence, *Memorials of Henrietta Hamlin*, 83. Dana Robert describes Lucy Goodale Thurston, Sybil Moseley Bingham, Charlotte Fowler Baldwin, and Philomela Thurston Newell as some of “many women who consented to, in effect, arranged marriages so that they could become missionaries.” *American Women in Mission*, 23. Some British women did the same thing, notably Mary Ellis, who married LMS agent William Ellis after being turned down by the LMS as a single woman. The ABCFM fielded a number of applications from single women in the years when they were only sending married couples. Emily L. Conroy-Krutz, “‘The Greatest Blessing or the Greatest Hindrance’: British and American Perspectives on Missionary Marriage” (paper presented at the twenty-ninth annual meeting of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Baltimore, Md., June 2013).

But her attention was still turned to foreign missions, where she believed the need to be greater. “Our own country, it is true, is in many parts in a state of darkness; but all men are brethren. We may extend our views to other countries, where still greater numbers have never heard of a Saviour.” But she tried to discourage talk about her intentions, because most of her acquaintances were still opposed to the idea. If she ever decided to join the mission herself, there would still be plenty of time “to suffer much from the world, and something from *dear friends*, who I know would strongly oppose me.”<sup>236</sup>

In 1832, after a couple years of pondering the purpose of her life, Louisa Wilson received an offer to join Reverend John C. Lowrie in “a heathen land.” In writing to a brother (also a reverend) to seek his approval, she claimed to have been concerned for the “condition of the heathen world” for over a year, as she “read and reflected upon their darkness and degradation.” She had prayed for them and supported other missionaries, and had become convinced from the Scriptures that “it was the evident duty of every Christian to do all in his power for the conversion of the heathen.” Because she did not have much money to give to support evangelism, she decided that the best she could do was “go to them and labour personally for their salvation.” She made this decision before receiving any opportunity to go, but “only felt a conviction that if it were the Lord's will that I should go, he would prepare the way.” She asked for her brother's advice, saying that “the responsibility of deciding whether to go or stay seems to great for me.” But by the time she received his response, she felt her “convictions of duty” to be “clear,” and she expressed

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<sup>236</sup> Fairchild, *Memoir of Louisa Lowrie*, 73, 77.

displeasure to learn that her brother did not agree. She reminded him that he had left home at an early age and “laboured in the vineyard of Christ” until his own strength was gone, so “that *you* should be anxious for me to do good only where I may live *at ease*, is to me indeed, a sore disappointment. How, dear brother, are the heathen to be converted? Is not the command, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,' still binding?” After elaborating on many other reasons why spreading the Gospel was important, she confessed “I cannot bear the thought of spending a useless life. The same grace that would be required to enable me to be much more useful here, will, perhaps, enable me to be much more useful in a foreign land. The way appears clear to me.” Louisa decided to go in spite of her brother's opposition, because she trusted her own discernment of the Lord's will for her life more than his. “I hope you will not blame me for my decision. I leave it all with the Lord, and pray that, if it is not best that I should go, he would in his providence prevent it.” Afterward she read Gordon Hall's “Appeal,” which confirmed her decision for her. It made her “glad that I have determined to devote my body as a 'living sacrifice' to the Lord. Indeed I have never regretted it a moment.” Even the opposition of men in her family did not prevent her from pursuing missionary work as a career, with marriage to John Lowrie being simply one of the necessary steps to take in reaching her goal.<sup>237</sup>

### **The Supremacy of Foreign Missions**

Depictions of these activities suggested that foreign missionary work was the most significant cause a young evangelical woman could join. Of course, on one hand

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<sup>237</sup> Fairchild, *Memoir of Louisa Lowrie*, 93, 97, 102.

the culture portrayed in missionary memoirs reflected a codependent relationship between domestic concerns and the goals of foreign missionaries. Foreign missions organizations depended on the continuation of the evangelical movement back home to fuel support for their work abroad. Revivals, religious publications, Sabbath schools, and other aspects of American culture prepared individuals to respond to the call of missionary literature. But missionary biographies also implied that foreign work was more important than benevolence at home. The subjects of these stories ultimately found their work in local churches, schools, or voluntary societies to be less fulfilling than the prospect of working abroad. Even the act of marriage was put into the service of the missionary cause, as men and women chose spouses specifically on the basis of their commitment to foreign missions. This literature depicted the commitment to foreign missions as the ultimate personal calling for ambitious young Americans looking to demonstrate or achieve new levels of piety and feel significant in the world beyond their homes.

In fact, the success of missionary memoirs as a genre indicated that women who joined the movement could play a significant role simply through their writing, by contributing to the evangelical print culture that facilitated foreign missions, regardless of how much they actually accomplished overseas. They and their communities could invest in education and pious pursuits with the knowledge that they would serve a greater cause, even if the women themselves met with an early death. When Gordon Hall, Samuel Newell's partner in Bombay, died in 1824, the editors of the Philadelphia *Christian Advocate* announced that he had written a "circular" as his "dying legacy" to the American churches. They compared his death to that of Harriet Newell, saying "Frequently have we thought and said that Harriet

