

AMERICAN WOMEN’S FOREIGN MISSION MOVEMENT:
“COOPERATION OF EVE WITH THE REDEEMER” IN EVANGELICAL
MISSIONS

A Master’s Thesis

by
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BILKENT UNIVERSITY
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MISSIONS

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Masters of Arts in History.

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to depict American women's "indispensable" participation in the United States' foreign mission movement. The emphasis in this thesis is on missionary wives and single missionary women both in mission fields and in the missionary societies controlled in the United States. The concept of separate spheres of male and female influence forms the center point of this thesis and the participation of women in the foreign mission movement is discussed from this perspective. It was the divine sanction, the religious service that stimulated American women to enter the mission work in the 19th century. Although the starting point did not embrace a feminist frame, the process of implementation did lead American women into public roles independent of male influence. In the name of this accomplishment, this thesis aims to explore what many historians have neglected to analyze. American missionary women, in the United States or in the foreign mission lands, created a new professional career for educated women, broke the bondage of the domestic sphere, expanded the involvement of women in cultural and political interaction, and represented the American woman to the whole world.

Keywords: 19th Century American Woman, American Missionaries, Evangelism, Woman's Boards, American Women's Foreign Mission Movement, The Doctrine of Separate Spheres.

ÖZET

AMERİKALI KADINLARIN HARİCİ MİSYON HAREKETİ: PROTESTAN MİSYONLARDA “HAVVA’NIN KUTSAL KURTARICIYLA YAPTIĞI İŞBİRLİĞİ”

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Bu tez Amerikan kadınının, Birleşik Devletler harici misyon hareketindeki ‘onsuz olmaz’ katılımını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Tezde özellikle, Amerika’da yönetilen misyoner topluluklar ve misyon sahalarındaki misyoner eşleri ve bekar misyoner kadınlar üzerinde durulmuştur. Tezin odağında ayrı kadın ve erkek nüfuz çevreleri kavramı yer almakta ve kadınların harici misyon hareketindeki katılımları bu bakış açısından ele alınmaktadır. 19. yy’da Amerikan kadınını misyon çalışmalarına katılmak üzere harekete geçiren unsur kutsal yaptırım, dini hizmet olmuştur. Başlangıçta feminist bir çerçeve içermese de uygulama süreci Amerikan kadınının erkek nüfuzundan bağımsız kamu rolleri iktisabına öncülük etmiştir. Bu muvaffakiyet adına, bu tez, pek çok tarihçinin incelemeyi ihmal ettiği bir hususu araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır: Amerikan kadını, Birleşik Devletler’de olsun, harici misyon topraklarında olsun, eğitim sahibi kadınlar için yeni bir mesleki kariyer yaratmış, o zamana kadar ev içine hapsedilmiş olan kadının esaret zincirini kırmış, kadının kültürel ve siyasi etkileşimlere dahil olmasını temin etmiş ve Amerikan kadınını tüm dünyada temsil etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 19. yy Amerikan Kadını, Amerikan Misyonerler, Evangelism (İncil yayıcılığı), Kadınlar Kurulu, Amerikan Kadınları Harici Misyon Hareketi, Ayrı Alanlar Doktrini

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZET.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II: 19 TH CENTURY AMERICAN WOMAN’S NEW PROFESSION...	10
CHAPTER III : THE EMERGENCE OF AMERICAN WOMEN’S FOREIGN MISSION MOVEMENT.....	33
CHAPTER IV: AMERICAN WOMEN IN FOREIGN MISSION FIELDS	53
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION.....	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	86

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth-century Protestant missionary movement was certainly male dominated in the sense of organizational control, but it is inaccurate to describe it as a movement in which the labor of men was ever predominant, let alone sufficient. Whatever their founders may have intended, missions such as these soon learned that they must rely heavily on the energy and personal commitments of women in all that they did.¹

The doctrine of spheres suggests that the public sphere consisting of politics and commerce belongs to males while females “preside over the spiritual and physical maintenance of home and family” in the private sphere.² The private sphere is considered to be dangerous for the “sacred trusts” females are obliged to save and the private sphere is pictured as the only space for the protection of them.³ In the private sphere women are praised for their wife and mother roles, which are considered to be the highest roles for women. Missionary women, however, transgressed the sphere of domesticity. In this context, American women’s entry to the public sphere through evangelical works should be regarded as an accomplishment. Most scholars consider American women’s evangelical work as a part of religious history. However, this thesis aims to illustrate that the women’s

¹ Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999, 68.

² Ruth Bordin. “The Temperance Crusade as a Feminist Movement,” 215-223. Mary Beth Norton. *Major Problems in American Women’s History*. Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1989, 217.

³ Ibid.

foreign mission movement is as important as the women's clubs movement or the women's temperance movement and it should feature more prominently in women's history books. The structure of this thesis does not include deep analysis of comparisons regarding women's foreign mission movement and other women's movements. Instead the movement's significance in women's history is pointed out by analyzing the movement in depth and by depicting how American women became vital figures in the public sphere.

American women's involvement in the foreign missionary movement in the United States began in church and in Cent Societies in the 1810s. The meaning of piety and Protestantism led American women to pray for assigned male missionaries and to contribute to their education, clothing and any other expenses with their limited kitchen budgets. In time, pious women, active in church prayer and meetings regarding missionary works, met newly assigned missionaries, married them, and left their families for non-Christian lands. The institution of marriage came to expand and change the foreign missionary movement and it was noticeably enriched by female missionaries in the following decades. Missionary matrimony carried two different dimensions. The American Board supported it for the development of the missionary works, in other words, the American Board wanted the assigned missionary to be happy and comfortable in his home with his wife and children so that he could do his evangelical work better. On the other hand, missionary brides considered this marriage as an opportunity to be more active in evangelical work. In a sense, this marriage was a door to the public sphere where missionary brides could be useful for non-Christian, who were pictured as dependent and submissive women by American missionary women. The desire to be involved in the "public sphere" was not lacking in women's foreign mission movement, while missionary wives did

not seek an active role, the American Boards and other missionary societies offered them opportunities in the domestic life to evangelize women in foreign mission fields. At this point missionary wives took the responsibility of non-Christian women's evangelization by starting women's meetings among non-Christian women and teaching careers in missionary schools. The picture of American women's involvement in this movement changed with the establishment of Woman's Boards, who became responsible for all the single missionary women in the mission fields. After the 1860s, women's missionary experience started embracing a more educational work enriched with evangelical aims, and included both married and single women.

American women's participation in the foreign missionary movement does actually embrace a wider meaning and perspective. The process occurred as mentioned above; their participation started in the churches and continued in societies American women superintended or in missionary fields, challenged the American perception of "female" and "cultural norm" both by women and men in missionary works. Although missionary women were not depicted as inappropriate models of American females, missionary work could never become the ideal job for an American woman. Patriarchal authority was assumed in missionary fields and in missionary societies when American women first appeared on stage. However, "attempts to preserve patriarchal domination were limited by the material indispensability of women's participation and by the resulting day-to-day necessity of absorbing women's energy and adjusting to their presence."⁴

This thesis will reconsider the significance of American women's missionary works by focusing on missionary wives and on the activities in the public sphere of

⁴ Ibid.

single missionary women. The thesis focuses on the importance of more than three million women's involvement in foreign missionary movement, firstly for the development of the movement, secondly for creating a new career for themselves and thirdly for the enlightenment and education of non-Christian women. It does not aim to point out the differences between a missionary wife and a single female missionary. In this thesis, American women's involvement is examined as a whole but the changing approaches of the missionary career are to be discussed to show the importance of this movement to American women's history.

Thus Chapter II focuses on the historiography of American women's involvement in foreign mission movement. Starting with American Board's creative idea of matrimony, pious American women appeared on the stage as missionary wives. This career enlarged itself in a short time period and single American women became involved in the movement with an extensive role; they were assigned as missionaries by the Boards. This role expanded with teaching opportunities in women's colleges and schools with the establishment of Woman's Boards. Women's involvement in this movement reached millions in one hundred years. American women played crucial roles in non-Christian lands between 1810 and 1920⁵. Chapter II also includes a brief analysis of women's foreign mission movement's status in some American women's history books and illustrates scholars' negligence of this topic.

American women's involvement in the movement is analyzed in Chapter III and IV. Chapter III mainly focuses on the fact that American women managed to be

⁵ The women's foreign mission movement went into decline after World War I, since beginning in the 1920s, "young single women of the middle classes were less likely to choose a career in poorly paid mission work" as business and professional opportunities for college-educated women multiplied in the United States. See Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1985, 5.

a part of this movement and represent the voice of American pious women while being useful for the non-Christian women. Chapter IV continues to analyze American women's missionary work, however in depth. Missionary wives' and single missionaries' diaries telling their experiences in China, Burma, Syria and Turkey shed a light on their experiences. Missionary wives' diaries depict how American women became indispensable figures in evangelical work and how American women in the mission land attracted other pious women's attention in America. These diaries also help us to understand the elevation of American women's status in the foreign missionary movement, since single missionary women's mission experiences follow these diaries throughout this chapter. These primary sources show responsibilities given to missionary wives and single missionaries. Chapter IV aims to emphasize the elevation of women in the foreign missionary involvement, a process of American women's becoming indispensable in mission fields. This idea of "indispensability" is the core point of the thesis, since it proves that American women created and developed a career, which was different from being just a "church-woman," between 1810 and 1920. This career should not be undervalued by women's historians.

Historian Margaret Lamberts Bendroth illustrates the problem of locating women's foreign mission movement in women's history. She compares it to the temperance movement because the two shared a religious background. The Suffrage movement was one of the striking and popular movements of the time but Bendroth claims neither the temperance movement nor the missionary movement responded to suffragists' battle. The religious background of these two movements created a distinction from other women's movements. Thus, for Bendroth the American missionary movement cannot play a role in American women's history; rather,

American missionary women are appreciated and they become pious heroines in American Protestant history. Historians have neglected the extensive missionary movement of American women in American women's history books. This thesis aims to take attention to American women's foreign mission movement by examining the movement and the process of women's involvement in depth.

American missionary women insisted on "their womanly responsibility to nurture and instruct mothers and children," consequently "leaders of missionary organizations ultimately reinforced the old idea that woman's sphere was primarily a domestic one."⁶ The argument over the separate spheres for women and men is considered to be the grounding element of women's reform movements during the antebellum and progressive era. The indifference of historians to the women's foreign mission movement could stem from this argument since women committed to the missionary cause in the United States or in foreign lands allegedly did not struggle for access to the public sphere as did other women of the era in other reform movements. However, when analyzed in depth it is apparent that missionary women did gain access to the public sphere. Women entered the missionary movement first as contributors at the church level in the domestic sphere; however they continued their contributions by establishing Cent Societies, which they also superintended. In the meantime, they married missionary men and ministers and left their native land to be useful in "heathen lands." Although marriage could be asserted as a significant part of the domestic sphere, marriage also brought these women to the public sphere in foreign lands. They became teachers, translators and superintendents of the missionary schools in the mission fields. Later on, with the establishment of Woman's Boards in the late 1860s, single women entered the arena of male

⁶ Margaret Lamberts Bendroth. "The Social Dimensions of Woman's Sphere: The Rise of Women's Organizations in Late Nineteenth Century American Protestantism." A Dissertation Submitted to The Johns Hopkins University. Baltimore, 1984, 177.

missionaries and missionary wives. With the aim of being useful for non-Christian women, single American women established women seminaries, schools and orphanages under the name of denominational boards. Both missionary wives and single missionary women enjoyed being in control of a school, in other words, reaching the satisfaction of being useful for non-Christian women and children. In this context, a missionary woman was no longer in the territory of private sphere; she was functioning in the public sphere, next to her male colleagues.

One should never forget the back-stage women in these efforts of evangelism. American women in the United States worked hard at first in Cent Societies, and later in Women's Foreign Mission Societies and finally in Woman's Boards. They collected money for the expenditures of missionary schools and seminaries, published magazines, administered every branch of their societies or Boards, and supplied women missionaries' wage, clothes and every personal necessity. Beginning in the 1810s, women started playing crucial roles in the so-called public sphere previously belonging only to males. The professionalization of the women's foreign mission movement could not be treated as an outcome of the growth in evangelical missions. It was the success of American women stepping in the public sphere. After the establishment of Woman's Boards, working in a branch of the Board or going to a mission land as a missionary became a career for American women.

It can also be asserted that the women's missionary movement also had different objectives from other women's reform movements. Although this movement did lead women to be useful outside the domestic sphere and to help the non-Christian women and children, it could never aim to be a "women's movement" regarding women's rights, equality of sexes, and challenging gender roles in the

public sphere. Foreign missions were started and dominated by American men as a religious movement and American women entered later. The organization, principles and outlook of the movement were defined by the male ministers and missionaries, and women respected and approved these. Still, starting with the fulfillment of religious service, women in mission works did elevate American women's status; over time, especially with the establishment of Woman's Boards, women missionaries cultivated the concept of education for non-Christian women. Education and evangelization went hand in hand in Woman's Boards and knowledge was believed to be the core point of elevating non-Christian women's social status. Thus American missionary women had a strong and effective voice in the public sphere.

Missionary women served as bridges between the foreign women and male missionaries. They became translators and evangelizers for the native women. They became the loving teachers or even mothers for the orphans in the mission land. Numerous examples of exotic disease, childbirth, widowhood and early death formed the history of American missionary women. Many newly married women died of an exotic disease upon arriving at the mission field. The domestic life never came to end for missionary women, quite the contrary; the American Board supported the missionary matrimony for the assigned missionaries' comfort within the domestic sphere. Missionary wives were literally assigned for keeping a peaceful domestic life, nursing and caring for their missionary husbands, giving birth to new Protestant children and contributing to the evangelical mission by making access to native women possible. Getting used to a new culture, environment and a totally new life constituted another trouble for these women. In order to reach the women of the mission land they had to learn the domestic culture and even be a part of it. With the

establishment of Woman's Boards, missionary women became more active in the missionary field. They constructed the idea of female colleges to educate non-Christian women and became superintendents, instructors, fund-raisers in these colleges. The American Board's need for single missionary women in secluded areas in non-Christian grounds and Woman's Boards' support of them took women into the public sphere. Struggling with all these troubles stemming from being a woman in the missionary field, American missionary women made strenuous efforts to reshape the world in which they were living. Historian Robert Pierce Beaver conveys that,

Given the lack of cultivation from the headquarters of the boards and societies, the want of integration into mutually sustaining national and regional organizations, the denial of representation and influence in the making of missionary policy and even the denial of women's rights, to lead and speak in their own meetings in some instances, it appears most remarkable that the women persisted in raising funds, praying, stimulating general interest and educating themselves and their children⁷.

In this context, it is important to examine American missionary women's involvement in the foreign mission movement. As wives or assistants of male missionaries, fund-raisers of the collecting agencies, teachers in missionary schools and colleges, American women accomplished their aims. They decided to evangelize the world, bring piety and evangelization to non-Christian women's hearts and homes and finally to elevate these women socially through education.

