

Purveyors of “religion, morality, and industry”: Race, Status, and the Roles of Missionary Wives in the Church Missionary Society’s North-West America Mission

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The Church Missionary Society (CMS) and its missionaries held that, regardless of race, the wives of CMS agents could facilitate the Society’s work in the Canadian mission field. The Society also maintained, however, that the Native wives of CMS agents in Canada possessed advantages over their European-born counterparts, including hardier physical constitutions and ties of kinship, culture, and language to local Aboriginal populations. Nevertheless, because prejudices and axioms rooted in racial assumptions governed the attitudes of European-born individuals towards those of Aboriginal ancestry, many contemporaries doubted the ability of Native women to overcome what were considered to be racially inherent weaknesses and to embrace and project the core essential values and ideals deemed necessary of middle-class missionary wives.

La Church Missionary Society (CMS) est ses missionnaires jugeaient qu’indépendamment de la race, les épouses des agents de la CMS pouvaient faciliter le travail de mission de la CMS au Canada. La CMS estimait également que les femmes autochtones de ses agents au Canada possédaient des atouts que n’avaient pas leurs homologues nées en Europe, dont leur physique plus robuste et leurs liens parentaux, culturels et linguistiques avec les populations autochtones. Quoiqu’il en soit, comme les préjugés et les axiomes ancrés dans les à priori raciaux gouvernaient les attitudes des personnes nées en Europe envers la population d’ascendance autochtone, de nombreux contemporains doutaient de la capacité des femmes autochtones de pallier ce que d’aucuns qualifiaient de faiblesses

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essentiellement raciales et d'adopter et de projeter les valeurs et les idéaux de base que devaient nécessairement posséder, estimait-on, les épouses des missionnaires de la classe moyenne.

IN THE INTRODUCTION to *Women and Missions: Past and Present*, Fiona Bowie observes, “Women and men live in different cultural worlds and this will inevitably manifest itself in missionary life and attitudes.” Bowie argues that the experience of women in the modern missionary movement therefore “cannot simply be subsumed under that of men”.¹ A similar observation can be made with regard to Native² women who were involved in the proselytization of Christianity in western and northern Canada — more formally referred to by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) as its North-West America Mission — during the second half of the nineteenth century.³ An analysis of the experiences of and expectations about several of these women demonstrates that the actions and responses

1 Fiona Bowie, “Introduction: Reclaiming Women’s Presence”, in Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood, and Shirley Ardener, eds., *Women and Missions: Past and Present, Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), p. 18. See also Margaret Whitehead, “Women Were Made for Such Things: Women Missionaries in British Columbia, 1850s–1940s”, *Atlantis*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Fall 1988), p. 143; Carol Devens, *Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions, 1630–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 7–14, 108–110; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 6.

2 During the nineteenth century, the CMS used the term “Native” to distinguish between individuals in its employ who had been born in England and those born in a foreign mission field. This constructed classification “Native” was ethically explicit: it could apply to individuals who were of full European descent but had been born in the mission field as well as individuals who were of full or partial indigenous descent. The use of the term “Native” by contemporaries in the Canadian North-West, however, was racially explicit: it almost exclusively referred to a person who was “wholly or partly of Indian blood”. Library and Archives Canada [hereafter LAC], Church Missionary Society Archives [hereafter CMS] (A75), C.1 / I.2, CMS House to Reverend Nailt, December 30, 1885. See also CMS (A113), C.1 / O.2, Bishop of Moosonee to Reverend C. C. Fenn, September 16, 1885; CMS (A96), C.1 / O., Annual Letter of Reverend T. T. Smith, December 30, 1865; CMS (A109), C.1 / O.1, Bishop of Saskatchewan to [?], January 22, 1880. The term “Native” therefore is used here to refer to agents of the CMS who possessed at least some degree of Aboriginal ancestry. It accurately conveys the important role that race played in shaping nineteenth-century perceptions about these individuals.

3 The CMS’s North-West America Mission included the Dioceses of Moosonee, Rupert’s Land, Saskatchewan, Athabasca, Mackenzie River, and Selkirk, which cover roughly all of present-day Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northern Ontario, Northern Quebec, the Yukon Territory, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. The CMS employed its first ordained Native missionary agents in the North-West America Mission in the 1850s and by the end of the nineteenth century was preparing to withdraw from its work in Canada to focus on other mission fields. See CMS (A109), C.1 / L.8, Barring-Gould to CMS Missionaries in Canada, “Resolutions Regarding the Administration of the North-West Canada Mission”, April 22, 1903; Derek Whitehouse-Strong, “‘Because I Happen to be a Native Clergyman’: The Impact of Race, Ethnicity, Status, and Gender on Native Agents of the Church Missionary Society in the Nineteenth Century Canadian North-West” (PhD dissertation, University of Manitoba, 2004), pp. 5, 24.

of the wives of Native CMS agents cannot be subsumed under those of their European-born counterparts. Just as the life-worlds of European men and women differed, so too did those of Native and European-born women.⁴

“... the Gospel should be preached to all nations”

The Church Missionary Society was founded in 1799 by “some lay members of the Clapham Sect and several evangelical clergymen” as an independent and voluntary “Anglican society devoted exclusively to the evangelisation of the heathen”.⁵ Evangelical Anglicans disagreed with contemporary polygenists who professed that white Europeans were a different species than Native Americans, Asians, and Africans;⁶ rather, they argued that the “variety” among humans resulted from “the varying influences of climate, [and] habits of life”, including the knowledge or lack thereof of Christianity.⁷ While evangelical Anglicans often held negative stereotypes about the religious, social, political, and economic institutions of indigenous peoples, they suggested that indigenous peoples could surmount most shortcomings if they opened their “mind[s] and heart[s] unreservedly to Christianity and European understandings of civilization”.⁸

Evangelical Anglicans also believed that, while man was inherently sinful, Christ’s sacrifice made salvation possible.⁹ CMS agents therefore

4 Records left by the wives of CMS Native agents are scarce. While the very nature of missionary reports, letters, and journals ensured that Native missionaries left numerous detailed primary records, no such source exists with respect to women who were connected to the Society by marriage. Nevertheless, their personal correspondence, supplemented with interpretations derived from the records left by their husbands and fathers, provides an avenue for us to understand the work, actions, and attitudes of those women. Furthermore, ethno-historical methodology and the techniques of literary criticism and textual deconstruction are useful in identifying and balancing the biases, ethnocentric perspectives, exaggerations, and inaccuracies in the existing source materials.

5 Originally called the Society for Missions to Africa and the East, it was renamed the Church Missionary Society in 1812. Jean Usher, “Apostles and Aborigines: The Social Theory of the Church Missionary Society”, *Social History* (April 1971), p. 28.

6 Robert E. Bieder, “Anthropology and History of the American Indian”, *American Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 3 (1981), pp. 311–312. See also Samuel G. Morton, *Crania Americana; or, A Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America: To Which is Prefixed an Essay on the Human Species* (Philadelphia: J. Dobson, 1839).

7 *Church Missionary Intelligencer* (1855), p. 243, as quoted in Usher, “Apostles and Aborigines”, p. 32. Note also Ian A. L. Getty, “The Failure of the Native Church Policy of the CMS in the North-West”, in Richard Allen, ed., *Canadian Plains Studies 3: Religion and Society in the Prairie West* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1974), p. 20; C. L. Higham, *Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820–1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), p. 33.

8 *Church Missionary Intelligencer* (1852), p. 65. Note also *Church Missionary Intelligencer* (1849–1850), pp. 176–180.

9 Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 83.

accepted that the soul of an unconverted non-Christian would be lost forever¹⁰ and believed that it was a “Divine command that the Gospel should be preached to all nations”.¹¹ In fact, evangelical Anglicans accepted that, by raising their nation to what they believed was the pinnacle of civilization and Empire and by conferring upon it the saving graces of Christianity, God had placed upon the British an “obligation to impart” Christianity to others.¹² Contemporary Britons supported missionary endeavours in part because they believed that the colonized of the Empire were, at least in principle, fellow British subjects who were entitled to receive the benefits that they themselves associated with British culture, civilization, and religion.¹³ Thus, in addition to accepting that it was a Christian responsibility to evangelize the indigenous peoples of the Empire, evangelical Anglicans also argued that it was the right of those colonized peoples to receive that knowledge and spiritual amelioration.