Newell probably served the cause of missions a hundred fold more by her death, than she could have served it by the longest life.” If Hall's departing words could similarly “rouse the dormant energies of the American churches, and call forth the holy ardour of a hundred young missionaries, to offer themselves to supply his loss—he too will have done more by his death than he could have done by his life.” When Louisa Lowrie died just weeks after reaching Calcutta in 1833, the editor of her memoir compared her contribution to that of her martyred predecessor: “Like Harriet Newell she was only permitted to see the wretched beings whom she went to teach; and her prayers for their conversion ascended from the midst of the heathen; and like the same sainted missionary (whom in many respects she much resembled) it has been her lot to seal, by an early death, her testimony to the unspeakable importance of the enterprise for the conversion of the world.” Louisa Lowrie's sacrifice would prove to be worthwhile because her memoir would awaken readers' interest in foreign missions, just as Harriet Newell's had, through its portrayal of her character. The *Christian Review* reflected in 1842 that “a great sensation” had been produced by the memoir of Harriet Newell, and “that a new impulse was given... to the missionary feeling of the Christian church. Nor should we hear with surprise the remark, so often made, that this early adventurer in the field 'did more by her death, than she could have done by her life.’” The article argued that Harriet's service to the heathen, had she lived, was impossible to speculate. “But, being dead, she has spoken to many a heart. Her memoir is, doubtless, among the elementary causes, which have aroused and encouraged many timid spirits to undertake the self-denials and toils of a voluntary expatriation for the sake of the heathen.” The memoirs of Harriet Newell, Louisa Lowrie, and many women who followed them into foreign missions sent the message

that even death on the foreign field was a greater contribution to the spread of the gospel than life lived in service to the gospel in America.<sup>238</sup>

Female missionary memoirs succeeded by appealing to readers and critics alike. For Americans concerned about the cultivation of character in their new nation, they provided effective role models for women and served as competition for less desirable forms of print. For religiously trained readers they provided a formula for achieving individual piety as well as social significance in evangelically sanctioned ways. For the promoters of foreign missions, memoirs could encourage American evangelicals to place greater priority on sending or going abroad to the rest of the world, even as they addressed more general evangelical concerns about the culture of the early republic. As the *Christian Review* said in 1842, memoirs “are not only the fruit of the missionary cause, but also the seed of missionary spirit... The histories of the life and labors of pioneers in the cause have done much to arouse the energies of youthful disciples. They are destined to do still more.” Evangelicals had many reasons to agree.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> *The Christian Advocate* 4 (October 1826), 470 (see also *Literary and Evangelical Magazine* 9:9 (September 1826), 498; Fairchild, *Memoir of Louisa Lowrie*, 219; *The Christian Review* 7:25 (March 1842), 104.

<sup>239</sup> *The Christian Review* 7:25 (March 1842), 104.

## Chapter 7

### EPILOGUE: PROVIDENTIALISM IN THE PROMOTION OF FOREIGN MISSIONS

Missionaries and missions promoters on both sides of the Atlantic used the language of “providentialism” to describe events or processes that facilitated the spread of Protestant Christianity. Anglo-American evangelical Calvinists shared a common framework for interpreting events as signs that Providence wanted them to act. One such sign was the existence of missionary societies on both sides of the Atlantic, and the cooperation that they were able to cultivate on different levels. Thomas Haweis of the London Missionary Society wrote in an 1812 pamphlet that while Americans and Britons were no longer a united people, “America is still a land of real Protestants... the American colonies appear, not only rising into a vast consolidated empire, but reviving in efforts to promote the kingdom of the Lord... and are, I hope, destined with us to spread the everlasting gospel to the ends of the earth, whither their commerce next to our own extends.” He and other authors were always looking for evidence that Providence had created a sphere in which they could work and that Protestant Christianity was destined to spread around the globe.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> All denominations “shared the view that in this providentially guided, divinely driven world it was for ‘the modern missionary’, through prayer and watchfulness, to discern the means available for the spreading of true religion. In such a world national developments might have their place, empire might provide an arena for providential fireworks, but no necessary priority was to be attached to either. Empire in the form of British rule could never be more than one among many such means, each of varying importance, to be employed or ignored as Providence thought fit. Thus evangelicals

The expansion of British rule was, in the minds of evangelicals, one of many means (at times) for facilitating the spread of mission work. The inclination to celebrate events that opened opportunities for evangelicals to spread Christianity eventually led to perceptions among later observers that missions and imperialism were inextricably linked. But that link was less obvious in the minds of antebellum missionaries and missions promoters, who often saw Western economic and political expansion as providing hindrances as well as assistance to the spread of Christianity. Governments and mercantile interests, both British and American, could serve as tools in the hands of Providence for facilitating missions—or they could pose obstacles that Christians had to overcome. The British Baptists faced serious restrictions on their early activities from the East India Company, which was opposed to any interference in native culture that might provoke conflict, but the missionaries saw the fate of their enterprise as being entirely in the hands of an omnipotent providence. As William Carey reminded readers of the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* in 1807, the “success of the gospel” had “been frustrated by the cruel interposition of government,” but “God's plan however will never be disconcerted by the malice or cunning of men,” and “there shall be no end of the increase of his government and peace.” British missionaries saw British rule less as an opportunity than as “a source of obligation. Possession entailed the duty to Christianise; failure to do so risked

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also identified exploration, commerce, science, individual Christians, as well as the new missionary societies, among the necessary and efficacious means now available.” Andrew Porter, *Religion versus empire? British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 61-62; Thomas Haweis, *A View of the Present State of Evangelical Religion throughout the World; with a view to promote missionary exertions* (London, 1812), quoted in Porter, *Religion versus empire?*, 62.



incurring divine displeasure,” and of course communication and travel was easier where trade was already established, so the choice to work in or near British territory was natural. But missionaries also went ahead of any colonial or imperial presence in areas like the Pacific islands or parts of Africa.<sup>241</sup>