⁷ Beaver, 47.

CHAPTER II

19TH CENTURY AMERICAN WOMAN'S NEW PROFESSION

*The Universe might be enlightened, improved and harmonized by woman; she would be another better Eve, working in cooperation with the Redeemer, bringing the world back from its revolt and sin.*⁸

-Barbara Welter

This chapter will delineate the historiography on the women's foreign mission movement. Starting with the concept of matrimony, this chapter focuses on how American women got involved in the movement and what roles they played as their commitment and contributions to foreign missions continued and developed. Scholars' approaches towards evangelical American women in foreign mission works depict that while American women became vital figures in the United States' foreign mission movement, and their contribution was not limited to domestic work. Women's foreign mission movement did not have a feminist objective. However, it does not change the fact that American women entered a new profession in the 19th century, which was considered to belong to the public sphere, in other words only to males. In this frame, this chapter focuses on American women's accomplishment in embracing and shaping a role in male's sphere. Several well-known women's history books are analyzed and their approach to the women's foreign mission movement is criticized in this chapter.

⁸ Barbara Welter. "Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860" in Mary Beth Norton. *Major Problems in American Women's History*. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1989, 122.

Robert Pierce Beaver shows that the significance of becoming a “missionary wife” stemmed from a new strategy embraced in 1799 by the New York Missionary Society. This new strategy of “the mission family” consisted of sending a family to Indian lands as missionary families. The role of the wife went into transformation at this stage since in the earlier decades the wife of an ordained minister was not allowed to enter the frontier of the social interaction. Within this new strategy, as Beaver points out, the wives of the missionaries “were expected to teach the girls and women the rudiments of learning and domestic crafts and to help in their religious instruction.”⁹ This new role served to be a significant point in the development of American women’s involvement in missionary works. Although teaching girls domestic work did not seem vital progress in women’s participation in missionary works, it did provide the basis of mutual interaction between the Christian women and the non-Christian women. Teaching domestic crafts meant that the role model of Christian woman knew how to knit, spin and weave and she was portrayed as an expert of this profession by allowing her to teach native women. In the meantime, these wives taught non-Christian women in religious instruction, which should be considered as a vital step into the territory of male missionaries.

Beaver states that the American Board’s embrace of missionary matrimony in foreign missions as a general rule took its first step in domestic missions however it strengthened with the example of British missions in India. The advice of the London Missionary Society in the contribution of females in missionary fields led the American Board to support missionary matrimony. Beaver submits several reasons for this support, which convinced American Board employees. The British example in India showed that “wives were indispensable to the success of the work”

⁹ Ibid, 48.

since they conducted schools and educated many girls in religious knowledge¹⁰. The American Board presented this fact as the initial point when sending three wives to Ceylon in 1815. Later on, missionary marriage was always helpful to allow an American Board missionary to lead an undisturbed and peaceful life, with a loving and caring wife, so that he could accomplish in his work. For the success of his evangelical work, matrimony also had another significant role. Marriage to a well-educated and pious female served to be a model for the non-Christian people. Marriage also meant the increase of missionary population in foreign lands. The American Board advocated missionary marriage on the basis that raising up a Christian population in mission lands would ease the spread of evangelism. Beaver gives importance to the official reasons of this matrimony and points out American Board's published views on missionary matrimony and the state of females in mission lands. Beaver aims to focus on the process of females' becoming indispensable in mission lands, but points out that American Board missionaries or male heads of the chapters played the dominant role in contributing the females to the mission work. Wives of the missionaries did not become the missionaries themselves, they could only be the assistant missionaries and American Board accepted that "woman was made for man, and as a general thing man cannot long be placed where he can do without her assistance."¹¹

Historian Barbara Welter's approach on the involvement of American women in the missionary movement is similar to Beaver's. She also discusses the general outlook of American female missionaries' roles in the foreign missions movement. Welter interprets females' involvement in this movement as women's response to

¹⁰ Ibid, 50.

¹¹ Ibid, 52.

missionary Boards' invitation. Welter shows that, different from feminist movements for the equality of sexes in the public sphere, the women's missionary movement did not stem from the concept of women's rights. The American Board felt the necessity of females in the mission fields and American women responded with their whole heart. However, she argues the roots of females' involvement in a mass movement like the foreign missionary movement should not be undervalued by historians since American women's support in the homeland increased with the existence of females in the mission lands. The experience of missionaries in Ceylon, Africa, India and Turkey was frequently reported to the homeland and discussed in missionary meetings of the Boards or in Sunday church meetings. The reports gave an exceptional significance to missionary wives' experiences in the mission land, which instilled courage and pride women in the United States and they supported their active sisters more devotedly. As Welter mentions, the sections devoted to females' experiences in the reports included mostly "their cheerful and holy demise" and their brief but significant labors in the mission lands¹², encouraging women in the homeland were not discouraged to marry missionary men and leave their country to evangelize non-Christian lands.

Historian Dana L. Robert brings a more feminist approach to American women's decision of marriage to a missionary. American women involved in missionary works, in the first generation of the foreign missionary movement, were mostly from New England and among the active church and charitable organizations women. Marriage to a missionary was not an unexpected decision for them. Robert mostly focuses on this New England, church going, pious girl's reason to marry a missionary and she concludes that the hope that "the mission field would permit even

¹² Barbara Welter "She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women's Missionary Carrers in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Quarterly*, Vol. XXX, No. 5, Winter 1978, 630.

a larger role in the salvation of others than did women's benevolent work in New England" led many females to decide on matrimony¹³. Some women "felt limited by their inability to preach the gospel or to work publicly for the salvation of others" and marrying a missionary represented a step beyond the limitations imposed upon them by society because of their sex¹⁴. Robert also interprets male missionaries' reasons to marry and bring their wives to mission lands. "For missionary men, a wife seemed desirable to ward off loneliness, as well as to take over household tasks" so that they would be more active and motivated in their mission work¹⁵. However, American women involved in the missionary movement as wives aimed to engage in the mission work itself, so they did. Actually what these missionary wives' of the early 19th century did was to be appreciated. First they committed themselves to the role of "helpmate" of their husbands so to fulfill the requirements of their husbands of marriage¹⁶. They provided a clean and peaceful home and brought up and educated Christian children, whose education was also fulfilled by them. In time, mission work reached these pious women. With the establishment of missionary schools these women started their career of teaching, partly because missionary men faced restrictions in some mission lands while reaching non-Christian women. For instance, in India mission fields, missionary men encountered the zenana, which was "a segregated space for the exclusive use of women."¹⁷ But historian Joan Jacobs Brumberg states that women missionaries could have access to these private female

¹³ Dana Lee Robert. *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice: The Modern Mission Era 1792-1992, An Appraisal*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997, 14.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid, 31.

¹⁶ Ibid, 32.

¹⁷ Joan Jacobs Brumberg. "Zenanas and Girlless Villages: The Ethnology of American Evangelical Women, 1870-1910." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 2, 347-371, 357.

domains, which was a significant fact in American Boards' support of females in mission lands. As Beaver puts it, missionary matrimony became "part of God's very scheme for the evangelization of the world, in the opinion of the directors of the mission boards."¹⁸ This opportunity also gave missionary wives the active religious life they were looking for in the United States.

But the wife of the missionary got never official recognition. Beaver states that American Board members saw missionary wives as subordinate and secondary. In general, it was the missionary matrimony which gained an official meaning, not the wives who made this matrimony possible. However, for the missionary wives of the first generation, gaining an official recognition from the Boards was not very important. They felt that they accomplished enough to be active publicly by working for the salvation of their non-Christian sisters. As Welter mentions, "the itinerant preacher who spoke until midnight felt herself necessary and important."¹⁹

The work of missionary wives in zenanas or in harems however was limited. In a wider scope, the missionary wife had the responsibility of her home, including domestic chores, education of her children and responsibilities towards her missionary husband, who was regarded as a more significant person in the work of evangelization. Having access to all zenanas and harems in non-Christian lands could not be achieved by depending only on missionary wives. As a solution, American Boards started considering hiring single missionary women to take on the responsibility of evangelizing non-Christian women in zenanas and harems. This record turning point in the foreign missionary movement is discussed in Helen Barret Montgomery's book, *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline Study of Fifty*

¹⁸ Beaver, 48.

¹⁹ Welter, 638.

Years of Woman's Work in Foreign Missions, published in 1910 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The Woman's Union Missionary Society. Montgomery points out that "the helplessness and misery of the women of the Orient" and "the hopelessness of attempting to dislodge heathenism while its main citadel was unreached and unreachable" convinced American Board officers to decide on allowing single women to enter the mission work, which was considered as a "revolutionary doctrine."²⁰

A more contemporary book *A Looking-Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century*, by Lisa Joy Pruitt, interprets American females' involvement in the foreign missionary movement from a different point of view than the ones held by earlier literature of women's missionary experience. Pruitt focuses mainly on the concept of Orientalism. She argues that,

the construction, elaboration, and reinforcement of a discourse about the female oriental other played a significant role in a movement that mobilized Protestant women on behalf of foreign missions in the half century and culminated in the formation of denominational women's mission boards in the later decades.²¹

Pruitt enriches the literature of evangelical women's history by focusing on the meaning of Oriental women for American women engaged in missionary work. She says that the "Orient" for 19th century evangelicals was "the area of the world stretching from historical Palestine to China and a wide variety of religious cultures, including Judaism, Islam, Greek and Syrian Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism,

²⁰ Helen Barret Montgomery. *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline Study of Fifty Years of Woman's Work in Foreign Missions*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910, 21.

²¹ Lisa Joy Pruitt. *A Looking-Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005, 1.

Confucianism, and Taoism.”²² The people living in the Orient were portrayed by American evangelicals of the 19th century as “effeminate men, oppressed women and children, who were either wildly undisciplined and overindulged or exploited and neglected.”²³ In this frame, Pruitt conveys that American missionary women felt responsible for the evangelization of these Oriental women and their contribution to the foreign missionary movement accelerated as the image of the oppressed Oriental women spread among evangelical women in American churches. According to Pruitt, male denominational leaders supported the involvement of women in the foreign missionary movement since they believed that “evangelizing the women of the Orient would completely renovate those societies, releasing the women from cultural bondage while simultaneously bringing eternal salvation to all of the people.”²⁴ The picture of the Oriental women as kept in cultural bondage, afflicted, oppressed and miserable was created by the male missionaries working in the Orient and in time this picture took the attention of the females in the United States. The stimulating thought of “being useful” was nurtured by this picture, since American women felt that their contributions and sacrifice were really needed in the Orient for the salvation of Oriental women. This picture of Oriental women also encouraged American women to consider their own status in American society. As they considered themselves in a higher position than the non-Christian women in the Orient, this became a significant stimulant for them to sacrifice their lives for the missionary work. Pruitt’s work examines the image of the Oriental women among

²² Ibid, 3.

²³ Ibid, 6.

²⁴ Ibid, 7.

Christian American women and considers its power as the turning point in women's involvement in foreign missionary movement and in shaping their self-perceptions.

Joan Brumberg indicates that it is significant to consider “both how and what American women came to think about themselves in relation to other women of the world” to understand American women's involvement in the foreign missionary movement²⁵. Brumberg focuses on ethnological descriptions of manners, family life, politics and culture, which created the basis in distinguishing Christians from non-Christians. Specifically after the 1870s, the religious ethnology embraced by American women implied that the research on non-Christian cultures or oriental cultures took the attention and trust of American women. The exotic characteristics of oriental cultures, such as “foot-binding of Chinese girls or polygamy of Indian rajahs” became the core elements of American women's interest²⁶. According to Brumberg, “the popular dissemination of this catalog of heathen atrocities” became the women's foreign mission crusade, “a powerful and multifaceted sisterhood of agencies.”²⁷ In this frame, the “otherness” of the native women played the most significant role in American women's involvement in foreign mission work. By comparing themselves with the non-Christian lands' women, American women defined themselves. They realized that native women were in miserable conditions all over the world and American women were among the luckiest groups since they saw themselves within liberty of Christianity. Consequently, Christianity became the tool of liberation and American missionary women devoted themselves to spread this

²⁵ Brumberg, 348.

²⁶ Ibid, 349.

²⁷ Ibid, 350.

liberation through the world. As Barbara Welter also says, “Christianity was characterized as the liberator of the women”²⁸

In her analysis of American women’s missionary work in Japan mission in her book *American Women Missionaries at Kobe College, 1873-1909: New Dimensions in Gender*, published in 2004, Noriko Kawamura Ishii also mentions American women’s perception of the non-Christian women in comparison to themselves. Beginning in 1866, American women started organizing separate women’s societies for foreign missions, which were denominational. This was the third turning point of the women’s foreign missionary movement since women in missionary societies brought their independence and professional work to a wider perspective. They started making decisions independent of males’ boards, chose their own missionaries, who were single women, and took the responsibility of the mission work by themselves. Ishii mentions that their rhetoric also changed with the establishment of the Woman’s Boards. Helping native women and bringing Christianity to their lands had always been the main objective of American women in missionary works so that they could depict themselves doing a job usefully. Ishii states that this objective was enriched with “the coexistence of two concepts: that the American women were superior to the native women in mission fields and that both could unite in sisterhood despite their cultural differences because they were women.”²⁹ Ishii states that embracing the approaches of “difference” and “commonness” gave a unique view to the women’s missionary movement³⁰. American women saw themselves as superior to non-Christian women since they

²⁸ Welter, 198.

²⁹ Noriko Kawamura Ishii. *American Women Missionaries at Kobe College, 1873-1909: New Dimensions in Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004, 29.

³⁰ Ibid.

were pure, pious, evangelized and converted females. Christianity stressed the notion of difference. However, American women also believed that gender established a strong basis for the notion of “commonness.” The women of the mission field, although they were considered heathen, were the sisters of American missionary women. The notion of sisterhood emphasized the commonness, that both groups of women could understand each other’s gender based problems. With these perceptions, Woman’s Boards aimed to educate and evangelize these native women at the same time. They believed that both education and evangelization would elevate these women. In this sense, totally different from what their male colleagues were doing, American missionary women decided to provide knowledge and spiritual instruction to native women.

Ishii described Emily A. White Smith, the second president of the Woman’s Board of Missions of the Interior (1871-1906), as an influential character in embracing educational aims in missionary works. WBMI developed women’s Christian colleges in foreign mission lands. Emily A. White Smith’s family background did explain her educational aims in mission fields. Ishii points out that,

the progressive ideas of Smith’s parents who believed in equal education for boys and girls and the intellectually stimulating atmosphere full of books in a vast array of interests provided her with an ideal environment to freely nurture her ideas about women’s advancement.³¹

Emily A. White was representative of many influential women in mission works. There were hundreds of women committed to educational works and women’s colleges in mission fields and aimed both to evangelize and to educate the native women so that they could be elevated spiritually and socially.