Early in the nineteenth century, however, the CMS recognized that it would not be able to achieve its goals by using European-born clergy alone: it lacked the financial and human resources necessary to reach all non-Christians. The Society also acknowledged that, in many instances, parishioners were more receptive to Christianity when it was preached by their own countrymen.¹⁴ Training a body of Native clergy was therefore central to the CMS’s plans for spreading Christianity across the globe.¹⁵ Indeed, when the Society began employing ordained Native missionaries in its North-West America Mission in the last half of the nineteenth century, Native agents often far outnumbered their European-born counterparts.¹⁶

10 L. E. Elliott-Binns, *The Early Evangelicals: A Religious and Social Study* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953), p. 387.

11 Henry Venn, “Providential Antecedents of the Sierra Leone Mission”, *The Christian Observer* (November 1872), as reprinted in Max Warren, ed., *To Apply the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1971), p. 54.

12 Reverend Leigh Richmond as quoted in Ford K. Brown, *Fathers of the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 234. See also Samuel Wilberforce as quoted in Andrew Porter, “‘Commerce and Christianity’: The Rise and Fall of a Nineteenth-Century Missionary Slogan”, *Historical Journal*, vol. 28, no 3 (1985), p. 597; *Church Missionary Intelligencer* (1849–1850), p. 76, as quoted in Usher, “Apostles and Aborigines”, p. 35.

13 Ernest M. Howse, *Saints in Politics: The “Clapham Sect” and the Growth of Freedom* (London: George Allen Unwin, 1971), pp. 89–92; *Report of the Synod of the Diocese of Rupert’s Land, Called by the Bishop, and held on the 8th January, 1873, including the Bishop’s Address* (Winnipeg: Queen’s Printers, 1873), p. 9.

14 Whitehouse-Strong, “‘Because I Happen to be a Native Clergyman’”, pp. 61–63.

15 The CMS’s Native Church Policy, particularly as it applied to the Canadian North-West, is discussed extensively in *ibid.*, pp. 55–87.

16 In the Diocese of Athabasca in 1875, for instance, the CMS employed eight agents: one European-born bishop, two European-born priests, one Native archdeacon, and four Native catechists. CMS (A81), C.1 / M.10, Bishop Bompas to [?], November 15, 1875. See also Whitehouse-Strong, “‘Because I Happen to be a Native Clergyman’”, p. 294.

In addition, the Church Missionary Society held that the wives of its Native and European-born agents were crucial to its efforts to disseminate Christianity throughout western and northern Canada. As purveyors of “religion, morality, and industry”,¹⁷ these women could make the home life of their husbands more comfortable, they could perform manual tasks around the mission station, they could serve as role models to other women, and they could actively inculcate congregants with Euro-Christian values, norms, knowledge, and culture.

The CMS also held that, if Native churches were to be successful, the Society could not pay or educate Native agents at levels that would make them “appear before their countrymen as belonging to a different class, and as the well-paid agents of a foreign society”.¹⁸ The Society therefore recognized “the distinction of races”,¹⁹ although it expected its Native agents and their wives to disseminate Euro-Christian values, norms, knowledge, and culture, it did not train them “to the same academic and business standards expected of Europeans”, and it paid Native agents significantly less than their European-born counterparts.²⁰ This policy promoted visible distinctions between Native and European agents in status, wages, performance expectations, and responsibilities.²¹ These distinctions seemingly confirmed stereotypes about the social and cultural inferiority of non-Europeans²² and about the ability of persons of indigenous ancestry to serve effectively as agents of the CMS.²³ Indeed, most European missionaries believed the Native agents were less able and of lower status than themselves and in other ways inferior, and Europeans were reluctant to be placed in subordinate positions to them.²⁴

“... a suitable partner in life” and work

Historians have long used the idea of separate private and public spheres to explain and interpret the different roles and activities that Victorians deemed to be acceptable, in the abstract ideal at least, for men and for

17 CMS (A77), C.1 / M.1, Reverend William Cockran to CMS House, August 3, 1831.

18 “Extract from a memorandum...”, August 4, 1856, as reprinted in Warren, ed., *To Apply the Gospel*, p. 65.

19 CMS (A75), C.1 / L.2, CMS House to Bishop of Rupert’s Land, February 13, 1871.

20 Whitehouse-Strong, “ ‘Because I Happen to be a Native Clergyman’ ”, pp. 108–109, 179–180.

21 See *ibid.*, chap. 3.

22 Archbishop David Anderson to Honorary Clerical Secretary, August 22, 1849, in *Church Missionary Intelligencer* (1849–1850), p. 178.

23 Whitehouse-Strong, “ ‘Because I Happen to be a Native Clergyman’ ”, pp. 72–73, 202. This policy was not suited to regions such as the North-West America Mission, in which Euro-Canadian and European settlement was increasing (pp. 65–67, 194–195).

24 See *ibid.*, chap. 3; Ken Coates, “Send Only Those Who Rise a Peg: The Recruitment and Use of Anglican Missionaries in the Yukon, 1858–1931”, *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* (Summer 1986), pp. 10–11.

women.²⁵ In her historiographical analysis of the concept, Linda Kerber observes that mid-nineteenth-century contemporaries believed that women “live[d] in a distinct ‘world’, engaged in nurturing activities focused on children, husbands, and family dependents”.²⁶ Middle-class Victorian ideals of hearth and home and of the roles that were acceptable and appropriate for women, however, were indeed just ideals. Historians have demonstrated that it was beyond the means and abilities of the majority of the population to live in a domestic environment that mirrored that portrayed in contemporary literature. Joan Perkin, for instance, observes that, while “[t]he middle class thought a working man should totally support his wife and children, ... [m]ost wives and older children ... had to work to help maintain the family”.²⁷

Indeed, scholars including Myra Rutherdale and Lesley Erickson have demonstrated that the idea of separate spheres adequately explains neither the dynamics of gender relationships at nineteenth-century Christian mission stations nor the roles, actions, and attitudes of and assumptions about Native women connected to Christian missionary endeavours.²⁸ The ideals expressed in the concept of the cult of true womanhood and in the image of the perfect wife complement those embodied in the idea of separate spheres and explain why issues of race and status were important in shaping Victorian perceptions about the wives of CMS agents. These scholars also show how Victorians attempted to reconcile the roles and activities that the wives of Christian missionaries were required to perform in foreign mission fields with those deemed to be acceptable according to their “idealised vision of home and family”.²⁹ Finally, they provide clues as to how and why the CMS failed to reconcile its expectations of the roles that the Native wives of its agents would play in northern and western Canada with the racially based attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions held by many of its European-born personnel.

25 See F. Knight, “‘Male and Female He Created Them’: Men, Women and the Question of Gender”, in John Wolfe, ed., *Religion in Victorian Britain*, vol. 5: *Culture and Empire* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 28; Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

26 Linda Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History”, *Journal of American History*, vol. 75 (June 1988), pp. 9–18.

27 Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 119. Perkin suggests that “only about 15 per cent of the most skilled and highest paid ‘aristocrats of labour’ ” could earn enough regularly to be the sole breadwinner (pp. 162–163).

28 Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man’s God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002), p. xx; Lesley A. Erickson, “‘Bury Our Sorrows in the Sacred Heart’: Gender and the Métis Response to Colonialism, the Case of Sara and Louis Riel, 1848–83”, in Sarah Carter, Lesley Erickson, Patricia Roome, and Char Smith, eds., *Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West Through Women’s History* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), pp. 20, 27, 36–37.