Americans sympathized with the British as they lamented the limitations that various governments placed on evangelical efforts, in India as well as other colonies, such as Jamaica with its large slave population. They also shared in the rejoicing when Parliament revised the East India Company's charter in 1813 to require “ample provision for the propagation of christianity in India.” Evangelicals of all denominations shared the primary goal of achieving toleration “and the freedom to promote the expansion of Christianity where, as and when they saw fit.” The change in India, combined with the hostility that missionaries met from the native government of Burma, eventually led American Baptist missionaries to begin characterizing British authorities as protectors of religious liberty—and their imperial conquests as indications of divine intervention on behalf of Americans.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Quotation from Porter, *Religion versus empire?*, 65; *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 1:10 (May 1807), 297; John Barker, “Where the Missionary Frontier Ran Ahead of Empire,” in *Missions and Empire*, ed. by Norman Etherington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 86-106. “Certain words or ideas that became deeply imbedded during this period—that became a part of the orthodoxy—were destined to encounter more opposition as they persisted into later eras,” one being “a providentialism that, by taking the 'opening' of the non-Western world as God's warrant for Christian expansion, helped forge a fundamental link between mission and imperialism.” William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 60.

<sup>242</sup> *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 3:12 (Dec. 1813), 359; Porter, *Religion versus empire?*, 73. For example, rumors that the colonial assembly in Jamaica had forbidden religious meetings among slaves indicated “a very lamentable

When the Judsons and other Baptists ventured beyond the frontiers of the British empire, they encountered resistance not only from the majority of the Burmese population but from the rulers as well. In Rangoon the Judsons found that the governor issued threats and managed to scare away most of their potential converts. Judson wrote that the “little circumstance, strange as it may seem to one living under a free government,” had discouraged nearly everyone from associating with them. He unsuccessfully appealed to the emperor for religious toleration. So, the missionaries decided to establish a settlement in Chittagong, which bordered the Burmese empire but was ruled by the British East India Company's government. Judson would continue his efforts in Rangoon and in the capital city of Ava with the help of a new colleague, Dr. Price, who might use his skill as a physician to gain favor with the emperor's family, while Ann Judson would cultivate a relationship with the women of the royal family. Their colleagues the Colmans would set up the mission station in Chittagong, to serve as “an asylum to the Rangoon missionaries and converts, in case persecution should become so severe as to put a stop to all religious inquiry, and missionary efforts.”<sup>243</sup>

The missionaries' efforts to win over the Burmese ruler were proceeding slowly when war broke out between the Burmese empire and the British government

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circumstance, for there are many of our Brethren there.” William Carey predicted that “the hand of God will fall heavily on those Islands whose trade and even existence is supported by Robbery, Oppression, ...Persecution, and Murder... and when he maketh inquisition for Blood will not forget the sighing of the poor and needy.” Carey to Williams (Calcutta, November 1803), John Williams Correspondence, RG-1207, ABHS.

<sup>243</sup> *American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer* 2:10 (July 1820), 379; 2:12 (November 1820), 435.

in Bengal. In the context of war, the close association between American and British Baptists proved both a help and a hindrance to the missionaries. Judson initially told his sponsors not to worry, “as the distinction between Americans and Englishmen is pretty well understood in this place.” But as the fighting spread, most of the American missionaries sought refuge with their British brethren in India to await the conclusion of the war. In Calcutta they were received “with much kindness” and were given “a house free of expense, five miles out of town formerly the residence of Rev. Mr. Eustace Carey,” who had gone to America. Several months later, one of the missionary wives remarked that they were “surrounded with all the necessary comforts of life,” as well as “the loved society of the dear English missionaries.”<sup>244</sup>

The Americans expressed sympathy for the suffering of the Burmese people as a result of the war, but they were convinced that God was allowing the war “to humble Burmah's proud monarch who rejected the religion of Christ, and to erect the standard of the cross in the midst of this heathen empire.” The prospect of living in Burma under the English rule, “where the poor pagan will not fear to examine the christian religion, nor the poor converts fear persecution,” made the missionaries optimistic about the future of their work with the Burmese. But in late 1825, Americans learned that Judson and Price had been imprisoned on suspicion of spying for the British. Ann had destroyed most of their papers in an effort to remove any evidence of their close relationship to British Baptists, but the Burmese authorities were never convinced. The missionaries spent two years in captivity, which they survived only due to Ann's efforts to provide them with food and medicine. As their defeat became evident, the

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<sup>244</sup> *American Baptist Magazine* 5:1 (January 1825), 22; 5:11 (November 1825), 339.

Burmese rulers sent the Americans along “with other European prisoners to treat with the British Commander for Peace.” One of the American missionaries reported that most likely “a large proportion of Burmah, will be retained by the English, particularly the lower provinces and Arracan.” If that happened, “some of the obstacles in the way of the progress of Christianity will be removed—at least, its progress or regress will not depend upon the will of Majesty.” While British rulers had been a hindrance to missionary efforts in the past, they were now considered to be vastly preferable to the government of Burma, which was overtly anti-Christian. The Americans expected their mission stations to be reestablished in the regions ruled by British authorities. As Ann Judson wrote to Francis Wayland, “We have been in Rangoon a week, but have not concluded to which of those places, retained by the English government, we shall go.” Since the East India Company had come under greater control of Parliament, and since their forces had liberated American missionaries from Burmese imprisonment, a British imperial presence now seemed quite attractive.<sup>245</sup>

But the positive portrayal of British authority following the Anglo-Burmese War—and in similar situations down the road, where a British imperial presence could provide physical protection to American missionaries faced with other hostilities—by no means translated into an overall endorsement of British imperialism. Americans followed the example of their British brethren in criticizing British authorities for not doing everything they could to promote Christianity—such as requiring religious instruction in English schools or prohibiting certain native religious practices. An 1840 article in the Baptist magazine raised the question, “why the gospel does not