³¹ Ibid, 39.

In these terms, missionary women became reform activists within the Woman's Boards. The mission started embracing the education of native women, besides their evangelization. Although the notion of education was presented to the male Boards as an influential and inevitable element of the evangelization, it was actually apart from it. Women's colleges and schools in mission fields stressed the aim to educate native women. Gaining a new dimension, missionary movement became a social reform movement regarding foreign cultures and Emily A. White Smith claimed that "Christianity was a rationale that could convince an American Christian woman of every class to participate in the social reform of foreign cultures."³² Smith aimed to change the world by making use of her education and by providing educational opportunities to females all around the world, however as Ishii mentions, Smith used religion "in the foreground to legitimate women's active participation in foreign mission work."³³ In this radical way or in a more conservative way, American women of the late 19th and early 20th century supported the foreign missionary movement fiercely.

Patricia R. Hill's book *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920* focuses on American women's involvement in foreign missionary movement within the historical context of Woman's Boards establishment till the movement's decline in the 1920s. As she puts it, "the interdenominational woman's foreign mission movement was substantially larger than any of the other mass woman's movements of the nineteenth century" and in statistics, by 1915, "there were more than three million women on the membership rolls of some forty denominational female

³² Ibid, 43.

³³ Ibid.

missionary societies.”³⁴ Hill points out that naming the women’s societies the “manifestation of missionary expansion” in the last decade of 19th century, gives American women committed to missionary work a vital role in the development of foreign missionary movement. For Hill, the role of American women, in generating enthusiasm for missions, collecting money or recruiting candidates for foreign service, had been overlooked in studies that focus on the activities of denominational mission boards³⁵. However, American women’s help in mission fields as contributors, teachers, nurses or superintendents in women’s colleges and schools gained significance and support from their male colleagues in time. Consequently, Hill states that,

if the activism that is said to characterize American religion and American missions is to be fully understood, surely the activities of churchwomen and female missionaries must be examined.³⁶

Hill’s approach focuses on the place of American missionary women in American religious history. However, she also analyzes this point within the women’s history writing, arguing,

from the perspective of women’s history, it is equally important that a movement which enlisted millions of women be placed in the tradition of female voluntary associations to which historians of women in nineteenth century America have assigned considerable significance.³⁷

The place of American missionary women in American history books is also worth discussion. Christine Bolt compared British and American women’s

³⁴ Patricia R. Hill. *The World Their Household: The American Woman’s Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1985, 3.

³⁵ Ibid, 24.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

movements and their backgrounds, which compared the emergence of same movements on different sides of the Atlantic, in 1993. Although Bolt does not dedicate a different section for women's missionary movement in her book *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s*, she informs the reader with basic elements of women's involvement in evangelical work in general. Under the light of Beaver's book *All Loves Excelling*, it is well-known that missionary movement in Britain constituted an example for the American missionary movement and Beaver points out that the American Board's attitude towards including females in the movement changed with British women's productive participation in mission fields.

Bolt's study of evangelical women focuses on the women's voluntary work and social activism under the title of *Religious Ferment*. According to Bolt, the concept of voluntarism gained significance in the 1820s in the United States and women in voluntary work "were a way of demonstrating feminine concern for children, the welfare of unfortunate women and masculine morality."³⁸ Embracing a sense of devotion to voluntary work in churches, Sabbath Schools or in missionary societies, women "gave practical expression to their own ideal of self-sacrificing womanhood, winning the approval of society, an enhanced sense of individual worth and sisterhood, and an opportunity for moving out of the home without bringing on themselves the censure of men."³⁹ In this sense, Bolt interprets American women's entry to men's sphere through voluntarism but without any element of feminism and women's rights beginning in the 1820s. Women aimed to enlarge their domestic sphere without being criticized by men and as Bolt asserts, they did "strengthen the

³⁸ Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993, 34.

³⁹ Ibid.

sexual status quo.”⁴⁰ Treating the women’s missionary movement as a movement stemming from the concept of social activism of the 1820s, it is hard to expect American women interested in foreign missions to struggle for the extension of women’s rights.

Bolt demonstrates the general view of women’s sphere and connects it to women’s interest in evangelical work. Women’s seeking self-reliance and self-improvement was not common in the first half of the 19th century and education was not appropriate for women unless it included domestic concepts. However, as Bolt points out, “time spent in religious contemplation and study was harder to criticize” and women’s entry to public sphere through religious benevolence could more easily be achieved⁴¹. Bolt’s approach to American women’s involvement in evangelical and missionary works focuses mainly on the concept of usefulness. American women desired to have an influence outside the domestic sphere, however they did not choose to show this desire in a radical way. As Bolt points out the early 19th century women’s pursuit of personal autonomy was limited to their service to God so that they would not lose the respect of the male society.

Bolt demonstrates the historical setting successfully by referring to men’s perception of a respected middle class woman, which framed the role of a missionary wife or a single woman missionary in the first half of the 19th century. Nancy Woloch discusses American women’s missionary movement similarly in her book *Women and the American Experience*. Woloch mentions women’s missionary societies under the same title with other benevolent societies of the early 19th century. Thus American women entered the missionary work as fundraisers or

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, 56.

lecturers at the churches and in women's missionary societies with humanitarian aims, such as saving native women and children from desperate conditions, teaching them God's way and elevating them to a pious status. Like Bolt, Woloch also focuses on the fact that women's involvement in benevolent societies, such as missionary societies, stemmed from their will to "fulfill a mission rather than to tamper with the boundaries of woman's sphere."⁴² American women gathered and worked together for the common cause, to save their non-Christian sisters in domestic or foreign mission fields, but never "challenged the roles they were assigned by custom, convention, and clergymen."⁴³

However the custom had already been broken since women appeared in public life with the membership in voluntary associations such as missionary societies. Women created a network of their own outside the domestic sphere. They learned to organize meetings and to address a group, and they managed to gather for the common cause and became influential in the development of the missionary movement. What has not been recognized by many historians is that beginning in the 1800s American women consciously or unconsciously accomplished to enter male's sphere. They were limited by men's rules and they did not consciously struggle to break the bondage of domesticity but their entry to the mission work already disrupted that bondage. Their common cause to be useful to their non-Christian sisters brought them a career as fund-raisers, organizers, lecturers, publishers, writers, teachers and even superintendents of missionary schools. This elevation of American women's status should not be overlooked.

⁴² Nancy Woloch. *Women and the American Experience*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994, 174.

⁴³ Ibid.

Although Woloch does not point out the works of missionary women in a separate section in her book, she refers to the evangelical Protestant experience of American women under the title of piety and purity. Belief in female moral superiority came as an outcome of the Second Great Awakening in the early 19th century. Female converts outnumbered male converts and the new Protestant American woman model was shaped with the concepts of “humility, submission, piety and charity.”⁴⁴ As mentioned above, religious activity was asserted as an element of the domestic sphere, so women started playing a vital role in churches. As Woloch points out, American women’s gaining dominancy in churches led ministers to appreciate their effort and to encourage them to be more active. At this point, ministers and pious American women found themselves on the same track; both depicted themselves as “outsiders in a society devoted to the pursuit of wealth, as allies who strove for morality in a competitive world.”⁴⁵ Woloch states that, with the elevation of Protestant woman character in the church, ministers risked losing both the loyalty of female church members and their own clerical power in the church. Consequently, as the ultimate power of the church, ministers created an alliance with the female members of the church. The alliance provided the “clerical endorsement of female moral superiority in exchange for women’s support and activism.”⁴⁶ As the word activism implies, American women thus accomplished entry to the public sphere where they started their career as lecturers, publishers, organizers and fund-raisers.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 120.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 121.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 121.

The activism of American women accelerated in the 1830s with the full support and approval of ministers. Since women “were bastions of piety in their congregations and a proven success as domestic evangelists” ministers supported and even encouraged them to form associations⁴⁷. The first three decades of the 19th century proved to be the “the groundwork for entry into public life” for American women⁴⁸. Pious purposes gathered thousands of women, mostly in Northeast and West to form societies of their own. Woloch lists these societies as Bible and tract societies, missionary societies, charitable societies, maternal societies and Sunday school associations. Historian Lois W. Banner also points out the form of women’s organizations and their purposes in her book *Women in Modern America: A Brief History*, published in 1984. Banner gives women’s auxiliaries to missionary boards as an example in order to point out that early 19th century American women were stimulated by a religious zeal in forming associations of their own⁴⁹.

Woloch calls the sphere occupied by females founding associations for the cause of piety, “a public space midway between the realms of domesticity and politics.”⁵⁰ Compared to women devoted to domestic chores and to the welfare of only their own families, American women in religion-based associations accomplished the fulfillment of being useful for other people. In response to their courage and sacrifice, these associations elevated these women to a status of being indispensable and respectful in males’ sphere.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 171.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Lois Banner. *Women in Modern America: A Brief History*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984, 19.

⁵⁰ Woloch, 171.

S. J. Kleinberg does not mention any dimension of American women's involvement in foreign missionary movement in her book *Women in the United States, 1830-1945*, although she does show the emergence and development of the late 19th century club women's movement. Kleinberg points out that, women's clubs "had their roots in ante-bellum female organizations, including missionary, anti-slavery and temperance societies."⁵¹ In this frame, women's clubs of the late 19th century were similar to women's missionary societies in terms of their goals, works and responsibility of participants and women's view of social activism. As Kleinberg states, the late 19th century club women's movement adopted many elements from antebellum missionary societies; the late 19th century club women's organizations

neither criticized masculine supremacy nor believed that gender characteristics were mutable, instead these groups accepted what they believed to be the differences between the sexes and used them as the basis for sociability and social action⁵².

It is obvious that the club women's movement did not embrace an aim of gender equality or women's rights. As Kleinberg mentions, it derived from women's consciousness of their separate interests. In basic terms, neither the club women's movement nor the women's foreign mission movement emerged as movements seeking women's equality with men. However, in all women's history books, as in Kleinberg's, the club women's movement does attract the attention of the historian whereas the women's missionary movement is mostly not even mentioned. Sara M. Evans's *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*, which was appreciated as "the best one-volume history of American women to date" by Gerda Lerner, does not

⁵¹ S. J. Kleinberg. *Women in the United States 1830-1945*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999, 163.

⁵² Ibid, 162.

include any chapter or section devoted to American missionary women's works or associations.

Examining the relationship of woman's foreign missionary movement to other women's movements of the same period is crucial in understanding women's historians' perception of the women's foreign missionary movement. As historian Patricia Hill claims, the attitude of the missionary ladies toward woman's rights was not friendly, since "the egalitarian rationale underlying the woman's rights crusade challenged the very assumptions about the sanctity of the Christian home."⁵³ As mentioned by many historians writing on missionary women's experience, challenging the traditional division of gender spheres and claiming an equal opportunity of activism in public sphere, was not among the objectives of American women in mission work. New England girls chose to marry a missionary in order to gain entry to the public arena to be useful to other women but this wish did not embrace a radical meaning of sexual equality. In this context, the women's rights crusade or suffrage movement did not attract American women committed to missionary evangelization.

However, the origins of the woman's temperance movement and woman's foreign missionary movement, their ideology and their perspective of Christian womanhood met at common points regarding the members' religious background and their perceptions of Protestantism. Women's foreign mission societies depicted the Woman's Christian Temperance Union as "the other great movement of their day" and these two different branches of women's movements in the 19th century sympathized and cooperated with each other. Mostly the women, who became involved in missionary movement as participants of money collecting societies or as

⁵³ Hill, 54.

missionaries in foreign lands, were among the members of the WCTU. Patricia Hill claims that the women's temperance movement was "the only organization that approached the woman's mission movement in size," which was a fact that ignited competition and even rivalry on some occasions. The movements shared a common ideology; the salvation of the world could only be accomplished by Christian womanhood. This belief mostly depended on these women's denominational education background, which enabled them to become involved in these movements as courageous, conscious of social and political events, educated and pious women. When compared these two movements in size, it became obvious that Women's Temperance Movement "never enlisted as many women as the foreign mission cause attracted" although "the temperance movement received the lion's share of the publicity in the 1870s."⁵⁴ Historian Maureen Fitzgerald asserts that WCTU women used Christian rhetoric to legitimate their right to the public sphere and consequently "carved a path through which their daughters and protégées could claim access to public space without a religious rationale at all."⁵⁵ However, the women's foreign mission movement carved this path before their temperance sisters did.

The concept of temperance gained its significance among the women of the United States in the 1820s, when they joined the temperance societies, established and run by men. The most notorious temperance society led by men, "The Sons of Temperance" gave way to the establishment of an auxiliary named the "Daughters of Temperance" for the purpose of women's participation at temperance movement in this era.⁵⁶ In the meantime, the "Order of God Templars," another temperance

⁵⁴ Ibid, 55.

⁵⁵ Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton. *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002, 285.

society under the power of men, admitted women to membership. Men's encouragement of women to attend the temperance movement attracted women to the temperance issue and led women to "establish temperance as a woman's issue" in the United States⁵⁷. In ten years, women interested in the temperance movement started publishing "fiction presenting temperance as an overwhelming concern for women."⁵⁸ Beginning in the 1840s, the existence of women in temperance movement started representing more significance for the future success of the movement's purpose since independent local and state female organizations were established in "New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio."⁵⁹ In the 1850s, with the formation and leadership of the New York Temperance Woman's Society, under the presidency of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, women's voice regarding the temperance issue reached the public sphere and thousands of women in the U.S. mentioned their support of temperance in numerous public speeches. By the summer of 1874, the participation of women in the temperance movement was strengthened with the establishment of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union under the presidency of Annie Wittenmyer.

Ruth Bordin described the WCTU as "the major temperance organization for women, in numbers that far surpassed their participation in any other women's organization in the nineteenth century and that made the WCTU the first women's mass movement."⁶⁰ While General Federation of Women's Clubs had 20,000 and

⁵⁶ Mattingly, Carol. *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998, viii.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 39.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Mattingly, xiii.

⁶⁰ Ruth Bordin. "The Temperance Crusade as a Feminist Movement," 215-223. Mary Beth Norton. *Major Problems in American Women's History*. Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1989, 215

National American Woman Suffrage Association had 13.000 dues-paying members by 1893, the WCTU attracted 200.000 American women. However, the Methodist Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, the largest of forty woman's missionary societies, had "267.000 members by 1910, which increased to half a million in 1920."⁶¹ In this respect, the American women's foreign mission movement should be considered as the first women's mass movement and should own a place in American women's history right beside the women's temperance movement.

⁶¹ Hill, 49.

CHAPTER III

THE EMERGENCE OF AMERICAN WOMEN'S FOREIGN MISSION MOVEMENT

Since it was widely accepted that only women could reach the secluded females of the Orient, this emphasis on the conversion of mothers elevated the importance of woman's mission and made American women peculiarly responsible for the success of the Protestant mission crusade⁶².