29 Gorham, *The Victorian Girl*, pp. 3–4.

In her study of the antebellum United States, historian Barbara Welter demonstrates that members of the middle class held very defined ideas about the traits that a true woman embodied: “The attributes of True Womanhood by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbours and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues — piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity.” She observes that “[r]eligion or piety was the core of woman’s virtue, the source of her strength” and notes, “One reason religion was valued was that it did not take a woman away from her ‘proper sphere’, her home.” Welter continues: “Unlike participation in other societies or movements, church work would not make her less domestic or submissive, less a True Woman.”³⁰

Paralleling Welter’s observations about widely held ideals and sentiments in pre-Civil-War middle-class America, Martha Vicinus demonstrates that middle-class English Victorians believed that “the perfect wife” performed vital and specific roles for and within the family. According to Vicinus, these roles included giving birth to children, raising those children and inculcating them with middle-class ideals and Christian doctrine, and contributing indirectly to the financial stability of the family unit by mending and making clothes, cooking, and maintaining the home.³¹

The roles and lifestyles that the CMS and its agents deemed to be acceptable for missionary wives in the North-West America Mission were very similar to those espoused by members of middle-class England, America, and eastern Canada.³² In their letters, CMS agents presented their wives as being “pious[,] industrious, [and] indefatigable”³³ when running their households, raising their children, and supervising their servants.³⁴ The Society nevertheless subsumed the roles and responsibilities of these women within the family unit, which it publicly embodied in the male missionary. Because of their gender, the wives of CMS agents therefore were an almost invisible component of missionary work among the Aboriginal peoples of Canada; issues of race and status even further marginalized Native missionary wives.

30 Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860”, *American Quarterly*, vol. 18 (1966), pp. 152–153.

31 Martha Vicinus, ed., *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. vii–xv. See also Perkin, *Women and Marriage*, pp. 162–163.

32 Other Protestant missionary societies held similar expectations regarding the roles and responsibilities of missionary wives and daughters. See, for example, Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), pp. 101–120.

33 CMS (A78), C.1 / M.2, Reverend William Cockran to Secretaries, August 3, 1838.

34 Tanya Fitzgerald, “Missionary Women as Educators: The CMS Schools in New Zealand, 1823–1835”, *Historical Studies in Education*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1994), p. 148.

Despite limiting wives' visibility, the CMS acknowledged that, within these accepted domestic roles, four important facts made women, regardless of their race, crucial to the success of its mission program in Canada. First, the Society recognized that, just as women were responsible for the operation of the household in England, the wives of its agents could carry out or oversee the mundane work at a mission station. Life at a mission encompassed much more than the singular act of religious proselytization. For a mission to succeed, livestock and gardens had to be cared for, clothing had to be made and repaired, meals had to be cooked, and the interior living space of each building had to be kept clean and functional.³⁵ By performing these tasks,³⁶ by caring for and dispensing medicine and advice to persons who came to the mission,³⁷ and by assisting with translating Christian tracts,³⁸ the wives of CMS agents permitted their husbands to devote more time to disseminating Christianity.³⁹ Moreover, the reality of life in the Canadian mission field necessitated that women step beyond the accepted middle-class Victorian boundaries and ideals of hearth and home.⁴⁰ The wives of CMS agents often were responsible not only for the house, but also "for the entire charge of [the] ... school";⁴¹ the farms, and mission personnel.⁴²

Secondly, beyond their responsibility for the physical aspects of a mission, its buildings, and its grounds, women could indirectly facilitate the evangelizing work of their husbands and fathers by stabilizing their home lives. The mental and physical demands of missionary work in western and northern Canada could be extreme. The harsh climate, missionary tours that encompassed hundreds or thousands of kilometres,

35 CMS (A95), C.1 / O, journal entry of James Settee, February 7, 1856; CMS (A99), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend Henry Budd, July 20, 1868.

36 CMS (A99), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend Henry Budd, July 20, 1868; Winnipeg, Archives of the Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land [hereafter AEPRL], (P. 345) 1893 [typescript], journal entries of Archdeacon Robert McDonald, February 9 and March 19, 1893.

37 CMS (A95), C.1 / O, journal entry of James Settee, August 22, 1855; CMS (A102), C.1 / O, Annual Letter of Reverend William Day Reeve, July 2, 1877.

38 CMS (A81), C.1 / M.10, Annual Letter of Reverend Henry Cochrane, December [?], 1875; CMS (A95), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend James Settee, June 7, 1863.

39 Indeed, unmarried missionaries often lamented that being single impeded their ability to perform the duties that superiors and congregants expected of them. CMS (A79), C.1 / M.5, Reverend Hillyer to Secretaries, March 14, 1854.

40 See Myra Rutherforddale, "Models of Grace and Boundaries of Culture: Women Missionaries on a Northern Frontier, 1860–1940" (PhD dissertation, York University, 1996), pp. 18–19.

41 CMS (A79), C.1 / M.5, Bishop of Rupert's Land to Reverend Henry Venn, August 3, 1853. Note also CMS (A94), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend J. A. Mackay, March 4, 1865; CMS (A88), C.1 / O, Reverend John Horden to Reverend W. Knight, July 3, 1854.

42 See AEPRL (P. 345), 1891 [typescript], journal entry of Reverend Robert McDonald, May 2, 1891; CMS (A78), C.1 / M.4, journal entry of Reverend Cowley, April 18, 1846; CMS (A100), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend W. W. Kirkby, June 2, 1872; CMS (A102), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend W. W. Kirkby, June 6, 1876.

the physical distances between missionary brethren, and cultural isolation all could have a negative impact on the quality of life of CMS agents.⁴³ The Society and the men in its employ believed that wives and children could alleviate some of these pressures.

In the 1850s Archdeacon James Hunter initially requested that the CMS send unmarried missionaries to work in the Mackenzie River region. After visiting the area himself, however, he revised his position. Hunter reasoned that, because missionaries “will be so cut off from Society in these remote regions, for this may well be designated the Siberia of America, ... they will find great comfort and assistance from a partner like minded with themselves.” He therefore wrote, “I should now recommend that they be married men.”⁴⁴

Reverend E. A. Watkins also highlighted the positive impact that marriage could have on the personal lives of CMS agents. Commenting on the marriage of his Native “School-master Mr. Philip McDonald” to “a native of Red River”, Watkins trusted that his new wife “will make him a suitable partner in life”. He observed, “After having lived in solitude now for many years whilst conducting the scholastic & frequently other duties of the Station, he [McDonald] must really feel the need, I should think, of a change of condition.”⁴⁵

Thirdly, the CMS held that women played a central role in maintaining and protecting the social, economic, and cultural status of the family unit. Status in Victorian British society often was assigned based on perceptions of material wealth. Historian Deborah Gorham writes:

The family’s style of life displayed its tastes and thus its status and its gentility. A man could achieve success through hard work and initiative, and thereby gain economic power, but his social status, if not actually determined through the family he established, was reflected through it. The style of family life, the quality of domesticity achieved, was the final determinant of the niche he occupied in the social structure.⁴⁶

Because women managed the private sphere and hence “the outward forms that both manifested and determined social status”, they were responsible for creating “an appropriate domestic environment” that

43 In 1870, for instance, Reverend Horden informed the Secretary of the CMS that over the course of a single summer he and Reverend Thomas Vincent had travelled 1,300 miles and 1,100 miles respectively. CMS (A80), C.1 / M.7, Reverend John Horden to Secretary, September 18, 1870.

44 CMS (A80), C.1 / M.6, Archdeacon Hunter to Secretaries, November 30, 1858.

45 CMS (A98), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend E. A. Watkins, July 3, 1861. Other CMS agents concurred: “It would add much to the usefulness of the missionary to be married.” CMS (A78), C.1 / M.2, Reverend Cockran to Secretaries, August 3, 1838. See also CMS (A79), C.1 / M.5, Reverend Hillyer to Secretaries, May 1, 1854.