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<sup>245</sup> *American Baptist Magazine* 5:11 (November 1825), 339; 5:12 (December 1825), 383; 6:2 (February 1826), 62; 6:10 (October 1826), 315.

more immediately and invariably prevail over the ignorance, superstitions and miseries of idolatry... why have not these abominations been abolished by the light of truth and the influence of the powerful Christian government under which they are practised?" It accused the established authorities of being "nominally a *Christian* government," and "instead of giving its support to the gospel, and its influence to promote the diffusion of Christianity among its pagan subjects, it has joined itself to their idols, and both directly and indirectly sustained and perpetuated these very abominations, for no better motives than worldly policy and love of gain." These observations were supported by excerpts from a couple of Calcutta publications as well as a speech by a former missionary given in London. Baptists were promoters of religious liberty, but they were also believers in a "Christian state," as long as it operated in accordance with their version of Christianity.<sup>246</sup>

At other times, American and British Baptists expressed condemnation of British interests for being blatantly harmful to native societies, especially when it came to the opium trade, which affected both India and China. An essay on "British India, Opium, and China" that appeared in the Baptist magazine was, like many such pieces, reprinted from the *Calcutta Christian Observer* (a multi-denominational magazine printed at the English Baptist Mission Press). "Who would anticipate that Christian Britain should for the mere sake of a petty portion of her revenue, promote the growth of a poisonous drug, and stealthily carry it into the interior of a vast empire, in opposition alike to the faith of its people and the edicts of its rulers?" The article condemned Britain's hypocrisy in allowing opium to be loaded "in her chief

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<sup>246</sup> *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 20:4 (April 1840), 85; McLoughlin, *New England Dissent*, 1270.

ports” on ships aiming to smuggle it into China. “How must such conduct elevate Christianity and European policy in the estimation of the disciples of Confucius!” For several pages the author discussed the ill effects of opium on China and the economic motives behind its sale. “The only possible advantage to be derived from the traffic by the British Government is *pecuniary*,” and for a “paltry sum we are called upon to witness a kind of national and commercial *immorality* unprecedented in the annals of civilized governments... a Christian nation, a nation standing high above all others for its noble and generous character, violating the laws of another and that one of the most populous dominions in the world, exciting a bad taste in and debasing its people to the level of brutes... this, too, by a government especially jealous of interfering with the religious prejudices of the heathen people.” Not only was the opium trade opposed by people in China, but “the wise and humane in our own Britain have actually enlisted in the cause.” The authors hoped that “neither shall such a blot be long permitted to rest on the honor and religion of Britain; nor that the missionaries of the cross (when they shall have an entrance given them into China, which they may soon,) shall not only have to contend with idolatry and its abominations, but with a superadded sottishness induced by the avarice of their own countrymen and believers in that one faith which pledges them to wage warfare with all evil.” The essay was supplemented by a personal appeal from American David Abeel on behalf of all the missionaries, American and European, already working in Macao and waiting for an opportunity to go further into China. American and British evangelicals shared concerns about the damage done by such economic imperialism and its effects on their ability to spread the gospel.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 20:11 (November 1840), 270-273.

But while evangelicals bemoaned the destructive results of the opium trade and subsequent war between China and Britain, they did celebrate the outcome as a providential provision for the furtherance of their work. After their defeat in the first Opium War, China's government was forced by the Treaty of Nanjing to open the ports of six coastal cities to foreign trade and Western influence in the 1840s. The handful of American missionaries already in the region proposed that six corresponding American cities devote themselves to sponsoring a missionary family, supplying their basic needs and salaries, through the Baptist Board on behalf of each Chinese city. "Is this asking too much? The London Missionary Society are making extra efforts to send *twelve* missionary families to China forthwith, for each of which they will require two thousand three hundred dollars to begin with, while we ask for *six* families, just one half, and one thousand dollars for each." They suggested that new opportunities to work in China were a providential means for Americans to use their growing wealth productively, as American commerce seemed to expand at an unprecedented rate. "Nothing less than this great empire providentially laid at the feet of American Christians, begging for the bread of life, will apparently suffice to counteract the fearful power and baneful influence of worldly prosperity, and turn the energized activity of this new development in the history of man into one concentrated effort for the immediate conversion of the whole world to God." The American Baptists also suggested that supporting more missionaries to China was a way for Baptists in Britain to right the wrongs of their compatriots in the opium trade. They compared it to the Atlantic slave trade, which British evangelicals had successfully protested. But "Neither slavery nor the slave-trade is fraught with more evil to Ethiopia, than the infamous opium traffic to the land of Sinim. It may be that you can

do little or nothing to stay this flood... but you possess the antidote—the gospel of Christ.” Indeed, the English Baptist Missionary Society donated money to the Americans to spend on their new efforts, because while the LMS had started the first mission in China, Americans had established the first Baptist presence. Thus, while missionaries saw the opium trade as evil, they could see the British victory in the Opium Wars as a providential provision for them to turn evil into good through expanded missionary efforts.<sup>248</sup>