-Patricia R. Hill

This chapter will concentrate on the formation of the women's foreign mission movement. The dominant female characters in the movement and well-known missionary associations established by pious American females, whose names are not even mentioned in most American women's history books will be noted. While ideological gendering of public and private spheres placed American women in domestic bondage in the early nineteenth century, most New England women attempted to change the lives of non-Christian women in the far East⁶³. Christian virtues, enriched and empowered with the Second Great Awakening, consisted of piety, purity and charity, which were described as female characteristics. Consequently, the Second Great Awakening strengthened female moral superiority

⁶² Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1985, 5.

⁶³ The concept of domestic bondage is to be treated within the ideology of separate spheres. The ideology of separate spheres determines to place women in the domestic sphere. The morality and piety of 19th century American middle class women is evaluated with the concept of this ideology. In this sense, the way to gain a respected figure in the society is adopting this ideology and become a part of domestic life and alienate from the outer life.

and offered women a more active church experience. In this sense, church became involved in the domestic sphere and women's participation in church meetings regarding charity organizations and missionary activities was encouraged. In this setting, this chapter argues that American women made use of this limited activism, which was portrayed as appropriate by the male society of the time and became active workers in the public sphere. This chapter's main objective is to make the American women's foreign mission movement and more than three million American females involved in this movement, visible. American women, motivated by religious fervor, sacrificed their lives in any possible way and aimed to help some other women, who were pictured as weak, submissive and dependent in the other half of the world. However, their experience of "woman's work for woman" cannot make a mark on women's history. Then it is sufficient to ask this question: Must a woman's movement in general sense embrace a feminist or secular objective to be considered as a part of women's history? This chapter lays the groundwork for the thesis by emphasizing the general outlook of women's foreign mission movement and the process they became indispensable figures in mission works.

Missionary women most often came from the professional or artisan classes of New England. They all enjoyed a background in education, but as Barbara Leslie Epstein conveys, they did not find attending female seminaries enough. Unlike other women of the age they studied advanced subjects with the male members of the family, their brothers and fathers⁶⁴. These advantages shaped their lives similarly; after their education was completed, they mostly taught school for a time and got prepared for their future careers as missionaries.

⁶⁴ Barbara Leslie Epstein. *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1981, 3-4.

What American women involved in missionary works advocated passionately was the education of women in the name of an evangelical purpose. Missionary service was seen as a direct “prerogative and benefit” for womanhood⁶⁵. These women believed that they were specially enabled for missionary work. Their special gift was the ability to influence others. It was due to woman’s influence that she had a responsibility to mission work. The responsibility attendant to this influence was a Christian education, reinforcing again the necessity for Christian study. They argued that woman’s education was a “prerequisite” for her service to others. Their motto included a pious thesis: “Piety led a woman less into submissiveness and more into service to others through the notion of influence.”⁶⁶

As Marjorie Shell Wilser argues, women raised in New England had, by virtue of background, an ingrained sense of individualism. New England schools and churches all gave them a sense that America, especially New England, had a mission to provide the world with a “godly example of democracy”. Combined with the “equally ingrained sense of the mission of the church to spread the Gospel”, this sense of mission was a strong motivating factor for the faithful of New England⁶⁷.

Since each child in New England’s churches was taught that “original sin tainted everyone”, all of them grew up considering that they were sinners.⁶⁸ The women’s self-image may actually have benefited by this knowledge, since the idea of being a sinner did not depend on gender difference, so women depicted themselves

⁶⁵ Janet Muriel Cramer. “Cross Purposes: Gender and Nation in the Women’s Missionary Press, 1880-1905” A Thesis to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota. June, 1999, 128.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Marjorie Shell Wilser. “Living Sacrifices: Women Missionaries’ Personal Writings 1812-1860.” A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Department of History San Jose State University. December 1997, 40.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 42.

no worse than men. To express the Gospel meant to announce that Jesus had come to save the world, more particularly the individual sinner, from sin. Missionary activity was the logical consequence of the belief: If one believed that “humankind was sinful, Jesus Christ died to save the world from sin and humankind was destined for eternal punishment unless each believed in Christ,” then it became imperative for believers to tell unbelievers the Gospel⁶⁹. Considering that women saw themselves as significant figures to influence people, they did not hesitate to attend to the missionary purposes courageously.

Nineteenth century culture did not promise a vast variety of opportunities to American women. Sexual division in labor prevented them from embracing secular careers. As mentioned above, the educated American girl, mostly from New England, had few opportunities, which focused on a teaching career. She could teach either in elementary and primary schools or in Sunday schools, which was much more praised than secular schools. Her career would be finished when she got married and became involved in domestic life totally.

Church and religion never became neglected in the lives of educated New England girls. Especially after conversion, they gained more courage since the idea of being safe from sin, helped them to survive under any circumstances. Continuing to attend the church service made educated New England women aware of the conditions of non-Christian women. Horrified with the spiritual darkness of non-Christian women, church-going, educated New England women devoted themselves to the evangelical cause and established female missionary societies, under the supervision of local churches.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 49.

Before the women's missionary movement was institutionalized under Woman's Boards, female missionary societies were operating as "Cent Societies" under the name of denominational boards⁷⁰. These Cent Societies contributed to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and after 1810s to Baptist and United Foreign Missionary Societies. However these small societies did not last long; with the establishment of Female Charitable Societies, the number of Cent Societies began to decline⁷¹. The New Hampshire Missionary Society was one of the rare examples which continued organizing Cent Societies as its auxiliaries. In 1814, in order to emphasize the significance of New Hampshire women's participation at foreign missionary works, NHMS started publishing annually a "Report on the Concerns of the New-Hampshire Cent Institutions."⁷²

The most striking characteristic of the pre-institutionalized female missionary movement was women's dedication to the leadership of "city missions."⁷³ The increasing number of female societies of cities and Cent Societies as these city societies' auxiliaries gave women the opportunity to build leadership skills. The idea of being a small participant in a big movement was common in this era. The annual reports of these small organizations emphasized how popular these city missions were among women who wanted to support the foreign missionary movement. The number of their members increased everyday and cents collected from each member made huge amounts of cash for the "parent" societies which were the American

⁷⁰ Margaret Lamberts Bendroth. "The Social Dimensions of Woman's Sphere: The Rise of Women's Organizations in Late Nineteenth-Century American Protestantism." A Dissertation Submitted to The Johns Hopkins University. Baltimore, 1984, 87.

⁷¹ Robert Pierce Beaver. *All Loves Excelling: American Protestant Women in World Mission*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968, 34.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Bendroth, 87.

Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and Baptist and United Foreign Missionary Societies⁷⁴.

The pioneer of female fund raising organizations was The Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes, founded in 1800, which aimed to help American Board of Commissioners financially. The first secretary and treasurer of this pioneer organization was a single lady, Miss Mary Webb, who managed to reach all women organizations in the United States⁷⁵. Although women mostly were not wage-earners in the 1810s, their devotion for evangelizing the world led them to donate the money they saved from their kitchen budget they gained from their husbands. The other similar example was the New York Female Missionary Society, which started functioning as a fund raiser for the Methodist Board of Foreign Missions in 1819. Traditionally, during the pre-Civil War period, the female missionary movement was under the shadow of missionary men's big denominational boards. Women, who devoted themselves to the mission evangelization embracing the whole world, were supposed to gather in women's meetings and welcomed donations from the participants of the meetings in the name of evangelization.

Before the establishment of Woman's Boards, women participating in missionary programs, meetings and raising money or donating money, did not seem inappropriate; in fact these pious women were considered as the ideal type of women. Missionary men appreciated their efforts for fund-raising and step by step encouraged them to promote the "Savior's cause" by supporting missionary causes which should be accomplished by missionary men only⁷⁶. Thus, American women

⁷⁴ Ibid, 88.

⁷⁵ Helen Barret Montgomery. *Western Women in Eastern Lands: An Outline Study of Fifty Years of Woman's Work in Foreign Missions*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910, 12.

were supposed to bring piety to the missionary meetings, to pray with clergymen and to become models for all women who sought a career. From the 1810s, till 1868, the woman's missionary movement even witnessed the expansion of the "missionary zeal" as one of the basic courses in the curriculum of female academies⁷⁷. However, even gatherings of women for religious purposes were questioned and criticized by both men and women of the era. These criticisms mostly stemmed from "apostolical prohibition" which did not approve of several women praying together⁷⁸. The concern of the female members of the fund-raising societies led to an official declaration of approval of women meetings regarding religious discussions and discussion of the Gospel, given by Congregational and Presbyterian ministers⁷⁹.

With the encouragement from the ministers, women gathering at church began widening their perspectives; they learned the Bible in depth, exchanged their personal thoughts regarding missionary works in far lands and heard about women who died for the sake of the Gospel. Considering the new perspective these church women were gaining, church gatherings ignited these women's "fresh interest in missions"⁸⁰. From this point on, women became interested in obtaining a more active role in missionary works. In this sense, women's church meetings could be asserted as a turning point in the existence of females in foreign mission fields. Pious women's growing interest in missionary works became the roots of their attempts in organizing their societies more efficiently and entering the missionary fields by marrying missionary men.

⁷⁶ Beaver, 34.

⁷⁷ Bendroth, 89.

⁷⁸ Beaver, 31.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 31.

⁸⁰ Wilser, 51.

The first sanctioned group of women in missionary works consisted mostly of wives of missionary men in foreign lands and very few single missionary women in the first half of the 19th century. Under the name of denominational missionary movements, which hired men as missionaries, single women had not had the chance to become missionaries in foreign lands. Missionary wives, however, gained popularity among the women at home for their being self-sacrificing for their husbands and for the sake of evangelizing the world. The image of a “quiet, docile, young woman for whom self-denial and self-sacrifice were joyful burdens,” was the popular image for missionary wives⁸¹. Women gathered in churches listening to the stories of missionary wives in foreign lands praised these women for sacrificing their comfortable lives in the United States. Missionary wives were acknowledged for tireless labor and heroic self-sacrifice. A missionary in South Africa, Mr. Aldin Grout, in his letter dated February 28, 1836, referred to Mrs. Wood who was a wife of a missionary, as a woman who “used to travel about among the blacks and whites without the least apparent thought of danger” when asking the American Board about his decision of hiring Mrs. Wood as a teacher for the indigenous people⁸². “Sacrifice and self-denial” were key components of missionary womanhood in the early 19th century.

Missionary wives were largely remembered in their domestic roles as wives, nurses and mothers, more than mission team members, translators or teachers. Missionary wives were the women who aimed to perform house work as well as possible so that they could be good examples for the indigenous women. In her journal dated January 10, 1847, Mrs. Emily Judson, who was a missionary wife in

⁸¹ Wilser, 72.

⁸² D. J. Kotze. *Letters Of The American Missionaries 1835-1838*. Cape Town: The Van Riebeeck Society, 1950, 103.

Burma, mentioned that “women were made for such things” and limited the work of a missionary woman in domestic bondage⁸³. The other significant responsibility of these women was evangelizing indigenous women through women’s meetings held in the private sphere⁸⁴. In some cases however, based on the missionary husbands’ decision, missionary wives could accompany their husbands in the spread of Christianity. In a letter dated 1834 to one of her friends in the U.S., Mrs. Allen, who was a missionary wife in the eastern part of Turkey, mentioned that she left her children at home with another missionary and “spent sixteen days, traveling seventy-five miles on horseback, visiting thirteen villages and holding thirty four meetings.”⁸⁵ However, this case could be interpreted as extraordinary for missionary wives, since as a missionary in eastern Turkey, Rev. C. H. Wheeler asserted that bringing Christianity to the places “where light of the gospel had not entered would be too hard work for ladies” and he did not let wives accompany their husbands in visiting villages⁸⁶.

The subordinate and self-denying role of missionary wives spread as a new career for women who had been shaped inside the boundaries of domesticity. In a letter to her sister Susan, dated March 16, 1844, the missionary wife Mrs. Shuck mentioned her daily duties “of a private and domestic nature” as a list consisting of teaching English and Bible to Chinese ladies, attending to “the instructions of the girls in needle-work, visiting women at their homes to pray with the sick amongst

⁸³ A. C. Kendrick *The Life and Letters of Mrs. Emily C. Judson*. New York: Sheldon & Company, 1862, 247.

⁸⁴ Bendroth, 93.

⁸⁵ Rev. C. H. Wheeler. *Letters From Eden; Reminiscences of Missionary Life in the East*. Massachusetts: American Tract Society, 1868, 207.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 201.

them and distributing Bible.”⁸⁷ American women, who made the marriage to a missionary man, a new “career”, mostly consisted of educated but not ambitious women in public space consisting of other reform movements. Actually, calling American missionary women totally not ambitious would be wrong; the frame of “ambition” for these women was drawn with marriage. Their interpretation of ambition was nurtured with Protestantism. These women were among the ones who had already embraced the devotion to missionary purposes in the foreign lands.

Women’s ambitions to marry a missionary man nurtured a new business in missionary societies; an arranged marriage to an “appointed missionary” gained popularity⁸⁸. Women’s choice of a missionary career by marrying a minister in foreign missions could be identified as an ambitious step in this sense. As historian Patricia Grimshaw states, American women’s “presence in foreign mission service was part of a separate female ambition for an important and independent career, the entry for which was marriage to a departing male missionary.”⁸⁹

In such a frame of mind, young women, who were interested in foreign missions would hear of an ordained young minister assigned to a distant mission. In this case, older women or men of the church brought this young man to her door and introduced him to her in the name of a shared interest in missionary activities. The actual object of their introduction was matrimony. The young woman understood that the minister had no time to waste when he proposed to her. Interestingly, she

⁸⁷ Jeremiah Bell Jeter. *Memoir of Mrs. Henrietta Shuck: The First American Female Missionary to China*. Richmond, 1850, 201.

⁸⁸ Barbara Welter. “She Hath Done What She Could: Protestant Women’s Missionary Carrers in Nineteenth-Century America,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. XXX, No. 5, Winter 1978, 624-639.

⁸⁹ Patricia Grimshaw. *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989, xxi.

interpreted these circumstances as “the hand of God” directing her path and leading her to a more useful task by making her a participant at the missionary service⁹⁰.

Assigned missionaries sent back reports from the mission fields and described the activities of missionary wives in the home of the missionary or in mission works. The results encouraged American Boards to support missionary matrimony since missionary wives were depicted as important figures in reaching the secluded areas of native women who could be evangelized by the help of missionary wives. The presence of a wife in the missionary’s home also encouraged the assigned missionary to be more productive and lively in his evangelical work. In time, the American Board did accept some single women’s applications to become foreign missionaries, but the request for matrimony was always repeated and encouraged. By 1860, “ABCFM’s women missionaries numbered 226.”⁹¹

By 1861, the first woman-sponsored missionary association, the Women’s Union Missionary Society, was founded to provide a better opportunity for American women to become involved in missionary works abroad independently and by not feeling obliged to marry an assigned missionary. Sarah Doremus, who was a Sunday school teacher, became the first president of the Women’s Union Missionary Society in 1861. The formation of the Women’s Union Missionary Society was one of significant examples of the women’s attempts at organizing their own missionary movement. As David Brewer Eddy asserts the pitiful story of life in Indian zenanas and Turkish harems led Mrs. Doremus to bring help to indigenous women⁹². However, the story of the formation of this society illustrated the dominance of

⁹⁰ Wilser, 46.