46 Gorham, *The Victorian Girl*, p. 8.

“acted as an effective indicator of status in the public sphere”.⁴⁷ The wives of CMS agents filled this role by stocking their houses with items integral to, and expected in, middle-class English homes and by keeping their person, their house, and the mission station as “a pattern of neatness & cleanliness”.⁴⁸

Fourthly, the CMS held that the wives of its missionaries could be “useful among the women and children”⁴⁹ because there was “no surer foundation for future civilization than the training up of Christian mothers”.⁵⁰ In addition to serving in their accepted capacities as nurturers, teachers, and care-givers in their own domestic environment,⁵¹ the wives of Native and European-born CMS agents often assumed active roles in teaching at Mission schools.⁵² Women also conducted classes at Sunday schools,⁵³ instructed congregants in music,⁵⁴ led “Mothers’ Meetings”,⁵⁵ and held “adult classes”.⁵⁶ All concerned believed that these methods of instruction inculcated into congregations the arts, standards, ideas, and practices of “the White man’s mode of life”,⁵⁷ illustrated how they might “bring their religion to bear on the duties and trials of their every-day

47 *Ibid.*

48 CMS (A103), C.1 / O, Abraham Cowley to Secretary, [?] 1878.

49 CMS (A81), C.1 / M.10, Annual Letter of Reverend John Reader, January 20, 1876. See also AEPRL (P337), Diary of Robert Hunt [typescript], journal entry of Reverend Robert Hunt, August 14, 1850.

50 CMS (A76), C.1 / L.2, CMS to Reverend A. Cowley, June 6, 1850. See also Regina, Saskatchewan Archives Board, Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Qu’Appelle [hereafter SAB ADQ] (R-705), Box 251, Reverend Owen Owens, “Occasional Paper, No. 50. Diocese of Qu’Appelle, Assiniboia (N.W. Territory), British North America” (November 1897), pp. 14–15; AEPRL (P337), Diary of Robert Hunt, “CMS Committee’s Instructions to the Rev. Robert Hunt and Mrs. Hunt”, May 24, 1849.

51 Elizabeth G. Muir and Marilyn Whiteley, eds., *Changing Roles of Women within the Christian Church of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 7–8.

52 CMS (A77) C.1 / M.1, Reverend David Jones to CMS Secretaries, January 31, 1827; CMS (A84) C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend Henry Budd, August 8, 1859; CMS (A87) C.1 / O, Annual Letter of Reverend Henry George, October 5, 1857; CMS (A95) C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend James Settee, January 5, 1868.

53 CMS (A80), Annual Letter of Reverend Henry Cochrane, November 30, 1872; CMS (A89), C.1 / O, Annual Letter of Reverend John Horden, January 15, 1862; CMS (A88), C.1 / O, Reverend John Horden to Reverend W. Knight, July 3, 1854; CMS (A94), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend J. A. Mackay, January 29, 1865.

54 CMS (A102), C.1 / O, Reverend Henry Cochrane to Secretaries, January 23, 1876; Whitehorse, Yukon Archives [hereafter YA], (Series 1–A–1), Microfilm Reel #1, Reverend I. O. Stringer to [?], [1895?]; CMS (A81), C.1 / M.10, Annual Letter of Reverend Henry Cochrane, December [?], 1875; CMS (A101), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend Henry Budd, March 9, 1875.

55 CMS (A81), C.1 / M.10, Annual Letter of Reverend Richard Young, November 16, 1875; Winnipeg, Provincial Archives of Manitoba [hereafter PAM] (MG.7.B8), Microfilm Reel 157, Jean A. Pinkham, “Reminiscences of an Old Timer” (n.p., n.d.), p. 13.

56 CMS (A97), C.1 / O, Reverend W. Stagg to Secretary, January 29, 1855; AEPRL (P337), Diary of Robert Hunt, journal entry of Reverend Robert Hunt, August 14, 1850.

57 CMS (A102), C.1 / O, Reverend B. Mackenzie to Secretary, July 23, 1877.

household life”,⁵⁸ and drew those congregations together to guard against backsliding.⁵⁹

Women also had other more informal avenues for “promot[ing] religion, morality, and industry.”⁶⁰ The Society maintained that skills such as spinning and weaving,⁶¹ as well as the ability and desire to maintain both a clean house⁶² and “neatness of dress”,⁶³ assisted the survival of Aboriginal Christian households because they helped Aboriginal women and families overcome negative cultural traits and embrace Anglo-Christian values.⁶⁴ Reverend William Cockran wrote:

Now we think by assembling daily the young women and girls who have a desire for improvement, and teaching them to read, write, knit, sew, & spin. [*sic*] This will in the first place keep them out of the way of evil. They will also acquire sober, industrious, and economical habits which will make them respectable, useful, and permanent Settlers; and their idle gossiping, extravagant, and licentious customs will be forgotten by the young, and laid aside by the old.⁶⁵

The CMS therefore cautioned the wives of its agents “to be in all aspects examples to the flock, to speak affectionately and earnestly of Christ and His Salvation and to glorify His name by a consistent & blameless life”.⁶⁶ It instructed them to keep their person, house, and the mission station clean and well ordered and to project respectful, chaste, and principled images that were expected of true women and perfect wives.

While the Society limited the roles that women could perform in an organized and ecclesiastically sanctioned setting,⁶⁷ it did consider them to be voluntary “helper[s]” in the “work” and expected them to

58 CMS (A81), C.1 / M.10, Annual Letter of Reverend Richard Young, November 16, 1875.

59 SAB ADQ (R-705), Box 251, Owens, “Occasional Paper, No. 50. Diocese of Qu’Appelle, Assiniboia”, pp. 14–15; CMS (A77), C.1 / M.1, Reverend William Cockran to CMS House, August 3, 1831.

60 CMS (A77), C.1 / M.1, Reverend Cockran to CMS House, August 3, 1831.

61 CMS (A81), C.1 / M.10, Annual Letter of Reverend Richard Young, November 16, 1875; CMS (A77), C.1 / M.2, William Cockran to Secretaries, July 24, 1834.

62 CMS (A103), C.1 / O, Abraham Cowley to Secretary, [?] 1878.

63 CMS (A81), C.1 / M.10, Reverend John Hines to Reverend H. Wright, February 1, 1876.

64 SAB ADQ (R-705), Box 251, Owens, “Occasional Paper, No. 50. Diocese of Qu’Appelle, Assiniboia”, pp. 14–15.

65 CMS (A77), C.1 / M.1, Reverend Cockran to CMS House, August 3, 1831.

66 CMS (A75), C.1 / L.1, CMS to Reverend James Settee, May 13, 1868.

67 Reverend J. A. Mackay recorded that “Mrs. Mackay assists at Sunday School, hearing the Classes read in English, but being a woman [?] she is not able to catechise &c.” CMS (A94), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend J. A. Mackay, October 17, 1864. See also CMS (A118), C.1 / O.6, Archdeacon J. A. Mackay to Reverend C. C. Fenn, January 23, 1892. Non-ordained persons were not permitted to lead church ceremonies, including baptisms and marriages. CMS (A78), C.1 / M.3, “Instructions to Mr. and Mrs. Settee” by Reverend J. Smithurst, October 2, 1843.

disseminate Christianity in an informal lay capacity.⁶⁸ Consequently, by reading aloud parts of the Bible, women gave “religious instruction”⁶⁹ and “impart[ed] religious knowledge” to interested individuals and small groups.⁷⁰ The fact that women assumed a wide variety of informal catechetical and active educational roles in the dissemination of Euro-Christian culture and religion in western and northern Canada, however, did not erode their ability to be true women according to Victorian standards. Because the mission station itself was an extended private sphere, it was acceptable that they exert authority and control in its daily operation.

She “greatly enhance[s] her husband’s usefulness”

The CMS nevertheless recognized that the capabilities of these women necessarily differed according to background and experience. While all women, regardless of their race, could contribute to the success of CMS work in the Canadian mission field, Native women possessed several important advantages over their European-born counterparts. It was understood, for instance, that European-born women would not have any great knowledge of Aboriginal life-worlds or languages until they had lived in the North-West America Mission for an extended period of time, and even then that knowledge likely would be imperfect.⁷¹ Women born in western or northern Canada, in contrast, often possessed a knowledge of Aboriginal life-worlds and languages, and the CMS expected them to use that knowledge to assist their missionary husbands. When the recently widowed Reverend James Hunter married Jane Ross, the “eldest daughter of Donald Ross Esqre. Chief Factor in the Hon: H.B.Co. service”, Reverend Smithurst exclaimed to the Secretaries of the CMS, “Mr. Hunter could not have selected a more suitable partner.” Smithurst observed that “Miss Ross is a very amiable & pious person, one who desires to see the conversion of the Indians”, and noted that, although Jane Ross was of European ancestry, she possessed significant knowledge of local cultures, customs, and languages.