This interpretive framework helped Americans to see the Civil War as a watershed moment in the interpretation of their own national destiny. The war not only prompted a surge of patriotism that helped smooth over sectarian differences (at least among northern churches), it provided evidence for missions promoters to argue that Americans had a special role to play in the global spread of Christianity. This message was unusually zealous in tone, but it was consistent in principle with Anglo-American understandings of providentialism. Northern evangelicals were prepared to read the Union victory as a sign of future success because they had long been interpreting events in terms of their effect on foreign missions. At its beginning, the New England leaders of the American Board depicted the war as a providential provision of justice for “our great guilt, as individuals and as a nation, in his sight,” and as a “furnace of affliction” that would purify the nation. The Board's president suggested that the war was a test of the American people, to make them prove their commitment to foreign missions: “It is not merely the political theories and

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<sup>248</sup> *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 25:9 (September 1845), 315; *Missionary Herald* 49:11 (November 1853), 328; *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 24:2 (February 1844), 33; 24:7 (July 1844), 176.



institutions of our country that are now, as never before, on trial before the world, but also its *Christianity*. How much is there of sympathy with Christ in what he has done, and is doing, for the redemption of the world?" The hardships brought about by the war should not lead them to withdraw from activities outside the United States, but should instead encourage them to focus all the more on their efforts for the kingdom of God, which would not suffer from the frailties of their human government.

"Doubtless great sacrifices are required... but... shall we not be led to esteem only the more highly the privileges of a citizenship under a government that is perfect, and to estimate more fully the duty of doing what we may for the establishment, over the whole earth, of 'a kingdom which cannot be moved?'"<sup>249</sup>

As the national conflict was resolved, the American Board presented the Board's financial survival of the war as evidence that American Christians were capable of doing even more than they had before. The ABCFM actually came out of the war years in relatively good condition, with "our treasury unembarrassed, our credit unharmed, with the grateful reflection that not one missionary has been kept from his work for lack of funds." Their missions had survived without too damage or debt, in spite of the unusual costs their supporters had been forced to bear during those years, proving to the Board that American churches were wealthier than they had known before.<sup>250</sup>

The Board's financial survival as well as the survival of the national union prompted the Board's leaders to articulate more thoroughly a prominent role for

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<sup>249</sup> Annual Meeting, *Missionary Herald* 57:11 (November 1861), 324, 329.

<sup>250</sup> "Obligations of American Christians to Foreign Missions," *Missionary Herald* 61:11 (November 1865), 343-349.

American Christians in the evangelization of the world going forward (and their essay on the subject was printed by the Baptist *Missionary Magazine* as well). The war itself was clearly part of a divine plan: “what shall we call it but one of the wars of the Lord? It was He that chose from all our tribes our martyred leader. It was He that surrendered the South to strong delusions. It was He that saved the North from concessions... It was He that issued that charter of freedom, even as He proclaimed deliverance to the oppressed of Egypt... *For what end?*” To answer this question, the Board took a providentialist view of American history (much of which they borrowed from Joseph Tracy's 1840 history of the Board). In this version, the original settlement of New England had been the establishment of a “missionary state” as Protestants began the process of dominating North America. The modern foreign missions movement had then started in the 1790s, just as “our country began to recover from its desperate struggle with England, and reap the benefits of a stable government, and gather the rich harvest of the carrying trade, which the wars of Europe threw into our hands.” In making this connection between the founding of foreign missions and the founding of the United States, the Board glossed over the fact that British evangelicals had been responsible for initiating the movement while Americans occupied a supporting role for two decades. But “just so fast as God has opened the world to the gospel of his Son, just so has he given us the ability to proclaim that Gospel. Who can resist the inference?”<sup>251</sup>

Second, the Board argued that America's prosperity was unique and therefore indicated a special purpose: “everything has been framed upon a scale of unequaled

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid. Partially reprinted as “Claims of the Heathen on American Christians” in the *Missionary Magazine* 46:6 (June 1866), 179-182.

magnificence,” including the the size and depth of the nation's natural resources as well as the talents, work ethic, and rapid growth of its population. God must have had a reason for giving so much wealth and population to the new nation. “Is it to make us 'a first class power,' in the presence of the monarchies of Europe? Is it that we may work out the problem of civil liberty to its ultimate issues? Is it that we may fill our borders with asylums and hospitals, with schools and colleges, with churches and seminaries, with all the means, in short, of an advanced Christian civilization?” Did all of their blessings exist simply to make America great, “with no resultant trusts? Are we ourselves both object and end?” The writer concluded that such an idea—that the United States existed purely to perfect itself as a nation, to provide its own citizens with the benefits of wealth, freedom, and social institutions—was selfish and inconsistent with Christian beliefs. American Christians had no reason to believe that they deserved special privileges over and above the rest of the world's inhabitants, so God obviously intended for them to share their blessings. “Our impartial Sovereign has 'made of one blood all nations of men' 'to dwell on all the face of the earth.' He looks, therefore, at the race as a whole, having a common nature and a common destiny. Whatsoever he gives in part, he gives in trust for all.” For Americans to adopt a “miserly” attitude would only bring judgment on them later on.<sup>252</sup>

As the Board articulated a unique responsibility for the United States, they still expected their supporters to care about their nation's reputation in the eyes of the rest

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid. This understanding of national responsibility is extremely similar to the philosophy of 19th-century British evangelicals described by Brian Stanley in *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant missions and British imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Leicester, England: Apollos, 1990), 68.

of the world. They assumed that Americans would want “the respect, spontaneous, undissembled, of our fellow-men. But how shall we best secure it? By having a more gainful commerce, richer harvests, a broader territory, a larger population than other lands? By having stronger forts, deadlier missiles, more terrific iron-clads than the old world?” None of these things would bring the kind of respect that Christians should want. In order to attract “the regard which is highest and best, we must do our proper work, in quietness, and with modesty. We must render our country radiant with the blessings of righteousness and truth; and then, with a generous and self-forgetting philanthropy, strive to make the destitute and wretched, wherever found, sharers of our joy.” The kind of philanthropy proposed included preaching the gospel and translating the Bible, as well as help in more physical ways. One example was the “humble efforts in behalf of starving Ireland” that had earned Americans international respect in the past. All of these activities would earn the newly reunited United States more respect from other nations.<sup>253</sup>