⁹¹ Ibid, 93.

⁹² David Brewer Eddy. *What Next In Turkey: Glimpses of the American Board’s Work In The Near East*. Boston: The American Board, 1913, 147.

men's participation and power in the missionary movement in this period. Doremus, encouraged by Reverend David Abeel's advice to form a foreign missionary society for women, informed the Congregational Church that she aimed to form a separate female branch of missionary works in 1834. The "denominational opposition" to the formation of a separate female missionary society prevented Doremus from forming the WUMS until 1861⁹³.

In 1834 Reverend David Abeel was a missionary in China. He met "the helplessness and misery of the women of the Orient," on which he thought long and deeply. He, then came to a conclusion to hold a "revolution doctrine" that it was absolutely necessary to bring into the field unmarried women to reach and teach women and children in the Orient. He went to the Boards with the argument that since "the missionary wife at best could give only a fragment of her strength and time to the work, then why not send out women to minister to the uncounted millions of women in non-Christian lands?"⁹⁴ However, the innovation was resisted by the denominational Boards and "women's work for women in heathen lands" postponed for thirty years.

Women's work for women attempted to develop what was commonly referred to as Christian character in indigenous peoples through the female population. Evangelism, education and later the medical programs became the means by which to achieve the end. The development of a Christian character remained an important theme of mission ideology throughout the late 19th and early 20th century when the concept of "women's work for women" started to dominate the female missionary movement. As wives and mothers, married missionary women

⁹³ Bendroth, 91.

⁹⁴ Montgomery, 21.

served as model homemakers for indigenous women in foreign lands. This theme regarding the effective maternal influence on the lives of indigenous women was not distinguished from the outer life while interaction between indigenous and missionary women continued in the churches, schools and hospitals. While reinforcing the traditional female role of domesticity, the growing sense of female mission thrust many women into non-traditional roles.

In the 1860s, two parallel developments reshaped missionary work in general; large numbers of college educated women applied to missionary works in foreign lands and under the influence of these more educated women, educational work gained a greater emphasis in the female missionary movement. With the expansion of the female missionary societies, the perspective of Protestant evangelism aimed to spread in foreign lands, went into transformation and aimed to have efforts not only for the “preached world” but also for the social life of the indigenous people⁹⁵.

Post Civil War women’s involvement and interest in the foreign missionary works could also be associated with their experience in war relief. The meaning of responsibility in social work gained importance among women who penetrated their abilities in social works which had been included in men’s sphere for many decades. It would be wrong to assert that the Civil War gave way to the formation of women’s foreign missionary movement, since attempts of women in gaining independence as a separate movement was obvious before the war; but the shift of women from home to the social services and to the war jobs during the Civil War was considered as an important point in the growing independent women missionary movement. From men’s point of view, it was the discovery of the power of organized woman’s work

⁹⁵ Bendroth, 87.

for soldiers in the camps and hospitals from 1861 to 1865 that vitalized the establishment of Woman's Boards⁹⁶.

The 1860s became a decade for missionary wives and church women interested in missionary work to build up their own missionary societies independent of male missionary boards. Missionary wives could become career makers for the future independent missionary women in the foreign fields. Mrs. Edwin Parker, who was a missionary wife in India, constructed the basis for the Methodist Woman's Foreign Missionary Society by gathering with Jennie Fowler Willing, a hardworking woman of the Methodist denomination, Mrs. William Butler, a missionary wife in India and Mrs. Lewis Flanders, a prosperous Bostonian lady⁹⁷. In 1869, the wealth and ambition of women yielded its first product; the Methodist Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was founded. In one year, local auxiliaries were formed in big cities all over the United States and financial aid was welcomed from wealthy and pious women of the nation. In four years, the Methodist Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, as an independent society, sent twelve missionary women to foreign lands and gained 33.000 members⁹⁸.

Baptist women who could not get the help of the American Baptist Missionary Union shared the same fate with Methodist women. When the American Baptist Missionary Union refused to commission single women for the position, women members of the denomination decided to form their own society. In 1871, the Woman's Baptist Missionary Society was organized as an official auxiliary of the Union.

⁹⁶ Eddy, 147.

⁹⁷ Bendroth, 94.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

These women's organizations that operated under the name of the denominations worked hard to enlist young women and children in their work. However, in the early years of their formation, their efforts were futile. In order to keep the unity among women, the Women's Baptist Missionary Society started publishing articles showing the progress and enthusiasm of missionary women in the fields. In one of these articles, Jennie Fowler Willing "complained that too many young girls were told to wait until they were married before becoming involved in church activities."⁹⁹ The women organizations cultivated their interest in single and young women and married women were encouraged to bring their daughters to the church and house meetings so that these small children were filled with evangelical training. The results of this new interest showed itself in the following generations when these small girls got educated and were willing to become more active in missionary fields when Woman's Boards would also prosper and train thousands of women to become active-single missionaries in the foreign lands.

Conscious and devoted women gathered in the old South Church, Boston, on January 7, 1868 to discuss the establishment of a separate Board for single missionary women. The speeches aimed to encourage women to collect their own money and contribute this money to their own "unmarried" missionary women's evangelization mission in the foreign lands¹⁰⁰. They raised \$500 and the Woman's Board of Missions was established. Nine months later, on October 27, 1868 the Second Presbyterian Church, Chicago became the historical setting for the second big step of missionary movement's leading women. The debates over the "woman's

⁹⁹ Jennie Fowler Willing, "Our Young Ladies," *Heathen Woman's Friend* 9. 1877, 179-181

¹⁰⁰ Willing, 179-181.

needs on mission fields” gave birth to the Woman’s Board of Missions of the Interior¹⁰¹.

The supervision of the women in the country by two separate Woman’s Boards required the country to be divided into two geographical parts. The Atlantic seaboard, including New England, New York and Pennsylvania became the field of Woman’s Board of Missions. They assembled their rooms in Congregational House, and set up twenty four branches with several constituent societies to act as representatives of this Board in the churches¹⁰². WBM adopted a similar system of management with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. They had an Executive Committee of fifty members who gathered fortnightly in the Board rooms to hold meetings. The Woman’s Board of Missions of the Interior took control of the Middle West which included Ohio in the east and the interior states to the distant line of the Rocky Mountains. The headquarters of WBM lay in Chicago. Similar to WBM, WBM also had an Executive Committee and thirteen Branches to control the movement in several states. In 1873, the headquarters of WBM made it clear that the country needed one more Woman’s Board which could control west of the Rocky Mountains. The Woman’s Board of Missions of the Pacific was founded.

For the men of ABCFM in the early 19th century, bound by the cultural belief that American Protestant single women had to be protected, sending single women to overseas mission work “in heathen lands” was a dreadful idea. Of the “36 single women missionaries sent out in 1848” by the ABCFM “24 were sent to American Indian stations” since ABCFM considered American Indian stations to be less dangerous for white, single Protestant women. By 1866, the American Board had

¹⁰¹ Eddy, 148.

¹⁰² Ibid.

sent out “170 single women and 43 of these were on the field in charge of boarding schools or of Bible work” in the foreign lands. These women missionaries were taken over as rapidly as possible by the newly organized Woman’s Boards. By taking over these missionary women under their own umbrella, Woman’s Boards became “responsible for their own budgets and work.” They were no longer collecting agencies. They raised money for the salaries, outfits and traveling expenses of their missionaries¹⁰³. They built their own school buildings, hospitals, colleges, and houses for their missionaries and carried on their evangelistic work through their own “Bible women” in each station abroad. For WBM and WBMI, the single women missionaries were the professionals. “Free from childcare and family responsibilities” that the missionary wives had to fulfill, they were viewed as significant “investments” responsible for the woman’s work in the mission fields¹⁰⁴.

What characterized Woman’s Boards’ rhetoric was the coexistence of two concepts: “that the American women were superior to the native women in mission fields and that both could unite in sisterhood despite their cultural differences because they were women.”¹⁰⁵ These women believed their superiority lay in Christianity and felt they could educate the “less fortunate” women by extending Christian education. The difference between these American women and native women in the mission fields was emphasized in the Christian religion. However, Woman’s Boards women missionaries aimed to erase this difference through Christian education. In the meantime, these missionary women considered “sisterhood” as significant since they believed “woman’s work for woman” could

¹⁰³ Eddy, 150.

¹⁰⁴ Noriko Kawamura Ishii. *American Women Missionaries at Kobe College, 1873-1909: New Dimensions in Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004, 67.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 29.

only be achieved through sisterhood. The notion of women's influence through religion was still preserved by women missionaries after the establishment of Woman's Boards. What was included to this notion consisted of not only the education of the missionary herself but also the education given to the native women by the missionaries. Missionary women believed that, regardless of a woman's condition or country of origin, her ability to influence remained intact. Converting a native woman, it was believed, would also achieve the goal of influencing others in her family, especially her children, and this then would contribute to the conversion of a nation. This motto made the acceptance of Woman's Boards by the male denominational Boards easy.

The rising emphasis on education in Woman's Boards derived mostly from the seminary educated women of the generation. The first generation of seminary-educated American women in the 1860s and 1870s found "the integrated concept of spreading Christianity" through women's education an appealing cause and decided to be involved in the foreign missionary movement as missionaries, officer in the Woman's Boards or as volunteers to support the movement financially and emotionally by attending the church meetings¹⁰⁶. This generation of women played an important role first in the institutionalization of the women's missionary movement and the professionalization of women's missionary tasks and secondly in embracing women's education as a method for evangelizing native women.

The separate Woman's Boards enabled women to exercise authority and train their organizational and political skills unknown before. A woman willing to be sent to foreign lands as a missionary by the Woman's Boards, who carefully studied the publications and works of her missionary organization learned not only about the

¹⁰⁶ Cramer, 130.

religious mindset and social conditions of the Oriental women in foreign lands, but also about what she was to do with her time and money, how she was to spend her leisure time, and what her role in church and public service was to be. In this sense, missionary women were to be strong, they should not embrace “too fanatical or emotional views of life in foreign lands”, they should have the ability of adaptability, be determined to stay in the new land and be devoted to the missionary gospel¹⁰⁷.

Women’s foreign missionary societies of the early nineteenth century nurtured missionary wives or young women missionary candidates with the influence of male missionaries who became their colleagues. However this new character stayed within the confines of domesticity. The headquarters of denominations which were organized by male missionaries did not immediately leave female auxiliaries to become leaders of the missionary story. However, within their bondage, these women created a hierarchy of working women who were given different responsibilities during the period of institutionalization with the Women’s Boards. Although the missionary work was served by the American Board, the Women’s Boards had the right to choose and decide their budget. They continued raising money from women groups as they had been doing since the day they got involved in missionary works. However under the name of Women’s Boards, raising money gained a more vital and professional meaning since they were held responsible for “the salaries, outfits and traveling expenses of their missionaries.” There were three basic responsibilities given to these women; Women’s Boards as “auxiliary bodies” of male boards were supposed to “recruit women missionaries”, spread the goals of

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 126.

missionary work in foreign grounds and contribute financial support for female missionaries¹⁰⁸.

From the missionary women's ascent following the 1800s to its decline in the years following World War I, social, political and economic forces were reshaping not only the world view of middle class American women, but how they perceived themselves as well. The transformations in the perspectives of American women were mirrored in the women's foreign missionary movement in the post-Civil War period. As historian Patricia Hill asserts, women devoted to missionary work in denominational societies embraced a transformation from volunteers into professionals¹⁰⁹. The professional male figure became the basis of this transformation and instead of creating a radical movement these women accepted the professional role given by their male colleagues. In this sense, women's efforts in separating their movement did not stimulate a new dimension in equality of sexes in labor; however they aimed to make their operation function efficiently. It was evangelical development which drove them to embrace professional roles, not their intention to become businessmen¹¹⁰. WBM-I women insistently emphasized that they were not stepping into the men's sphere, but that they were "merely extending their womanly attributes" of spreading Christianity to women in non-Christian countries.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Ishii, 19.

¹⁰⁹ Hill, 109.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ishii, 33.

CHAPTER IV

AMERICAN WOMEN IN FOREIGN MISSION FIELDS

*Though we find ourselves almost destitute of all those sources of enjoyment to which we have been accustomed, and are in the midst of a people who are at present almost destitute on account of the scarcity of provisions; though we are exposed to robbers by night and invaders by day, yet we both unite in saying that we never were happier, never more contented in any situation than the present.*¹¹²

-Ann H. Judson, missionary in Burma, 1813.

The motivation driving millions of American women to evangelical work could be described as “an internalized commission to spread the gospel; an altruistic desire to serve the less fortunate; and a practical response to a perceived need for the spread of civilization”¹¹³ Historian Barbara Welter adds also women’s search for “the ultimate definition of who you were and where you were going.”¹¹⁴ In this respect, American women believed that religion could lead them to find out this definition. Virtue and religion were assigned to American women, who believed that they could succeed in evangelical work by just embracing these virtues. Historian Amanda Porterfield points out also the significance of Puritan principles in constructing the motivation of evangelical works. Since early missionary women

¹¹² Arabella M. Willson. *The Lives of Mrs. Ann H. Judson, Mrs. Sarah B. Judson and Mrs. Emily C. Judson: Missionaries to Burmah*. New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855, 55.

¹¹³ Marjorie Shell Wilser. “Living Sacrifices: Women Missionaries’ Personal Writings 1812-1860.” A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Department of History San Jose State University. December 1997, 57.

¹¹⁴ Barbara Welter. *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the 19th Century*. Athens: The Ohio University Press, 1976, 102.

were from New England, Puritan ideology also played a crucial role in their involvement. Foreign missionary endeavor was believed “to enable New England women to reaffirm the Puritan principles” and this fact made the cause attractive and appropriate among women.¹¹⁵

Women’s education helped 19th century American women widen their perspective and embrace a global sense of womanhood. In a sense, educated American women became aware of the social and cultural conditions, in which women of other religions lived. The picture of non-Christian women was always shaped with negative characteristics in the minds of American women. As stated in Chapter II, Chinese foot-binding, polygamy of Indian rajahs, Indian zenanas and Ottoman harems were dominant figures both in describing the “darkness” of other countries and in shaping the idea that American women possessed a “privileged life” stemming from being Protestant¹¹⁶. Living in the bondage of patriarchy, non-Christian women lacked education, freedom and liberty. American missionary women, as stated in the description of their motivation above, were determined to spread civilization and the Gospel to the non-Christian lands. They firmly believed they could save their sisters, who they believed were “accustomed from childhood to hear themselves spoken of as stupid and without understanding; with neither intellect nor souls.”¹¹⁷ American women’s empathy with other women were fed by such stereotypical non-Christian women, and to help these women through evangelization

¹¹⁵ Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, 5.