68 Edmonton, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Athabasca [hereafter PAA ADA] (A.290 / 1.a), Bishop Young Letterbook, Outgoing, Bishop Young to Bishop Bompas, March 26, 1886. Note also CMS (A115), C.1 / O.2, Bishop of Athabasca to Reverend C. C. Fenn, September 20, 1888; PAM (MG.7.A2), Reverend Wilfred A. Burman Papers, Reverend James Lucas to Reverend Wilfred Burman, November 1, 1906; PAA, Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Edmonton [hereafter ADE] (Box ED.37), ED.530 / 28, Diocese of Calgary, “Report on Indian Missions” (1903), p. 5.

69 CMS (A94), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend W. Mason, November 22, 1856. Note also CMS (A93), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend Robert McDonald, July 27, 1866; CMS (A95), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend James Settee, June 7, 1863.

70 CMS (A94), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend W. Mason, September 29, 1856.

71 CMS (A115), C.1 / O.2, Bishop of Saskatchewan to [?], May 23, 1888.

Though of Scotch parents, yet being a native of the country, she speaks the Cree language very well. There will be found many indirect advantages arising from Mr. Hunter's marriage with Miss Ross, apart from her own personal character and suitableness for the missionary work. Mr. Ross being chief in authority over that part of the country, has it in his power to do, or withhold favours at his pleasure, and may materially influence the Indians either for or against our cause.⁷²

Smithurst thus believed that Mrs. Jane Hunter (née Ross) possessed personal qualities, knowledge, and contacts that she could and would exploit for the benefit of the Society's endeavours in the North-West America Mission.

Other individuals also praised Jane Ross's linguistic abilities and emphasized to the Society that she could employ her skills and knowledge to further its work. Bishop David Anderson of the Diocese of Rupert's Land informed Reverend Henry Venn that Reverend Hunter "reads the Church Services in Cree remarkably well & spoke as if with the assistance of Mrs. Hunter (who is in this respect invaluable and as good as any sound Clergyman) he could preach in Cree during the absence of [Native missionary] Mr. Budd."⁷³ In fact, Hunter himself commented that, although "Mr. Budd is a great help to me in my translations ... he does not understand much of the Grammar". He continued, "[I]t is from Mrs. Hunter that I have derived the most valuable aid in understanding the difficulties of the language and in obtaining a correct pronunciation of the same."⁷⁴ With the assistance of Jane Hunter and Henry Budd, James Hunter produced translations, including the "Prayer Book in Cree"⁷⁵ that agents of the CMS used throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century.⁷⁶

72 CMS (A79), C.1 / M.4, Reverend Smithurst to Secretaries, August 1, 1848. Genealogical information confirms that the maternal grandparents of Jane Ross, also known as Jean Ross, were Alexander McBeath and Christine Gunn, both born in Scotland, as was her mother Mary McBeath, also known as Molly McBeath. The McBeath family arrived in Red River as Selkirk settlers in 1815. Mary McBeath married Donald Ross of Scotland; Jane Ross was born of this union at Cumberland House in Rupert's Land in 1822. See Winnipeg, Hudson Bay Company Archives [hereafter HBCA], E.235 / 121, Warren Sinclair, *Métis Genealogies*, pp. 2451–2452; George Bryce, *The Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk's Colonists: The Pioneers of Manitoba* (Toronto: Musson Book Company, 1909), p. 326. Personal communication with Library and Archives Canada [hereafter LAC] (LAC file no. Q1–77170–B and in author's possession) notes that Mary Ross "was born in the Parish of Kildonan, Scotland, and was an 'Original White Settler' (RG15, D–II–8–a, vol. 1323, reel C–14932)".

73 CMS (A79), C.1 / M.4, Bishop Anderson to Reverend Henry Venn, August 7, 1850.

74 CMS (A79), C.1 / M.5, Reverend James Hunter to Reverend Henry Venn, July 20, 1850.

75 CMS (A79), C.1 / M.5, Reverend James Hunter to Reverend H. Knight, July 28, 1853.

76 Agents of the CMS also employed women other than their wives to serve as translators. See numerous dates contained in W. D. Reeve's journals for August 1869 to May 1870 and June 1870 to December 1870, as found in AEPRL (P340) and in CMS (A99), C.1 / O; CMS (A99), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend Robert McDonald, August 21, 1860; CMS (A93) C.1 / O, journal entry

Over a decade later, Reverend John Horden praised the marriage of Thomas Vincent, a CMS agent of mixed ancestry, to Eliza Gladman, also of mixed ancestry and “the Daughter of [HBC employee] Mr. Gladman of Rupert’s House”, for reasons very similar to those raised in favour of Reverend Hunter’s marriage to Jane Ross.⁷⁷ Horden observed that Mrs. Vincent could use her connections to the HBC to “greatly enhanc[e]” her husband’s “usefulness” and that, because she was of both European and Aboriginal ancestry, she could exploit her knowledge of Aboriginal languages and cultures for the benefit of the CMS’s work. Furthermore, Horden suggested that marriage would make Vincent’s life as an agent of the CMS more “comfort[able]” and concluded that his new wife was “in every way suitable for him”.⁷⁸

The CMS also recognized that linguistic and cultural barriers and the distances involved in missionary work in western and northern Canada led many of the Society’s European-born agents and their wives to experience feelings of isolation and loneliness. In 1840 Reverend William Cockran informed the Church Missionary Society:

My wife has generally 3 rheumatic attacks in a winter. During which periods, she has a high fever, unable to move from the excruciating pain in her bones. As there is no white woman in my congregation, and all the Indian and Half Breed women are unacquainted with the mode of nursing white women; and by no means are partial to them [*sic*].⁷⁹

Thus, because of the lack of medical knowledge among the women in his congregation and the inimical feelings rooted in racial and cultural differences, Cockran’s wife found little solace, comfort, or companionship during her frequent bouts of illness.⁸⁰

To provide their wives with friendship and companionship, many European agents requested that the CMS send schoolmistresses from England. Bishop William C. Bompas anticipated that one Miss Mellet would prove to be a

of Reverend W. W. Kirkby, August 27, 1859; CMS (A83), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend W. C. Bompas, “Jany. to March” 1886.

77 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, Reverend Horden to Reverend Henry Venn, September 5, 1861. Historian J. S. Long notes that Vincent’s father John was born to HBC Chief Factor Thomas Vincent and Jane Renton, “a woman of mixed race”. Long also notes that contemporaries described Vincent’s father as a “Half-breed” and that he married a woman of “mixed race” named Charlotte Thomas. J. S. Long, “Archdeacon Thomas Vincent of Moosonee and the Handicap of Metis’ Racial Status”, *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1983), p. 97. See also CMS (A113), C.1 / O.2, Bishop of Moosonee to Reverend C. C. Fenn, September 16, 1885.

78 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, Reverend Horden to Reverend Henry Venn, September 5, 1861.

79 CMS (A78), C.1 / M.2, Reverend William Cockran to Secretaries, June 17, 1840.

80 Reverend William Day Reeve and his wife had a similar experience to that of the Cockrans. CMS (A102), C.1 / O, Annual Letter of Reverend W. D. Reeve, July 2, 1877.

valuable addition to his staff, both as a teacher in the school at Buxton Mission and as a friend to his wife. Unfortunately for both the mission and Mrs. Bompas, the Bishop was forced to transfer Miss Mellet to a different location because she proved to be too much of a distraction among the miners in the region.⁸¹ Bompas nevertheless hoped that Miss Mellet might add to the mission at Rampart House by teaching in the school for Reverend Canham and acting as a friend and confidant to Mrs. Canham.⁸² Furthermore, Bompas thanked the CMS for Miss Mellet's replacement, whom he described not only as being "efficient as a school teacher and manager",⁸³ but also as someone who would provide his wife with much-needed "companionship".⁸⁴

In contrast, the CMS expected that Aboriginal peoples would be more receptive to persons with whom they shared at least some ties of race, language, and culture. Although ethnic antipathies did negatively influence the relationships that some CMS Native agents and their wives formed with Aboriginal peoples,⁸⁵ many persons of Aboriginal ancestry were more receptive to Native wives of CMS agents than they were to women who had been born in England. Indeed, Native agent Reverend James Settee observed that "a number of heathen women" were very open to his wife because "they are fond of talking with one who speaks their language".⁸⁶

The CMS officials also doubted the mental and physical stamina of European-born women and expressed great frustration when the poor "state of ... health" of an agent's European-born wife "compelled" that agent to withdraw from his assigned station.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, while the Society held that persons who were of "Indian" or "mixed descent" were "better able to rough it" than were individuals who were of full European ancestry,⁸⁸ illness and frailty could affect Native and European women alike. Less than two years after the CMS stationed the "Native Clergyman" Reverend James Irvine at Lac Seul, the ill-health of his wife forced him to consider resigning from the mission station.⁸⁹ Despite

81 YA (MSS.125), 81 / 38, Bishop William C. Bompas to George Bompas, August 15, 1895.

82 *Ibid.*, January 4, 1895.