The Board also looked abroad to determine how international events might indicate where American Christians should next focus their attention. Of course, the Opium War treaties had recently opened China to Western influence, first in the port cities in 1842 and then further inland in 1858. In 1867, one of the secretaries of the Board presented a special report on “The Claims of China upon Christians in America.” The Board's report reviewed several reasons why China was an appealing mission field for any Christian to invest in—its size, recent history, the potential for success, and the risk of letting time pass—factors that had often appeared in letters

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

from missionaries and would have been familiar to readers who had been following the news of events in China. But then the report offered several “arguments which address themselves with peculiar force to Christians in America,” reasons why Americans should take upon themselves the responsibility for evangelizing China.<sup>254</sup>

First, America's geography had equipped it to undertake especially great missions abroad: “Lands, like races, are created for definite ends.” For example, “Greece and Italy, in ancient times, England and Holland, in modern times,” were shaped by their watery surroundings, and the “sea was to give them wealth at home and empire abroad.” But the U.S. had exceptional “power of self-projection” because of its broad expanse of land, reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Americans also benefited from being “so far removed from the jostlings and entanglements of European life, and yet so central withal,” that God must have intended for them to “go forth to the bays and harbors and rivers of other lands” to preach the gospel.<sup>255</sup>

Second, the author repeated a version of America's providential history, this time within the framework of the history of Protestantism. Shortly after Columbus had discovered the New World, Luther had weakened “the despotism of Rome,” and only “a hundred years later, English Puritanism having reached its opening manhood, the Pilgrims stepped forth upon Plymouth Rock.” Then began a monumental struggle to tame the wilderness and build a new society, a struggle that culminated in the independence of the United States at the same time as modern missions got underway. Soon Americans had started their own missions, and “just as fast as God was pleased

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<sup>254</sup> “The Claims of China upon Christians in America,” *Missionary Herald* 63:11 (November 1867), 349-353.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

to open the pagan world to the gospel of his Son, just so fast did he give us the ability to preach the gospel,” in terms of wealth to support missionaries. What could be the purpose of such events coinciding, but to show “the divinely-appointed uses of our prosperity?” And finally, through the divisive war that had just ended, God had “taught us that whatever we wish to accomplish, we can accomplish. Doing great things for the heathen, therefore, has ceased to be a question of power; henceforth it is simply a question of will.” History indicated that Americans could do whatever they set their minds to.<sup>256</sup>

At the same time that Americans' capabilities were becoming evident, China was being drawn closer to Americans. As the Chinese government was weakening in its opposition to foreign visitors, the U.S. was acquiring territory that shortened the distance between the two nations, “as if God had sealed up its gates till we should be ready to enter them. Five years from the treaty of Nanking, California was ours.” Since then, transportation from the east coast to the west had become faster. Crossing the Isthmus of Panama had greatly shortened the distance to the Pacific, and new steamships had undertaken the voyage from America to China. Even more significant was the anticipation of transcontinental railroads, which would enable agents from Massachusetts to reach Shanghai in only a month. These events surely indicated that “the God of missions has brought this empire, so populous, so idolatrous, nearer and nearer, that we may accept the field which he has assigned us.” God had prepared the way for American Christians in particular to reach the Chinese with the gospel.”<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

In the 1870s, articles in the *Missionary Herald* continued to discuss unique characteristics that Americans brought to the foreign missions enterprise. A treatise on “The Present Need of Missionaries” in 1872 suggested that the United States had a particular responsibility to the unchristianized masses of the world. “Who now shall proclaim to these millions the 'good tidings of great joy?'" asked the author. “The Protestants of continental Europe, in spite of their manifold hindrances, will do something.” And of course Great Britain, America's “father-land,” would “do more, much more.” But to Americans the unsaved would “come, as they *must* come, with an appeal which is all the more affecting, because, like the orphaned child in his mute helplessness, they know not how to describe, or how to measure their woes or their fears.” The needs of the lost world posed a great challenge that would require dedication and persistence. But the article used the patriotism of the American people (presumably northerners) during the recent war to illustrate how Americans could meet this challenge. “When our national conflict began in 1861, thousands of our young men proffered their services, promptly and nobly. Afterward, however, when it became difficult to obtain recruits, measures were taken, not merely to reach individuals, but to rouse the public mind to the greatness of the crisis, and the need of broader and more effective appeals. Thenceforward the ranks were kept supplied by the steady, unfaltering patriotism of the people.” Thus the demand for missionaries could only be met if Christians were “in thorough sympathy with this endeavor.” All of the Board's problems could ultimately be alleviated if they accomplished “*the wider diffusion of a genuine missionary spirit*,” which was comparable to the spread of patriotism Americans had witnessed during the war.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> “The Present Need of Missionaries,” Annual Meeting of the Board, *Missionary*

For the much of the nineteenth century, the rhetoric of the American Board provided “more an alternative than alter ego to the culture’s lexicon of national advancement and material progress,” yet could appeal to citizens who were concerned for the welfare of their new nation. After the conclusion of the Civil War, ideas about an exceptional role for the United States in missions became more prominent in the Board's appeals for support, as they viewed their history—including even evils like slavery and civil war—as part of a divine plan to prepare their nation for greater influence overseas. Their interpretive framework was consistent with that of their British predecessors, who had seen the expansion of their empire as a sign of obligation for evangelical activity.<sup>259</sup>

But by the 1870s and 1880s, the ABCFM and other early missions boards had been joined by a number of new denominational, nondenominational, and women's missionary societies that changed the face of Protestant foreign missions. New generations of evangelicals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries critiqued and rejected many methods of the early organizations, such as their authority structures, systematic fund-raising efforts, and emphasis on educated (male) clergy to staff their missions. Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission in London in 1865 as the first of many “faith missions,” a nondenominational organization that eventually had branches in Canada and the United States as well as other countries in

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*Herald* 68:11 (November 1872), 344-346.