¹¹⁶ Wilser, 62.

¹¹⁷ Mary E. Darley, *The Light of the Morning*. London: Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1903, 40-1 in Lavinia Byrne, *The Hidden Journey: Missionary Heroins in Many Lands*. Great Britain: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1993, 100.

came to be considered as a “place of honor and usefulness beyond that available to them within the confines of American society.”¹¹⁸

In this context, this chapter illustrates American women’s perception of missionary career and non-Christian women, who were depicted as victims to be saved. In the first part of the chapter the analysis consists of the journals and letters of Ann H. Judson, Sarah B. Judson, and Emily C. Judson of the Burma mission, Mrs. Shuck of the China mission, Mrs. Sarah L. Huntington Smith of the Syria mission, Miss Harriet Lovell, and Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett of the Turkey mission fields. These journals give detailed information about the tasks of a missionary wife or a single missionary in different mission grounds during the first fifty years of foreign missionary experience of the United States. Secondly, single American missionary women sent by either the A.B.C.F.M. or Woman’s Boards to Turkey mission field are analyzed in terms of their status in mission works. Different from the women depicted in the first half of the chapter, single women missionaries became more dominant and the foreign mission work gained a different scope. Since Woman’s Boards embraced the objective of native women’s education for their social evaluation and for the success of a permanent evangelization of the native society, single women missionaries in the second fifty years of foreign mission works appeared on the stage as well-educated teachers or supervisors in the missionary schools. “Concerned for female education in a land where the feminine half of the population had few advantages,” young unmarried women continued the evangelization of native females in the boarding schools.¹¹⁹ This chapter focuses on

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 64.

¹¹⁹ Clifton Jackson Philips. *Harvard East Asian Monographs: Protestant America and the Pagan World: The First Half Century of the American Board of Commissioner for Foreign Missions 1810-1860*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969, 153.

different aspects of American females' missionary service and aims to depict their perspective of foreign mission work in different mission fields, native women's captivity in non-Christian lands and missionary women's self-perception, which went into transformation with the missionary experience between 1810 and 1920.

Being a pious and a real Christian required sacrificing for God and the best, most appropriate and the most respected way of sacrifice was leaving their nation to enlighten the darkened-heathen people with the Gospel for American women. Mrs. Harriet Hall Shuck, missionary in China, asked American church women to join the missionary movement and to go to the non-Christian lands to bring evangelization to non-Christian women. Mrs. Shuck tried to diminish American women's fear of this most respected means of sacrifice by pointing out that American missionary women's work in non-Christian ground was considered the "bread of life". In a letter she sent to America, dated 1839, Mrs. Shuck stated that,

How delighted should I be to welcome to the mission field some of our dear brethren and sisters of Lancaster! And are there none willing to come? None who feel it their duty, and their high privilege, to forsake the land of their nativity, that they may carry to the perishing Chinese the bread of life? Do they feel willing to come, and believe that there are difficulties in the way? If so, let them look at the matter in the light of eternity, and having the fear of the Lord before their eyes.¹²⁰

Being useful for the native women constituted the vital characteristic of women's missionary works and dominated their diaries. In every entry of Mrs. Shuck's diary, the "usefulness" of her work was emphasized. In 1842, when her husband Mr. Shuck was appointed as a missionary to another mission field of China, Macao, Mrs. Shuck wrote,

I trust, my first inquiry on going to any place will ever be, Can I be *useful* here? If not, I could not be happy. So far, I see many ways in which I can be more useful here than in Macao.¹²¹

¹²⁰ J. B. Jeter, *Memoir of Mrs. Henrietta Shuck: The First American Female Missionary to China*. Richmond, 1846, 141.

A missionary wife in Syria in 1834, Mrs. Sarah L. Huntington Smith, pointed out the sense of responsibility embraced with the mission work by stating that “we feel that a wide door of usefulness is opening before us, which will demand all our energies, and even more.”¹²² The satisfying consequence of so called tiring mission work was the feeling of being useful for the people who needed their help. As most missionary wives or single missionary women pointed out in their journals and letters, their involvement in evangelical work, especially actively in the foreign mission field, responded to pious, church-going women’s search for usefulness. A search for usefulness is arguably a more active way of helping the native women and children of the mission fields than just praying for them.

The China mission was considered as “a White Woman’s Burden to missionary women who tasted power and found considerable fulfillment in their freedom as ‘Western She-Tigers’.”¹²³ Referring to Jane Hunter’s book *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China*, Sarah Elbert points out that American missionary women came to China “with a mixture of religious ardor and plain longing for adventure” when there was not another alternative than teaching in a school for women in the home¹²⁴. Combined with the feeling of being useful for native women who were depicted as females in bondage of “intellectual deprivation, domestic oppression and sexual degradation,” longing for adventure gained a wider and greater perspective.¹²⁵ In one of the letters written

¹²¹ Ibid, 182.

¹²² Edward W. Hooker. *Memoir of Mrs. Sarah L. Huntington Smith, Late of The American Mission In Syria*. New York: American Tract Society, 1845, 182.

¹²³ Sarah Elbert, “Anywhere with Jesus, Everywhere with Jesus: American Women’s Foreign Mission,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 5, Winter 1985, 755-761, 760.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

to her family Mrs. Shuck pointed out her visiting of the native women in their own houses, which were secluded sections and closed to male missionaries. She stated that,

there are many good things to be gained by thus visiting these poor females. We see them at home, and can penetrate more deeply into their characters. We also learn to speak their language as they do.¹²⁶

The “White woman’s burden” summarizes all the expectations of American women from foreign missionary work in general. Religious ardor, a search for adventure, teaching career and the desire to be useful in the humanitarian service were all accomplished in the China mission when Mrs. Shuck’s experience of the mission work is analyzed. Prayer and instruction was combined in the emerging career of missionary work. Civil service, which was under male control in the name of separate spheres for sexes, was the core point of female missionaries’ indispensability in mission fields. Though the American Board supported missionary matrimony for domestic reasons at first and though civil service of female missionaries mostly consisted of domestic and religious instruction for native women, American females appeared on the same stage with males. As they became active participants in this evangelical work, American female missionaries did not wait long to attract more pious women to handle this work. Mrs. Shuck pointed out female missionaries’ works in China in her letter to her friend in America, dated 1839.

Female missionaries are always welcomed, with much politeness, to the rooms of the neglected and degraded women of China. We can distribute books, and talk to the people about religion, whenever we wish; and what more need we now desire than men and women, whose

¹²⁵ Joan Jacobs Brumberg, “Zenanas and Girlless Villages: The Ethnology of American Evangelical Women, 1870-1910.” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 2, 347-371, 356.

¹²⁶ Jeter, 143.

hearts are glowing with love to the Saviour, and to the souls of their fellow-men, to assist us in this glorious, this delightful work?¹²⁷

While assistance and devotion of more missionary females was encouraged by the missionary wives, the characteristics of the foreign mission work were not undervalued. American women interested in evangelical work in non-Christian lands were supposed to be devoted to religious fervor. Self-denial and self sacrifice were prerequisite characteristics of a female missionary candidate, who would be active in both domestic and public spheres in mission fields. Mrs. Sarah L. Huntington Smith of the Syria mission explained the perfect image of a missionary woman to American women in the homeland, in a letter to the Board, dated 1836.

To you my dear sisters, I would say, Avoid all romantic notions in reference to this subject, and all undue excitement... Strength of character, discipline of mind, steadiness of faith, patience, perseverance, and self-denial are the requisite qualifications. I need not remind you that ardent piety lies at the foundation of the whole... Ere I left my father's house, I was convinced of the truth, and am now confirmed in it, that within the walls of her own dwelling, a young lady may cultivate and exhibit all the qualifications of a devoted missionary.¹²⁸

Considering "piety" as the most important qualification, Mrs. Smith continued with "habitual self-control." Female missionary candidates had to be patient, quiet, docile and humble. Describing Syria as a place "where every thing is crooked and wrong; where ignorance, stupidity, insolence, and deceit, provoke the corresponding emotions of pride, impatience, contempt, imperiousness, and dislike," Mrs. Smith advised women to develop their virtue of self-control and to forget themselves¹²⁹. Mrs. Smith pointed out that all this sacrifice, not surprisingly, was to be equipped for the sake of active usefulness in Syria.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 142.

¹²⁸ Hooker, 308.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Within the American Board's perspective regarding the primary duty of missionary wives as providing a happy and peaceful home to the assigned male missionary, it could be argued that a sense of usefulness was accomplished within the domestic sphere in the mission lands. However, missionary wives did not limit the meaning of usefulness to the domestic life. They learned to use male missionaries' incapability in reaching native women for their benefit. With the American Board's unofficial approval of missionary wives' support in evangelizing non-Christian women, missionary wives did not lose any time to get used to the native culture, language, social norms, and most significantly to the native women. Once the missionary wife learned the native language, she became the indispensable figure in the mission field. Native language was considered to be the key to evangelization of the nation. Busy with preaching and visiting, male missionaries mostly could not find time to do translations of the sections of the Bible so missionary wives took this responsibility. Mrs. Sarah B. Judson's husband asserted her translation of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* as a work "worth living for."¹³⁰ It was not her only job; she translated some works of her husband, edited a "Chapel hymn book" and published four volumes of Scripture Questions to be used in Sabbath Schools. In the meantime, she was superintending a missionary school, performing her domestic duties, and raising her children. Her journal entry, dated 1831, depicted her tiring and valuable tasks, and she concluded that "every moment of my time is occupied from sunrise till ten in the evening, it is late bed time, and I am surrounded by five Karen women."¹³¹

Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, a missionary wife of an American Board's appointed missionary to Turkey mission, reflected a similar picture with Mrs. Sarah

¹³⁰ Willson, 312.

¹³¹ Ibid, 291.

B. Judson. She had to take care of her young child and household chores which left her little time for rest, as mentioned in nearly every entry of her journal. She was working as a teacher in the Female Seminary in Istanbul and was spreading the Gospel among Armenian girls. She was described as a woman, who “would not allow even the weeks of her vacation to pass without doing something with reference to the work she had deeply at heart.”¹³²

As in all American missionary fields, American women became participants in missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire by becoming wives of the ABCFM missionaries sent to this field. As mentioned in Chapter III, the American Board did not consider hiring single women and sending them to non-Christian lands, instead the Board highly encouraged the appointed male missionaries to get married before they departed for their mission field. This perspective of marriage actually aimed to embody a happy family picture so that missionaries would not be treated as if they were aliens or enemies by the native people but would gain the sympathy of native people.

This was the standard for the Ottoman mission field. However, there were also exceptions; the American Board sent some single women to mission lands as assistants to male missionaries. And the ABCFM Turkish field received the first single female missionary assistant in 1859, Miss Myra A. Proctor to the Antep mission¹³³. Likewise, the diary of Miss Harriet Martha Lovell, who married Cyrus Hamlin in Turkey later during her service, stated that Mrs. Lovell was appointed “to

¹³² Mary Gladding Wheeler Benjamin, *The Missionary Sisters: A Memorial of Mrs. Seraphina Haynes Everett, and Mrs. Harriet Martha Hamlin, late missionaries of the ABCFM at Constantinople*. Boston: American Tract Society, 1860, 169.

¹³³ Reverend S.C. Bartlett, D. D. *Historical Sketch of the Missions of the American Board in Turkey*. Boston: Board, 1876, 65.

take charge of the proposed Female Seminary” in Istanbul on February, 25, 1845¹³⁴.

Later, with the establishment of three separate Woman’s Boards for only single missionary women, starting in late 1860s, more single women joined the missionary ranks in Turkey and started working with ABCFM missionaries.

Miss Harriet Lovell described her employment in Turkey mission field as “Delightful employment! What would more than half the world think of the idea of delight in connection with six or seven hours’ daily confinement in a small room, with a dozen or more poor Armenian girls! Yet I feel that my employment is delightful” in her letter to her family, dated 1846.¹³⁵ In most of her letters to the United States she mentioned her past life in the U.S. and she concluded that she was not working for the welfare of poor and uneducated women and children. Teaching Armenian girls the Gospel and elevating them to pious Christian woman status made her to consider that,

I have never done my duty to those around me here, and will they not wonder at my presumption in thinking to teach others? I am deeply sensible of my past unfaithfulness, and I think nothing would give me greater pain than the idea of spending the remainder of my life, either here or elsewhere, so profitless, so unfruitful.¹³⁶

Miss Lovell’s fruitful employment consisted of teaching Armenian females to read so that they could manage to read Bible themselves. What Miss Lovell pointed out as the primary object of the seminary focused on the “conversion of everyone who enters it” so that she would feel useful both for Armenian girls and for the foreign missions.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Mary Gladding Wheeler Benjamin, 33.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 120.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 37.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 147.

It would be wrong to claim that the American Board male missionaries raised interest in the status of women in Ottoman Empire or attempted to step in on the “woman question.” Editorial Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions William E. Strong stated that when the expedition tour was held in Turkey in 1830, American Board missionaries Smith and Dwight reported that there existed no school for the education of girls. Strong described Turkish women of all races and religions as females “in hard and degrading positions; beasts of burden in the fields, drudges in the house, or idle prisoners in the harem.”¹³⁸ Native men also did not welcome the idea of female education and the elevation of the women’s status first in the family later in the society. The influential role of women as mothers in shaping the attitudes of children was never neglected by American Board missionaries however as William Goodell conveyed “it was neither possible nor desirable to educate women”¹³⁹ while women themselves did not have aspiration for themselves and their “lords and masters rated them scarcely above their donkeys.”¹⁴⁰ The participation of the female missionaries in Ottoman Lands brought the issue to the agenda of the missionaries both in Ottoman Lands and in the U.S. However, it is hard to state that native males’ dominant perspective of Turkish-Muslim women changed. Secretary of the American Board James L. Barton, relying on his missionary experiences in Turkey, claimed that the existence of an “inherent prejudice among all classes in the country against the intellectual or social

¹³⁸ William Ellsworth Strong, *The Story of The American Board: An Account of The First Hundred Years of The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*. Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1910, 221.

¹³⁹ Rao Humpherys Lindsay, *University of Michigan Comparative Education Dissertation Series: Nineteenth Century American Schools in the Levant, A Study of Purposes*. Michigan: Malloy Lithoprinting Inc., 1965, 117. See: William Goodell, *The Old and the New or the Changes of Thirty Years in the East, with some Allusions to Oriental Customs as Elucidating Scripture*. 89-90.