83 *Ibid.*, August 15, 1895.

84 *Ibid.*, January 4, 1895.

85 Henry Youle Hind, *Narrative of the Canadian Exploring Expeditions in Rupert's Land*, vol. 2 (London: Longman, Green, and Roberts, 1860), p. 324; CMS (A102), C.1 / O, Annual Letter of Reverend James Settee, November 24, 1871; CMS (A115), C.1 / O.2, Bishop of Saskatchewan to CMS, May 23, 1888.

86 CMS (A95), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend James Settee, October 20, 1861.

87 See PAA ADA (Acc.68.240), Microfilm Reel 2, "Report of the Second Meeting of the Synod of the Diocese of Athabasca", September 20, 1891.

88 CMS (A113), C.1 / O.2, "Memorandum taken by Rev. C. C. Fenn of Conversation with Archdn. Vincent", February 7, 1886. Refer also to CMS (A108), C.1 / L.5, Reverend C. C. Fenn to the Bishop of Mackenzie River, October 22, 1885.

89 CMS (A115), C.1 / O.2, James Irvine to Reverend Fred Wigram, November 15, 1888.

doing “good work amongst the Indians”,⁹⁰ he informed the Secretary of the CMS:

I resigned from the Lac Seul Mission some time ago but through some delay on the part of the Gov. in putting up the building of Mr. Burman I consented to stay on here for the winter. After thinking on the matter more carefully ... it would be much better for me to remain among these Indians now that I have their language perfect. My reason for leaving is that my wife is in poor health, & as I have frequently to make long journeys out among the Indians I can't leave her all alone. I would prefer staying here provided you can give me any help. Could you find a lady who would come out as a companion for my wife[?]⁹¹

The mere fact that a woman was of Aboriginal ancestry thus did not preclude her from becoming ill or developing infirmities that could hinder the Church Missionary Society's work.

Weakness in “natural temperament and habits”

Despite the many real and perceived advantages that Native women possessed over their European-born counterparts, racial suppositions led many European-born contemporaries to view these women as being generally inferior to European women as wives of missionary agents.⁹² The writings of Letitia Hargrave, wife of James Hargrave of the Hudson's Bay Company, provide an illuminating look at the impact that ethnicity and status had on the relations that people established in western and northern Canada.⁹³ While at York Factory in 1843, Letitia Hargrave observed that “all hands have turned on ... poor Mr. Evans”, a Wesleyan Methodist missionary who “was here lately in very bad spirits”. Although Evans previously had enjoyed good standing among fur-trading families in the Norway House region, Hargrave noted that “[h]e got a very sharp letter from Sir George [Simpson, the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company], and has been informed that he must live at the Indian village & leave the Fort” at Norway House. Mrs. Hargrave traced the cause of Evans's ostracism to “Mrs. Evans and her daughters' successful rivalry over Mrs. Ross and her children — For they were the derision of the whole passers by for their finery and exhibition of good

90 CMS (A114), C.1 / O.2, Alfred S. Cowley to [?], March 15, 1887.

91 CMS (A115), C.1 / O.2, James Irvine to Reverend Fred Wigram, November 15, 1888.

92 Historian Myra Rutherford also discusses this in her work *Women and the White Man's God*, p. xxiii.

93 Hargrave met Letitia while on furlough in England in 1838; they married in 1840, and she spent 10 years at York Factory. Refer to “Letitia Hargrave”, CBC Interviews, broadcast dates May 1 to 22, 2000 and March 6 to 27, 2000 [Government of Manitoba web site], retrieved November 17, 2005, from <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/about/cbc6.html> and <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/about/cbc5.html#Courtship%20and%20Marriage>.

education and knowledge of astronomy as Mrs. E used to say — whereas Mrs. Ross & Jane did not know the names of the commonest stars.”⁹⁴ Thus, although Reverends Hunter and Smithurst and Bishop Anderson all later would praise Jane Ross for her linguistic and cultural knowledge and for her personal connections and character traits, a minority of European-born and educated individuals found fault with her education and upbringing.⁹⁵

According to historian Deborah Gorham, Victorians accepted that “all females, ... even those who were not middle class, could be perfect wives or perfect daughters”.⁹⁶ Contemporaries, however, demanded that the wives of missionaries maintain and project certain minimal levels of status and respectability, manifested externally in the form of appropriate and expected material possessions and incorporated internally in the form of personal knowledge and embodiment of the traits expected of a true woman. To the Evans women, their own education, clothing, and actions were signs of their superior status to that of the Ross women. While this attitude earned them the scorn of the fur-trade families in the region, it reflected the expectations and assumptions of many middle-class persons who had been born, raised, and educated in England. As British imperial and Anglo-Canadian social, political, and economic institutions supplanted those of the fur trade after 1850,⁹⁷ the lines between cultural differences and supposed racial weaknesses became increasingly blurred.

Indeed, European-born men and women were even harsher in their criticism of women of Aboriginal descent than they were of women like Jane Ross, who were native-born but of full European ancestry. They suggested that the wives of Native proselytizers were of a disadvantaged social and cultural background and therefore lacked the ability to organize and run their homes in a way that reflected the status and respectability appropriate for an ordained clergyman. They also believed that the wives of Native proselytizers were unable to overcome the “weakness” in “natural temperament and habits” that they associated with Aboriginal peoples,⁹⁸ and that these women therefore lacked the ability to improve themselves to the degree required of a true woman and a perfect wife. While Europeans complimented the piety and domesticity of women of

94 Letitia Hargrave, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, ed. Margaret Arnett Macleod (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1947), pp. 150–151.

95 Sylvia Van Kirk, *“Many Tender Ties”: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing Ltd., 1980), pp. 214–218.

96 Gorham, *The Victorian Girl*, pp. 8–9.

97 Catherine A. Cavanaugh, “‘No Place for a Woman’: Engendering Western Canadian Settlement”, *Western Historical Quarterly*, vol. 28 (Winter 1997), pp. 502–503; Erickson, “Bury Our Sorrows in the Sacred Heart”, pp. 18–20.

98 “Reprinted Letter from Archbishop David Anderson to Honorary Clerical Secretary, August 22, 1849”, in *Church Missionary Intelligencer* (1849–1850), p. 176.

Aboriginal descent who were married to CMS agents,⁹⁹ they often found many to be wanting in the virtues of purity and submissiveness.¹⁰⁰

Historian Susan Thorne demonstrates that the position of European women in mission fields “actively depended on the subordination of their heathen sisters” and that the “existence of a degraded female Other in the colonies and at home” facilitated, for at least some British women, an “escape from the separate sphere”.¹⁰¹ Canadian contemporaries also employed “Othering” techniques to subordinate Aboriginal women. Historian Sarah Carter shows that “stereotypical images of Native and European women were created and manipulated to establish boundaries between Native people and white settlers to justify repressive measures against the Native population”.¹⁰² These images included presenting white, non-working-class women as civilizers and paragons of virtue and portraying Aboriginal women as adulterous, sexually liberal, and destroyers of civilized Euro-Canadian society.¹⁰³ Indeed, for many European-born CMS staff and for many other Victorian Europeans, the connection between licentiousness and Aboriginal ancestry was inescapable.