<sup>259</sup> Mark Hanley, “Revolution at Home and Abroad: Radical Implications of the Protestant Call to Missions, 1825-1870,” in *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home*, ed. Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 46.



Europe and relied on unsolicited donations and lay volunteers (both male and female) for its missions in China. Other international voluntary associations, like the YMCA, grew in conjunction with advancing communication and transportation technologies and helped to funnel less formally trained volunteers into foreign missions. A more rapid transatlantic exchange of ideas, such as premillennialism and revivalism, increased the urgency with which young lay people looked to serve through both denominational and nondenominational organizations. The number of exclusively women's missionary societies grew and helped female volunteers outnumber males in the foreign field by the early twentieth century.<sup>260</sup>

The influx of new generations of evangelical laymen and women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries changed many things about foreign missions. Young volunteers who flooded both new and old organizations were motivated by critiques of earlier methods and were quick to condemn the “conservatism” of older missionaries in favor of new strategies to meet what they saw as an expanding need. But numerous aspects of their missions represented continuity with the earlier movement. The women who formed and joined missions organizations in greater numbers after the Civil War expanded the roles established by early missionary wives and teachers, as well as the women who founded The Society for Promoting Female

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<sup>260</sup> Alvyn Austin, “Only Connect: The China Inland Mission and Transatlantic Evangelicalism,” in Wilbert R. Shenk, ed., *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2004): 281-3313; Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, 95-102; Dana L. Robert, “The Crisis of Missions’: Premillennial Mission Theory and the Origins of Independent Evangelical Missions,” in Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, eds., *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1990): 29-46; Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 14, 51-53.

Education in the East in conjunction with David Abeel in the 1830s. The evolution of denominational identities enabled new models and methods of international and interdenominational cooperation in the late nineteenth century, but the emphasis on exchange and connection was consistent with earlier ideals of ecumenical evangelicalism and transatlantic brotherhood. Americans had even tried to join an international Evangelical Alliance in the 1840s but were held back by controversy over slaveholding. With that issue gone, the first American affiliate was created in 1867 to help Americans participate in international discussions of missions as well as moral reforms. At the same time, a strong national identity at home allowed missions promoters to continue using appeals to national pride and reminders of providential destiny as a way of raising support among ordinary (northern) Americans.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Tyrrell, *Reforming the World*, 21, 38-40; R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission: History of the First Feminist Movement in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 89-90; Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards, "Forging an Ideology for American Missions: Josiah Strong and Manifest Destiny," in Wilbert R. Shenk, ed., *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2004): 163-191.

## CONCLUSION

The growth and definition of evangelical Protestantism was greatly influenced by the spread of print in the nineteenth century. As a religious strain that emphasized individual conversion and personal piety, it relied on pious memoirs and biographies to disseminate images of evangelical character as well as the conversion process. As a movement that was attempting to cultivate connections across denominational, regional, and national boundaries, it used not only theological texts but periodical publications that could draw readers into textual communities on a variety of levels. Just as the existence of trade networks between Britain, the United States, and India allowed Americans to follow news of British missionaries, so the expansion of communication networks in the United States allowed evangelical leaders to disseminate their messages through the religious press into newly settled and farther-flung areas of the Northeast. The promoters of foreign missions created an entire subset of evangelical publications that attracted attention to their specific branch of activism while addressing many other concerns shared by Calvinist evangelicals in the Northeast, thus contributing their own ideals to the construction of evangelical identity.

By promoting foreign missions as a transatlantic movement, missionary periodicals perpetuated the Anglo-American aspect of evangelical identity well into the nineteenth century. British opinions had played an important role in American decision-making at the outset, and missionary magazines reminded their readers of the transatlantic relationships that had influenced the founding of early foreign missions

organizations. Because their purpose was to solicit funds from their readers, the editors and writers of periodical literature discussed transatlantic connections in ways that could resonate with other concerns their readers had about national identity, denominational respectability, or ecumenical cooperation, and help them see donating to the cause as an action that would benefit the institutions they valued. In doing so, these periodicals reinforced the idea that evangelicals should have multiple loyalties—to their denomination, their nation, and to their transatlantic evangelical community. As the United States expanded and eventually survived a civil war, American national identity became more prominent in some Northerners' depictions of evangelical responsibility to foreign missions. The American Board and the Baptist Missionary Union both came to argue that certain events in United States history were signs of a providential role for Americans in the global enterprise, though this role was not evident at the outset.