¹⁴⁰ Strong, 221.

advancement of women.”¹⁴¹ Barton stated that even intelligent men of Turkey were claiming that girls were incapable of learning to read. The conversation between Reverend Dr. Henry Otis Dwight and Yusuf Bey, who was a well-educated Turkish man, depicted the status of Turkish women through a Turkish male’s eyes. It took place in March, 1915 and in response to Rev. Dwight’s ideas of women having a mind, Yusuf Bey claimed,

In this country women have no mind. And until I see it, I cannot believe that in any country they have more than an old hen. Every young man expects that he at least will find a woman who has sense; but in the end he has to sit, like the cat of a cook-shop, and satisfy himself with expecting.¹⁴²

In order to make Yusuf Bey state his personal ideas frankly Rev. Dwight went on to claim that girls’ schools might help Turkish women to gain sense. Yusuf Bey’s approach to this claim was again interesting:

You know nothing about women, you who live where the people are few and where women have at least been taught conscience. In great countries like this, where many women get into every house, they are the curse of life! May they get their deserts!¹⁴³

This conversation was published in a missionary newspaper, *Woman’s Work*, distributed in New York. While it showed that it was hard to change the attitude of Turkish men towards Turkish women, it also gave a message to American women that their non-Christian sisters in Turkey really needed their hand to get educated and to prove to the men of Turkey that they deserved to be treated as individuals with a mind.

¹⁴¹ Barton, James L. *Daybreak In Turkey*. Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1908, 188.

¹⁴² Anonymous, “Woman, through a Turk’s Eyes,” *Woman’s Work*. New York, Volume 30, no. 03, March 1915, 68.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

About the content of the female education; Pelin Basci asserts that “while self-reliance was not entirely dismissed in girls’ schools, unlike in boys’ schools, it never quite became the focus of attention”¹⁴⁴ Missionary women did not teach values of gender equality. Improvement of the domestic skills took the lead in the concept of education in missionary girls’ schools. Elevating the status of their “heathen sisters,” whom they believed suffered a lot, did not embrace a struggle for women’s rights, which “they had never claimed.” In this sense, one should never forget while analyzing the works of women’s missionary groups in any mission land and of course in Ottoman Empire – later in Turkey, that “the woman’s missionary movement became part of the larger bureaucratic structure of Protestant social services.”¹⁴⁵

A female missionary’s article on women in the Ottoman Empire and Islamic countries “The Shadow of Islam,” depicted Muslim women as a miserable lot. The image of a spiritually destitute and ignorant Muslim woman model was communicated to American women. The author; Mrs. O. E. Brown claimed that there could be “none more to be pitied.”¹⁴⁶ The low status of Muslim women was associated with “the early marriage, authoritative role of the father, the large family and the total lack of educational facilities.”¹⁴⁷ Brown encouraged American women

¹⁴⁴ Pelin Basci, “Shadows in the Missionary Garden of Roses: Women of Turkey in American Missionary Texts,” Arat, Zehra. *Deconstructing Images of The Turkish Woman*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998, 107.

¹⁴⁵ Sarah Elbert, “Anywhere with Jesus, Everywhere with Jesus: American Women’s Foreign Mission,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 5 (Winter, 1985), 758.

¹⁴⁶ Basci, 107. See: Brown, O. E. “The Shadow of Islam.” *The Missionary Voice*. 4 (March 1914) : 179-183.

¹⁴⁷ Lindsay, 116.

to help their miserable non-Christian sisters by arguing that “the destitute women of the Near East were awaiting salvation from their Christian sisters.”¹⁴⁸

“The missionary rhetoric associated the Oriental world and the Oriental woman with the veil.”¹⁴⁹ David Brewer Eddy, for one, saw the veil as a symbol of a barrier separating Turkish women from the world, modernity, liberty, progress and knowledge. His interpretation of the veil even reached a point that women with a veil meant to have “a disease that had stamped its heavy lines upon their features.”¹⁵⁰ According to American female missionaries, in Eddy’s words, Islam took the shape of a “clutch on these women’s hearts in this life and the next” and these non-Christian sisters of missionaries –Muslim women of Turkey- deserved to reach happiness and confidence in Christ’s way.

The fact that the veil represented a closed society did not serve to dampen the missionary desire to conquer the secret behind it. Like plucking the apple from the tree of knowledge, knowing the secret behind the veil would, it was assumed, expose one to a world of sin and heighten one’s obligation to reform it. It was as if the veil enveloped all the fundamental aspects of social life; it obstructed a great potential. If the obstruction could not be removed soon, it would ultimately bar all progress. Furthermore, the veil propagated a society that refused to open its doors to science, modernity, and evangelism.¹⁵¹

As Basci points out, the veil of Muslim woman took its place at the center of American missionary women’s perspective of their “heathen sisters,” who should be saved from the bondage of the veil, in other words, from sin of the uncivilized country. In this respect, bringing the Gospel to a non-Christian land was equal to enlightening and civilizing that country. Taking this approach, women’s missionary

¹⁴⁸ Basci, 107.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 109.

¹⁵⁰ Eddy, 153.

¹⁵¹ Basci, 108.

rhetoric made missionary women's task heroic and indispensable. Grounded in American women's significant role as mothers infusing Christianity to their children and as "guardians of the home and collectively of the nation," evangelizing the native women was considered significant too¹⁵². Evangelizing the "mother" meant accomplishment in the evangelization of the children, who would be the following generation of the nation. In short, in foreign mission rhetoric, this meant success in the general picture.

The nurturing, caring, pious and religious mother role was also infused to Ottoman mothers too by American missionaries. In this sense, as Noriko Kawamura Ishii asserted, the concept of "commonness" was built. The idea of sisterhood brought native and missionary women together, though missionary women depicted themselves as superior to native women because of their Christian roots. However, American missionary women's perception of veiling put this sisterhood stemming from a gender basis, in danger. In addition, it was seen as a dangerous impediment of the accomplishment of the mission works. American women missionaries, especially after the establishment of Woman's Boards, used education as a symbol to "unveil the women and awaken them from the surrounding darkness."¹⁵³

Documents of Reverend S. C. Bartlett D. D. in 1876 pointed out that there were 27 single missionary women appointed to the Turkey mission by ABCFM, presumably who were taken under the control of the WBM, WBMI or WBMP after 1868¹⁵⁴. This number grew after the 1880s with the proposal of establishing new seminaries, schools and colleges for girls. The entrance of the single missionary

¹⁵² Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Virginia Lieson Brereton. *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002, 284.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 110.

¹⁵⁴ Reverend S.C. Bartlett, D. D.

women to the Turkish field brought a new “method of approach” towards Turkish girls¹⁵⁵. In various places, some groups of these women focused on establishing kindergartens. A few of these women, appointed by Woman’s Boards, were Miss Fannie Burrage and Miss Clara Richmond of the Talas mission, Miss Cole of the Trebizond mission, Miss J. Louise Graf of the Mardin mission, Miss Caroline Silliman of the Van mission and Miss Elizabeth Clarke of the Sofia mission¹⁵⁶. In some of these kindergartens, there were native kindergarten teachers working with the missionaries but all working women were “under missionary supervision.”¹⁵⁷ Woman’s Boards missionaries aimed to bring opportunities of playgrounds, toys and a basic education to the little girls of Turkey whose girlhood, as David Brewer Eddy stated, did not have the same beautiful content as with the ones in the United States.

Eddy depicted the success of Woman’s Boards in Turkey with statistical data of single missionary women’s works regarding village schools. WBM and WBMI missionaries built 378 village schools in various villages of Turkey. These women had “the responsibility of superintendents of education” and aimed to infuse the “stimulus that came from the oversight of the missionary” to the native teachers¹⁵⁸.

Since the day they were planned and established, Woman’s Boards gave great significance to female education, which was believed “to be integrally linked to evangelism.”¹⁵⁹ Both the WBM and the WBMI adopted the education of native women as their primary objective in the entire mission fields, as in the Turkish

¹⁵⁵ Eddy, 155.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 156.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 155.

¹⁵⁹ Noriko Kawamura Ishii, *American Women Missionaries at Kobe College, 1873-1909: New Dimensions in Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004, 20.

mission. “Developing Christian leadership among women” of Turkey became the motto of WBM-I missionaries in nineteen boarding and high schools for girls.¹⁶⁰

There were two main objectives of the girls’ colleges and seminaries founded by American missionaries: spreading the girls’ education; and educating native teachers for the mission schools and seminaries or at least raising educated native brides for the male missionaries. The only requirement of admission to these girls’ schools was to be literate. These schools were asserted as the following step of the “common schools.”¹⁶¹ The education was held in Turkish and Armenian and consisted of mostly Bible reading, history, theology, music, composition, arithmetic, geography and astronomy.

Uygur Kocabasoglu asserts that American missionaries embraced a special objective in building these schools as boarding schools: accepting girls from different areas to the school would spread the influence of the American mission movement to a wider geography¹⁶². American missionaries aimed to infuse evangelical Christianity into various cities of the Ottoman Empire with the help of one or two girls from each city. As a matter of fact, as Kocabasoglu conveys in his book *Anadolu’daki Amerika*, in 1892, Central Turkey College for Girls educated 200 native women of Maras in return for a very small wage.

Girls’ schools of the ABCFM and the Woman’s Boards consisted of mostly Armenian girls, especially Protestant Armenian girls. There were also daughters of Jewish families and other Christian-Protestant families attending these schools. The American missionary women’s perspective of women belonging to ethnic religions

¹⁶⁰ Eddy, 156.

¹⁶¹ Uygur Kocabasoglu, *Anadolu’daki Amerika: Kendi Belgeleriyle 19. Yuzyilda Osmanli Imparatorlugu’ndaki Amerikan Misyoner Okullari*. Ankara: Arba Yayinlari, 1989, 64.

¹⁶² Ibid, 64.

in “Christless lands” explained their interest in Armenians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. There was a strong implication of sisterhood; American women as “daughters of covenant” referred to their sisters -that is to say Armenians and other women practicing ethnic religions in the land Islam- as “daughters of sorrow” and their ultimate mission was to save them¹⁶³. In the 1880s some Muslim families started sending their daughters to these schools. Based on research of ABCFM primary papers, during the academic year 1891-1892, Istanbul Girls’ College had 51 Armenian, 29 Bulgarian, 22 Greek, 14 English, 10 American, 6 Jewish, 4 Turkish students and 1 French student¹⁶⁴. It was also documented that Central Turkey College for Girls had two Muslim girls of a well-known family of Maras in 1886 and one Muslim girl in 1890, attending the classes as students¹⁶⁵.

The organization of girls’ schools did not differ from the boys’ schools, except for the head of the administration. Boys’ schools were under the administration of the ABCFM, however in the case of girls’ schools the WBM and the WBMI held the control since these two boards were providing the money needed for the expenditure of the schools. Consequently the WBM or the WBMI was the head of the school. Secondly, since American missionaries gave significance to the native people’s support, every school had a Board of Trustees whose members were chosen from the accredited native people. Women’s Boards in the U.S. and Board of Trustees in the native land were among the top layer of the administration system. The Board of Managers undertook the de facto administration of the schools. In the early years of the establishment of the school, American missionaries dominated the

¹⁶³ Basci, 115. See: Annual Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions 1902, 1902:62.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 134.

¹⁶⁵ ABCFM Project, ABC 16:9:5, c. 6, No:164.

Board of Managers. However, in time as the system could be ensured, native people had the opportunity to participate in the Board of Managers and even dominated it. In time, native missionaries also started working as educators and preachers in these schools. The missionaries of the school made annual meetings and offered decisions which were sent, in order of seniority, first to the Board of Managers, then to the Board of Trustees and then to the Woman's Boards.

As stated in Chapter III, with the proposal of WBMI, another Woman's Board was founded in 1873, the Woman's Board of Missions of the Pacific, which aimed to gather single female missionary candidates of the region and send them to either overseas or domestic missions. Like the WBM and the WBMI, the Woman's Board of Missions of the Pacific was a representative of "the possibility for increasing numbers of single women to seek a career as foreign missionaries" in the non-Christian lands, as in Turkey¹⁶⁶. There was only one school supported by WBMP in the Turkish field, under the Western Turkey Mission, which was called the Girls' High School in Brousa. Miss Annie T. Allen was the superintendent of this school and the number of pupils reached one hundred and sixty nine in the year 1913¹⁶⁷.

The female seminaries and schools opened by the American Board and Woman's Boards' appointees in the Ottoman Empire "were modeled on the one opened by Mary Lyon at South Hadley, Massachusetts."¹⁶⁸ Making a comparison between Mary Lyon's Mount Holyoke Institution and the female seminaries built up by missionaries in Turkey, Frank Andrews Stone showed that Mount Holyoke

¹⁶⁶ Ishii, 26.

¹⁶⁷ Eddy, 157.

¹⁶⁸ Frank Andrews Stone, *Academies For Anatolia: A Study of the Rationale, Program and Impact of the Educational Institutions Sponsored by the American Board in Turkey: 1830-1980*. Lanham: University Press of America, 7.

graduates became American Board missionaries sent to Turkey and initiated the wave of female seminaries and the concept of female education. Between 1837 and 1940, 388 graduates of Mount Holyoke became foreign missionaries and 60 of them found their way to the Turkey mission field¹⁶⁹. The first Mount Holyoke graduate who went to Izmir, Turkey as a missionary wife was Emma L. Bliss, wife of Rev. H. J. Van Lenney. Stone's analysis of this comparison focuses on the system adopted in female seminaries and the motto of American missionary women –Mount Holyoke graduates- controlling these seminaries in Turkey. The educational system and the contents of education in the female seminaries in Turkey were adopted from the system of Mount Holyoke. Actually, Mary Lyon's main objective in establishing Mount Holyoke did not cover educating females who would embrace the idea of evangelizing the world, but the western frontier. However, it was not a surprise that these girls became foreign missionaries since in Mount Holyoke, Saturday was the training day of "foreign mission fields," which were addressed by ABCFM secretary Dr. Rufus Anderson¹⁷⁰. These foreign mission classes of Anderson undoubtedly opened the way to foreign fields of American Board to Mount Holyoke girls.

Abstracting the program and education system of Mount Holyoke does depict the emergence of Mount Holyoke influence in the female seminaries of Turkey. Religious exercises and instruction of Bible were the cornerstones of the education in Mount Holyoke. Everyday, girls spent only one and a half hours for domestic work, and Mondays was the day of "recreation," which consisted of mending, ironing, washing and scrubbing¹⁷¹. Apart from these domestic responsibilities, Mount

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 18.

Holyoke girls were expected to be bright, intelligent and educated. They studied English and had composition classes in which they had to submit a composition they wrote every week. Mary Lyon gave great significance to some branches of science, which she called “the deep treasurers of science.”¹⁷² These were anatomy, physiology, zoology, astronomy, botany and chemistry. The main objective of Lyon in educating girls in these branches of science embraced a religious meaning; she aimed to teach “the orderliness of God’s universe.”¹⁷³ Mount Holyoke girls got their oral examinations in public so that they found a chance to make their voice heard in public and demonstrate the fruits of their education. At the end of the education, Mount Holyoke girls became teachers for the female seminaries in the U.S. or chose to serve as missionaries in domestic or foreign mission fields.