In fact, the “Othering” of Aboriginal women in general had important implications for the perceived ability of the wives of CMS Native agents to embody the purity required of persons in their position. Europeans saw these women, because of their race, as especially prone to moral corruption. Nineteenth-century Victorians placed great importance on the perception of chastity and virtue of women in general and of the wives of missionaries in particular. Historian Barbara Welter observes, “Purity was as essential as piety to a young woman, its absence unnatural and unfeminine.” Welter notes that, without purity, a woman “was, in fact, no woman at all, but a member of some lower order”.¹⁰⁴ However, as Welter observes, “Purity, considered as a moral imperative, set up a dilemma which was hard to resolve[:] ... marriage was, literally, an end to innocence.”¹⁰⁵ The traits that characterized a true woman and a perfect wife thus were somewhat at odds.

99 CMS (A99), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend Henry Budd, July 20, 1868; AEPRL (P345), 1893, journal entries of Archdeacon Robert McDonald, February 9 and March 19, 1893; CMS (A95), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend James Settee, August 22, 1855; CMS (A81), C.1 / M.10, Annual Letter of Reverend Henry Cochrane to Secretaries, December [?], 1875.

100 Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood”, pp. 152–153.

101 Susan Thorne, “Missionary-Imperial Feminism”, in Mary T. Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, eds., *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 60.

102 Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), p. i.

103 *Ibid.*, pp. xiv–xvi, 6–10.

104 Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood”, p. 154.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 158.

Middle-class Victorians overcame this dilemma by viewing wives and mothers as “Angel[s] in the House”¹⁰⁶ who stood as bulwarks against the morally staining influence of the public sphere and as inculcators of virtue and piety to the members of the household. Accusations of sexual impropriety undercut the moral influence and pure image of the “Angel in the House” and were thus usually critically damaging to the reputation of women.¹⁰⁷

In the late 1880s Reverend John Hines criticized Native agent Reverend R. R. McLennon for having others conduct religious services in his church while he observed the ceremonies from the pews or even walked “about in his garden”.¹⁰⁸ Hines, however, informed the Bishop of Saskatchewan that McLennon’s “laziness”¹⁰⁹ was not the only damaging influence at the Cumberland mission station; he also believed that McLennon’s wife was setting a very poor example for the local congregants. Hines regretfully noted that Mrs. McLennon had failed to present the chaste, respectful, and motherly image that the CMS expected of the wives of its missionaries; as a result, he commented, there was “much loose talk about” her. Although he hoped that “her crime consists [only] of a too little dignified self-control, such as becomes the wife of a native clergyman”, Hines believed that her social standing, her position within the community, and the mission itself already had been damaged. “[O]n this account,” Hines observed, “some of the young men have been tempted to act imprudently towards her.”¹¹⁰ The birth of a child by her husband shortly after the accusations surfaced and the uncertain nature of the accusations themselves permitted Mrs. McLennon to overcome the damage to her reputation,¹¹¹ the wives of other CMS agents were not so fortunate.

In 1898 Bishop William Day Reeve of the Diocese of Mackenzie River informed the Secretary of the CMS that, while Archdeacon Robert McDonald had been away in England for an extended period of time on Society business, his wife Julia (who was of Aboriginal ancestry and had

106 Gorham, *The Victorian Girl*, pp. 4–5, 102–122; Perkin, *Women and Marriage*, pp. 233–236. Coventry Patmore immortalized the phrase “Angel in the House” in a series of poems. The first two appeared in 1854 and 1856 and, according to the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, were “immensely popular with the Victorian public”. Margaret Drabble, “Angel in the House, The”, *X-Refer.com* [web page], retrieved January 3, 2003, from <http://www.xrefer.com/entry/367682>. These poems can be found at *Project Gutenberg* [web page], retrieved January 3, 2003, from <http://ibiblio.org/gutenberg/etext03/anghs10.txt>.

107 See, for example, Erica Smith, “‘Gentlemen, this is no Ordinary Trial’: Sexual Narratives in the Trial of the Reverend Corbett, Red River, 1863”, in Jennifer S. H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, eds., *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1996), p. 366.

108 CMS (A116), C.1 / O.2, Reverend John Hines to Reverend C. C. Fenn, November 19, 1890.

109 CMS (A117), C.1 / O.2, journal entry of Reverend John Hines, November 3, 1890.

110 CMS (A114), C.1 / O.2, Reverend John Hines to Reverend C. C. Fenn, September 23, 1887.

111 CMS (A116), C.1 / O.2, Reverend John Hines to Reverend C. C. Fenn, November 19, 1890.

been born at Peel River in what would become the Diocese of Mackenzie River)¹¹² had fallen to temptation and in doing so had not only brought “bitter grief” to her husband but also gave “occasion ... to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme”. Reeve wrote:

I have always dreaded the incoming of a mining population on account of the effect it would have upon the morals of our people but did not think it would touch us so closely. A party of gold seekers wintered at Fort McPherson one of whom was a doctor who attended upon Mrs. McDonald in his medical capacity, and took advantage of her in a moment of weakness to seduce her from virtue.¹¹³

Reeve then lamented that Julia McDonald’s ability to project the image desired of the wife of a CMS clergyman was ruined because “the sad fact is known to all the people at that post, and, I fear, to many others besides.”¹¹⁴ Reeve blamed Julia McDonald’s “weakness” and “lack of reticence” less on the loneliness that she felt from her being separated from her husband than on the fact that “she is an Indian”.¹¹⁵ He observed that Mrs. McDonald had been left without a moral and paternal male Christian figure to watch over her and ensure that she did not give in to the base feelings and revert to the looser moral standards that many Europeans associated with persons of Aboriginal descent. Reeve suggested to his superiors that, had Reverend Charles Whittaker not been “away at Herschel Island at the time ... it might not have happened”. Once events had unfolded, however, Reeve regretted that he could do little except to ensure that Whittaker “and his bride” lived “in the same house with Mrs. McD. ... [to] keep a strict watch upon her”.¹¹⁶

Julia McDonald was not the only person connected to the CMS to be accused of sexual impropriety. Several Native and European-born male agents left the Society’s service because of alleged sexual misconduct;¹¹⁷

112 CMS (A102), C.1 / O, Reverend Robert McDonald to Secretary, March 26, 1877. Note also AEPRL (P344), 1877, journal entry of Reverend Robert McDonald, November 7, 1876; CMS (A114), C.1 / O.2, Bishop of Mackenzie River to Secretaries, March 21, 1887.

113 CMS (A119), C.1 / O.6, Bishop William Day Reeve to Mr. Baring-Gould, July 29, 1898.

114 *Ibid.*

115 *Ibid.* Robert McDonald also was approximately 30 years older than his wife. Born in 1829, he was 47 when he married Julia Kutug in 1876; she was approximately 17 at the time. In 1898 Robert McDonald therefore would have been approximately 69 and Julia McDonald approximately 39. Sally Robinson, “Robert McDonald”, unpublished article in author’s possession.

116 CMS (A119), C.1 / O.6, Bishop William Day Reeve to Mr. Baring-Gould, July 29, 1898.

117 A partial list of names includes Reverends Griffiths Owen Corbett, Patrick Bruce, and Peter Badger. Note respectively: Frits Pannekoek, “The Anglican Church and the Disintegration of Red River Society, 1818–1870”, in Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook, eds., *The West and the Nation: Essays in Honour of W. L. Morton* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), pp. 83–83; Smith, “ ‘Gentlemen, this is no Ordinary Trial’ ”, pp. 364–366; CMS (A114), C.1 / O.2,

others were able to overcome similar charges raised against them.¹¹⁸ Because Victorian middle-class culture placed great importance on the ability of the wives of Christian missionaries to convey images of morality and purity and to serve as role models for converts and potential proselytes, however, charges of this sort were particularly damaging to women.