Individual piety and moral activism were also prominent aspects of the evangelical strain of Protestantism, and publishing religious biographies was a way for evangelicals to illustrate their ideals for personal character and share them across denominational boundaries. The promoters of foreign missions offered their own version of character formation with over forty missionary biographies that showed evangelical heroes navigating various cultural tensions in the early republic. Young men experienced new career and educational opportunities in the northeastern United States, but they also faced cultural attitudes that decried personal ambition as greedy and corrupting. The missionary character was ambitious on many levels, but a missionary's piety led him to pursue adventures and intellectual accomplishments for the benefit of the church rather than himself—though the end result was elite status, as

missionaries were regarded as evangelical saints. Missionaries also adopted the value of broad-minded benevolence being promoted by nationalist reformers in the decades following independence. But rather than pursue goals that would meet only federal ends, they pledged loyalty to a heavenly kingdom that transcended national as well as denominational borders, promoting the cosmopolitan and ecumenical potential of evangelicalism. Missionary biographers argued that evangelicals could be patriotic and cosmopolitan at the same time, because they were pursuing the expansion of universal Christian (evangelical Protestant) principles that would benefit America as well as the rest of the world simultaneously. And as American ideals of masculinity became entwined with expansionism in the 1840s and 1850s, missionary biographies demonstrated that evangelical men could find a middle ground between the aggressive and violent masculinity of expansionists and the disciplined, family- and career-oriented masculinity of other religious reformers and proponents of restrained manhood. Missionaries often exposed themselves to danger and left their families behind as they explored new territory for the cause of missions. A man could be adventurous and pious at the same time, as long as he was taking risks for the sake of spreading the gospel.

The expanding world of evangelical print also incorporated an increasing number of female readers and writers, resulting in a growing number of published memoirs and biographies with pious women as subjects. In depicting the experiences and decisions of women who joined foreign missions, female missionary memoirs provided more than patterns of conversion and spiritual growth—they offered models of female subjectivity for young women who read evangelical literature in the context of schools, revivals, and competitive relationships. Educational institutions

encouraged the development of female subjectivity in the early republic (at least in the Northeast), but women of evangelical convictions needed ways to combine their newly cultivated sense of agency and intellectual ability with their goals for spiritual growth and personal piety. The memoirs of missionary women depicted them using their education and religious training in ways that had a visible impact—one that they argued was greater than any impact they could have in the United States in other kinds of evangelistic or charitable work. Many of them made the decision to commit to foreign missions autonomously, later choosing marriage to missionaries as a way to gain sponsorship. Even women who did not live long enough to work in the field, beginning with Harriet Newell, were lauded as martyrs and celebrated as inspirational figures, affirming the validity of their callings and the significance of their individual commitments.

The subjectivity of missionary women was sometimes couched in the language of domesticity and motherhood, especially as the limitations of evangelical womanhood became more clearly defined. The publication of missionary memoirs allowed evangelicals in the United States as well as missionaries overseas to contribute to a dialogue about the appropriate roles for women in the mission field. As women who ventured into preaching or more radical forms of activism in the United States were marginalized by mainstream evangelicals, women on the mission field engaged in activities that sometimes pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable—as in the case of Sarah Boardman Judson, who continued her first husband's ministry in the jungle after his death. The biographers of such women took pains to describe their character in ways that would render them admirable rather than threatening to mainstream patriarchal values. But the variety of experiences and

perspectives offered in almost thirty memoirs published before 1860 could render missionary women appealing role models to young female readers with both spiritual and social or intellectual ambitions of their own.

The promoters of foreign missions creatively combined their goals with the values and concerns of other northeastern Americans, taking advantage of new communications technology and networks to produce a voluminous promotional literature that could draw in supporters and volunteers. The explosive growth of American foreign missions in the late nineteenth century—which led to Americans outnumbering Britons in the field by the 1910s—has led historians of missions to focus largely on the post-Civil War era, while historians of evangelicalism in the early nineteenth century have generally emphasized the domestic focus of revivalism and reform. But there was an outward-looking side to evangelicalism in the early republic—one that valued transatlantic connections, created new roles for pious yet ambitious men as well as women, and viewed the entire world as the spiritual responsibility of Anglo-American Protestants. At a time when the identity of American evangelicals was in flux, as ideas about nationalism, denominationalism, womanhood, and masculinity were being debated, the promoters of foreign missions successfully engaged the readers of religious literature to support a movement that would start small but eventually transform the religious landscape both at home and around the world.

While the promoters of foreign missions in the early republic laid the foundation for a movement that would see Protestant Christianity planted around the world in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, their contributions to evangelical identity in the United States resulted in a less successful story. Evangelicals never

cohered into a unified movement during the early republic. Denominations that identified with the evangelical strain of Protestantism spread rapidly, and publishers of religious literature identified and disseminated certain core evangelical tenets that could be shared across regional and denominational boundaries. But as the literature surrounding foreign missions demonstrates, textual communities only somewhat overlapped with real ones, and the values associated with evangelical manhood and womanhood were often up for debate. Even northern white reformed evangelicals differed over priorities as well as tactics, and their efforts to maintain the illusion of unity usually coincided with divisions in reality. If evangelicalism was always made up of multiple communities who simply shared certain characteristics, rather than a unified movement, then foreign missionary literature illustrates the heterogeneity of evangelical identity and some of the challenges involved in attempts to solidify it.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Mark Noll recently asserted that evangelicalism was never a monolithic movement, but rather, various groups shared evangelical characteristics. He affirmed David Bebbington's definition of evangelicalism as helpful for identifying those characteristics—crucicentrism, conversionism, Biblicism, and activism—but argued that a number of groups have exhibited these emphases without cohering into a single “evangelicalism.” See John Fea, “Defining Evangelicalism at the Conference on Faith and History: Part Two,” *The Way of Improvement Leads Home* blog ([www.philipvickersfithian.com](http://www.philipvickersfithian.com)), 3 October 2014.



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