Marsovan Boarding School for Girls, founded in 1865, in Merzifon, was one of the missionary schools in the Ottoman Empire that illustrates the extensive influence of Mount Holyoke. The first principal of this school was a Mount Holyoke graduate, Ann Eliza Fritcher, who was assisted by two Mount Holyoke girls, Flasia S. Bliss and Frances E. Washburn¹⁷⁴. There was also an Armenian teacher of this school, Anna Felician, who had spent one academic year at Mount Holyoke Institute in 1882 and started serving at Marsovan Boarding School for Girls. The students of this school studied math, history, botany, geology, physics, psychology and domestic science. As Mary Lyon did in Mount Holyoke, Marsovan Boarding School missionaries never neglected teaching basic branches of science to the girls while infusing domestic and religious training.

¹⁷² Ibid, 19.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 82.

Another female missionary school in Turkey, which embraced Mount Holyoke roots, was the girls' boarding school in Bardizag, in the Western Turkey Mission. Until 1870, the American missionaries of this mission field tried to persuade the native society to start building up a female school; however "the higher schooling of girls was regarded as unnecessary, and even harmful from the standpoint of family cohesiveness."¹⁷⁵ With the arrival of a Mount Holyoke graduate, Laura Farnham, as the appointed missionary to the field, the school started to be built and American Girl's Boarding School in Bardizag became well-known as a "one woman operation."¹⁷⁶

Olive Parmelee, who was an appointed missionary to Mardin, Turkey under the Eastern Turkey Mission of American Board, was also a graduate of Mount Holyoke, also taught at that institution for two years. She exhibited a unique work in Mardin. She founded the "only Arabic language secondary school for girls."¹⁷⁷ In this institution, which became Mardin Girls' School, Parmelee established a Mount Holyoke education system and girls of the school studied history, physics, math, algebra, astronomy, botany, geography and pedagogy besides homemaking, child care and Bible instruction. Explicitly, Bible study was the core of the school's education as in all female seminaries and schools built up by American missionary women in Turkey. Girls of this school had to study the Scriptures everyday for at least half an hour, until graduation day.

The same academic year graduates from Mount Holyoke College with Olive Parmelee, Charlotte Ely and Mary Ely also became missionaries in Turkey and they

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 83. See: Kalusdian, Marash, 466.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 84.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 124.

also did a unique job in the history of Turkish missions. These two sisters opened the Mount Holyoke Girls' Seminary for Kurdistan at Bitlis in 1870¹⁷⁸. Evangelical work was again the core element of the education of the seminary; however, domestic work and scientific branches were never neglected. The Ely sisters aimed to nurture the souls of the girls with Christ and led them to embrace a humble way of life¹⁷⁹.

One of the influential girls' schools established by American missionaries in the Ottoman Empire was Constantinople Woman's College, which began in 1871. As missionary female seminaries in Turkey became influenced by Mount Holyoke College of the United States, the Constantinople Woman's College was also modeled after an equally well known but newer and a more radical American woman's college, Vassar College¹⁸⁰.

In the beginning, Constantinople Woman's College did not have many Muslim students. Mostly Greek, Armenian and Bulgarian families sent their daughters to the College. In the early years of the College, the few Muslim attendants chose the school because they embraced modernity and egalitarian ideas but nevertheless "refused to sit at tables served by men and screamed when they met male attendants on the campus."¹⁸¹ Later, however, native girls embraced the idea of a liberal education for women. In 1909, as published in *Woman's Work*, the College enrolled "thirty Turkish students-that is, Mohammedans- about four times as many as

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 121.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East. Missionary Influence on American Policy. 1810-1927*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971, 25.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

were ever before in the college, at one time.”¹⁸² It was like a call to Christian women in the U.S. to donate to the College so that non-Christian girls could be saved.

As Pelin Basci asserts, “if Ottoman women benefited from the educational, medical, and philanthropic activities of American women, one can also argue that American women benefited from the superior position they occupied as providers of civilized necessities and ideas.”¹⁸³ It was an interaction in which both sides affected the other and elevated each other to a new status. Women’s missionary work served evangelical and American goals, as it “empowered American women to regulate, control, and change the lives of others,” which gave confidence and encouragement to American female missionaries to elevate both their non-Christian sisters’ and their own status.¹⁸⁴ The success of American missionary women in elevating their own status within a male dominated missionary society could be best depicted with Constantinople Woman’s College. “Council of Ministers report dated October 18, 1903 established that there were nearly 200 American educational establishments in the empire” and Constantinople Woman’s College was one of the most influential and popular ones¹⁸⁵. Stepping in the Turkish mission field as the wives of missionary men, these women convinced the American Board to start female education seminaries and schools for the accomplishment of evangelization. With the separate Woman’s Boards, the number of schools and seminaries increased in Turkish field and even so called “feminist and radical” women’s colleges of the U.S. became inspiration points for the establishment of women’s colleges in Turkey.

¹⁸² Anonymous, “Editorial Notes,” *Woman’s Work*. New York, Volume 24, no. 12, December 1909, 265-266.

¹⁸³ Basci, 118.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 117.

¹⁸⁵ Selim Deringil. *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909*. London: I. B. Tavis, 1998, 131.

American missionary women became the presidents, superintendents, accountants, teachers and preachers of these colleges and Mary Mills Patrick brought this status to the highest point by “driving for a program free from the American Board” and making the Constantinople Woman’s College an independent institution in 1908¹⁸⁶.

In December 1905 the Constantinople Woman’s College lost its two buildings during a big fire in Scutari and the College went into a financial crisis¹⁸⁷. When President Patrick could not receive any money from the American Board, she “followed the vocation of beggar, at different periods, for four years, beginning my efforts in a small room in lower New York, without backing or even much financial support for personal needs.”¹⁸⁸ Miss Patrick’s autonomy was developed in few years while she was struggling to find someone in the U.S. to finance the College. Ottoman regulations were also not friendly towards missionaries’ wish to purchase land for the establishment of schools or seminaries. However, for the maintenance of the College, Patrick needed to get the permission of Sultan Hamid to purchase a new territory and secondly to find a wealthy person to finance the College. She wrote,

As Sultan Hamid was obdurate in his refusal to allow us to purchase the property and we seemed to have reached an impasse, it was decided to make the question an international one. Therefore an appeal was made to the United States Government. As a first step I went to Washington and saw President Roosevelt.¹⁸⁹

Considering the oppressed status of missionary wives in the early decades of the American Protestant mission history, Miss Patrick, as a single missionary, became

¹⁸⁶ Grabill, 29.

¹⁸⁷ Anonymous, “Editorial Notes,” *Woman’s Work*. New York, Volume 21, no. 02, February 1906, 29-30.

¹⁸⁸ Patrick, 195.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 198.

extremely autonomous by traveling constantly between the U.S. and Turkey to find a financier and to get the permission of Sultan Hamid by making the issue an international question. John D. Rockefeller became one of the financiers for Constantinople Woman's College by donating \$150.000¹⁹⁰.

The Central Turkey College for Girls was another missionary school worth consideration. It was built in Maras with the aim of providing a higher education to the girls who received high school education in the neighboring cities, such as Adana and Antep. The missionaries also wanted to support the other missionary schools and seminaries in the region with educated native teachers. This school opened its doors to higher education of girls in 1882. The financial support for the school was provided by the WBM and donations were received from the native Christian society. The influence of this missionary school was widespread. "Graduates of this school could become teachers in any school belonging not only to the missionary societies but also the Ottoman Empire."¹⁹¹ The certificate of this school was accepted by Maarif Nezareti and opened the doors of a professional teaching career to the girls in any region of the Ottoman Empire. According to the ABCFM sources, during the academic year of 1893-1894, two Muslim-Turkish girls attended the school as official students.

Analyzing the mission work done by American missionary women in 1890s depicts that American women embraced an influential role in foreign mission works near the end of the 19th century. The number of girls' seminaries and schools established in Turkey by American Board and Woman's Boards increased each day.

¹⁹⁰ Grabill, 29.

¹⁹¹ Kocabasoglu, 159.

In parallel to that, the number of American missionary women in Turkey mission also doubled, since these schools needed teachers, superintendents and accountants.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Victorian ideology of separate spheres claimed that the highest role for a woman was her role as wife and mother. During the establishment of Woman's Boards and the institutionalization of the woman's missionary movement period, this ideology was still being embraced by many American people. Women, who recruited for female missionary effort following the establishment of the Woman's Boards, were unmarried and operating in the public sphere under the name of Christianity and piety which were the major virtues for which the Victorian women were taught to strive. Separate spheres were still legitimate; however the public sphere of a woman was characterized with her domestic sphere. In other words, the gender ideology espoused by missionary women was a mixture of that of Victorian woman and that of the single-educated woman who would become the New Woman in the following decades¹⁹².

Neither during the existence of "Cent Societies" or women's missionary societies, nor during the establishment of Women's Boards, did missionary women advocate for a radical feminist wave or nurture the concept of equal rights for both sexes. What mainly they believed was their potential power regarding their influence

¹⁹² Janet Muriel Cramer. "Cross Purposes: Gender and Nation in the Women's Missionary Press, 1880-1905" A Thesis to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota. June, 1999, 125.

on other people and their usefulness for evangelizing purposes in non-Christian lands when combined with their devotion to Christianity.

Missionary women who found themselves in professional labor in the 19th century did not claim that they were transgressing their proper sphere; their morality focused on the divine character of their objective and they believed that even if they were transgressing their domestic life, their justification was that they did it for evangelical purposes¹⁹³. In a sense, piety could be asserted as the cornerstone in the evolution of public womanhood.

Perceiving the context of missionary women's professional role in foreign missions societies under the concept of "domestic feminism" could be helpful in describing the reasons lying behind women's attempts in missionary works¹⁹⁴. By the 1830s, women colleges and seminaries started spreading in New England and a significant number of women received education with which they did not know what to do. The opportunities opened to women were scarce and this scarcity combined with these women's strong ties to domesticity prevented them from creating a rebellion against gendered sections of life and labor but encouraged them to become members of separate female missionary auxiliaries or later Woman's Boards for foreign missions and to "exert some influence on the world around them."¹⁹⁵ Missionary work provided a new ground for woman to exercise their energies. This new ground for women, which led women to embrace a sense of public service, was achieved "not through politics, or through agitation for equality with men and the right of suffrage," but by combining the special qualities of white, middle class

¹⁹³ Ibid. 126.

¹⁹⁴ Noriko Kawamura Ishii. *American Women Missionaries at Kobe College, 1873-1909: New Dimensions in Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004, 25.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

womanhood with a divine sanction¹⁹⁶. Along with teaching and nursing, missionary work was also asserted as a “profession permitted womanly” but male domination of this profession was inevitable and woman’s domestic sphere again shaped this profession¹⁹⁷.

American missionary women first became “missionary wives” in the foreign lands. Later, following the early decades of the 19th century, they convinced missionary men to accept single women into their missionary societies and they became independent female partners of missionary men in this movement. Their absolute ability in gaining power in the name of religion and church in the United States again gave them the opportunity to create female missionary societies effectively and every year the number of women going to foreign lands for evangelical reasons increased. Beginning in the 1860s, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions institutionalized this female missionary movement and provided funds for Women’s Missionary Boards. This formal name made the movement more serious and created a power, entirely separate from that of men which was embraced only by female missionaries. These women became active social workers, gathered funds, held missionary meetings, and established missionary schools in foreign lands. The shifting power in foreign missionary associations and the emergence of women missionary schools in foreign lands with their female presidents and teachers near the end of the 19th century should be considered as the most crucial product of this institutionalization which constructed a religious ideology of “women’s work for women.” Although the creation of separate Women’s Boards could not be perceived as the proclamation of equality in

¹⁹⁶ Cramer, 138.

¹⁹⁷ Ishii, 25.

missionary grounds, it did give women tremendous opportunities to exercise authority in the public sphere.

The development of religiously based gender ideology in the 19th century can be best depicted in American women's involvement in the foreign mission movement. In this respect, it is significant to analyze these pious women's experiences of foreign missions to estimate American women's history. As Nancy Cott, Estelle Freedman, Sheila Rothman and Barbara Welter point out, the doctrine of separate spheres plays a vital role in our understanding the women's movements and American women's status. Challenging the private sphere is considered to be an accomplishment in terms of independence. Thus, the American women's foreign mission movement is to be analyzed in the development of American women's attempts in breaking the bondage imposed by domesticity, since women involved in foreign mission movement "were able to acquire practical training and administrative skills, and in this way many of them gained a measure of actual independence from the culturally prescribed roles of mother and wife."¹⁹⁸

Sheila Rothman describes virtuous womanhood as the idea dominating the lives of American women in the 19th century, "closing off opportunities, fostering a sex-stereotyping of jobs, and ruling out options." In this respect, American woman was considered to be "consistent with moral sensibility, purity, and maternal affection, and no other code of behavior was acceptable."¹⁹⁹ American missionary women, however, managed to combine purity and sensibility with a greater influence and independence in the public sphere, in evangelical works.

¹⁹⁸ Robert Pierce Beaver. *All Loves Excelling: American Protestant Women in World Mission*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968, 69.

¹⁹⁹ Sheila M. Rothman. *Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present*. New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers, 1978, 14.

This thesis argued that American women involved in foreign mission movement both as members and workers in the female foreign mission societies and Boards and as active evangelizers in the mission lands, became the first group of American women who appeared on the public stage and became vital figures as soon as they did so. As Barbara Welter points out, they extended their maternal roles into the public sphere by merging ideal femininity with religious and spiritual virtues. In this respect, women missionaries were portrayed as submissive characters. Christianity required women to be submissive to their husbands and to their Lord and American missionary women did not challenge this idea. Actually, they were careful in protecting their pious and submissive Christian woman role. However, becoming active in evangelical work required them to transgress their proper sphere as prescribed by Victorian culture. They legitimized this transgression by embracing the idea that, this transgression was divinely mandated. In this respect, this thesis pointed out that analysis of American women's foreign mission movement did bring a new approach to American women's history shaped with the doctrine of separate spheres. Women's separation from the outer world, which included politics, commerce and business, was challenged by women's involvement in foreign mission movement.

In this respect, this thesis argues that an analysis of American women's foreign mission movement brings a new approach to American women's history. Women's separation from the outer world, which included politics, commerce and business, was challenged by women's involvement in foreign mission movement. Though their motivation embraced a strong sense of Christian womanhood ideal, which reinforced the concept of separate spheres, their activity in foreign mission

fields and societies demonstrate that American women were skilled and organized enough to play a vital role in the public sphere.

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