Moreover, persons who viewed and judged the Native wives of CMS agents according to middle-class Victorian standards and expectations often found them lacking and disparaged their actions and attitudes. Mission stations provided only basic academic education, religious instruction, and cultural inculcation for Aboriginal girls, some of whom would eventually marry CMS agents.¹¹⁹ In addition, subsequent and more comprehensive educational opportunities for girls and women in western and northern Canada were sparse, expensive, and beyond the reach of most girls of Aboriginal ancestry, including those related to CMS Native agents.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, despite the fact that the vast majority of the wives of CMS Native agents did not have access to the same middle-class socio-cultural and academic environment in which European-born missionary wives had been raised,¹²¹ critics of these women tended to associate their perceived shortcomings with the fact that they were of Aboriginal ancestry.

Victorian English, for instance, believed that true women should be passive, submissive, and subordinate to their husbands.¹²² Consequently, many Europeans were quick to criticize Native wives of CMS agents who appeared to be unbecomingly wilful and outspoken.¹²³ In the eyes of many, for example, Sally Settee, who assisted and worked alongside her husband, Native agent Reverend James Settee, was far from the image of the perfect missionary wife. Mrs. Settee admirably performed many of the duties that Victorian English missionaries expected of the

Abraham Cowley to Reverend C. C. Fenn, August 23, 1886; CMS (A117) C.1 / O.2, journal entry of Archdeacon John Hines, October 20, 1890.

118 Reverends Henry Budd and Henry Cochrane survived allegations of sexual impropriety and continued to have successful careers. Regarding Budd, see CMS (A76), C.1 / L.1, CMS to Reverend Smithurst, April 2, 1844; regarding Cochrane, see Whitehouse-Strong, “ ‘Because I Happen to Be a Native Clergyman’ ”, chap. 6.

119 Whitehouse-Strong, “ ‘Because I Happen to Be a Native Clergyman’ ”, pp. 211–216.

120 The struggles of CMS Native agents to have their daughters educated in academic settings outside the mission station are discussed in *ibid.*, pp. 216–219. See also CMS (A109), C.1 / O.1, Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance Committee of the Diocese of Saskatchewan, January 12, 1881; CMS (A81) C.1 / M.10, Bishop of Rupert’s Land to Reverend H. Wright, July 20, 1876; CMS (A104) C.1 / O, Reverend Gilbert Cook to Mr. Pellam, September 10, 1880.

121 Rutherford, *Women and the White Man’s God*, pp. 24–25.

122 CMS (A86), C.1 / O, journal entry of A. Cowley, April 3, 1852.

123 HBCA (1M268), B.3 / c / 3, Albany Fort Correspondence Inward, James Taylor to James Vincent, June 19, 1892.

wives of CMS agents: she cared for sick congregants, taught school, led mothers' meetings, prepared food, and mended clothes.¹²⁴ She did not, however, meet Victorian expectations regarding acceptable submissiveness, moral standards, and social status, and her experiences, along with those of Julia McDonald, give form to the increasingly negative suppositions about race, status, and ability that confronted the wives of Native CMS agents after the mid-nineteenth century.

Because the Settees did not share all the beliefs of their European counterparts regarding the acceptability of specific behaviours,¹²⁵ European missionaries such as Reverend Robert Hunt claimed that they lacked "moral sense" and "moral courage".¹²⁶ In reality, however, the Settees were more liberal than the Reverend Hunt and his wife because their perspectives were shaped not only by their experiences with the CMS and with Euro-Christianity, but also by their exposure to Aboriginal cultures.¹²⁷

A case that illustrates this point occurred in 1851, when Hunt informed the Society that he and his wife had "uncovered a stink [?] of moral pollution [at the Stanley Mission school] which filled us with grief and horror". Hunt and his wife launched an investigation after "[a]n Indian woman (Widow Venn) complained . . . that some of the elder boys had illtreated [*sic*] her little boy". The results of the inquiry revealed that "the eldest boys from 12 to 16 years of age had taken the eldest girl, ... [?] and having laid her upon a ton and exposed her person to all present proceeded to put Betsy Venn's little boy upon her".¹²⁸ Even more disturbing to the Hunts was the fact that their investigation uncovered that the students had engaged in a variety of other sexual acts that the Hunts categorized as "abominations".¹²⁹ Hunt informed the committee that "all the girls, big & little were in the habit of practising the abomination mentioned Rom. 1:24".¹³⁰ He continued, "For this purpose the elder ones sometimes returned to the woods, sometimes merely covered themselves with a blanket in the School room: the little ones imitated them almost everywhere."¹³¹

Five months later, Hunt informed the CMS of a further "serious impropriety" involving W. Rat, one of the individuals implicated in the case

124 See, for example, CMS (A95), C.1 / O, journal entry of James Settee, October 20, 1861.

125 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, Reverend Robert Hunt to Reverend Joseph Ridgeman, November [?], 1851.

126 CMS (A79), C.1 / M.5, Reverend Robert Hunt to Major H. Straight, November 23, 1852.

127 CMS (A78), C.1 / M.4, James Settee to James Cook, December 26, 1845.

128 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, Reverend Robert Hunt to Secretaries, June 5, 1851. Refer also to CMS (A89), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend Robert Hunt, January 16, 1851.

129 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend Robert Hunt, January 16, 1851.

130 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, Reverend Robert Hunt to Secretaries, June 5, 1851. Romans 1:24 reads, "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves."

131 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, Reverend Robert Hunt to Secretaries, June 5, 1851.

surrounding Betsy Venn's son. He wrote, "Only last night I heard of a young man's being in the room where all the school-girls, & the woman who takes care of them were sleeping." Hunt observed that "this young fellow is the same person who had behaved so badly to a school girl as mentioned by me in a former communication to the Committee". He commented that the young man's "subsequent bad conduct had compelled me to forbid him to come to the station unless for a visit, but he despised my authority . . . and here he stays in spite of me". In this context, Hunt informed the CMS, "I begin to fear that my own abhorrence of such serious impropriety will be smoothed down into passive compliance, or rather sufferance, from inability to do what I feel ought to be done."¹³²

Hunt stressed to the Society that he felt that he was justified in his concern for his own moral standards. He observed "that constant residence among the Indians and familiarity with heathen practices, had slanted the moral feelings of Mr. & Mrs. Settee".¹³³ Hunt suggested that the acts of "sinfulness" arose "from the indiscriminate manner in which both sexes, married & single, old & young have been accustomed to live together in crowded tents".¹³⁴ He accused the Settees of failing to bring an end to these habits and argued that they either did not believe that they could do anything to "introduce a new state of things" or were unwilling to face down the opposition that might arise if they attempted to do so.¹³⁵ One year later, in anticipation of James Settee's ordination, Hunt therefore warned the CMS that Settee "has not the moral sense, or moral courage necessary for the oversight of persons and property, or to raise the moral tone of a community of Indians by firmly and constantly as well as kindly opposing moral wrong or pecuniary injury done to the Society".¹³⁶

The Settees did view the actions of the school children differently and more liberally than the Hunts. Although the CMS agents in the North-West America Mission had inculcated in Settee some elements of middle-class Anglo-Christian culture, his perspectives, and those of his wife Sally (who had even less exposure than her husband to Euro-Christian life) also were shaped by their exposure to Aboriginal cultures and by their own upbringing.¹³⁷ In the words of one of Hunt's

132 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, Reverend Robert Hunt to Reverend Joseph Ridgeman, November [?], 1851. Refer also to AEPRL (P337), Diary of Robert Hunt, journal entry of Reverend Robert Hunt, August [?], 1851.

133 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, Reverend Robert Hunt to Secretaries, June 5, 1851.

134 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend Robert Hunt, January 16, 1851.

135 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, Reverend Robert Hunt to Reverend Joseph Ridgeman, November [?], 1851. Note also AEPRL (P337), Diary of Robert Hunt, journal entry of Reverend Robert Hunt, August [?], 1851.

136 CMS (A79), C.1 / M.5, Reverend Robert Hunt to Major H. Straight, November 23, 1852.

137 CMS (A78), C.1 / M.4, James Settee to James Cook, December 26, 1845.

contemporaries, “the Indians ... including Settee ... ‘are but babes and know little of our English notions of right and wrong’. Their selfish and insincere habits have been wrought unto him by their mode of life.”¹³⁸ The Settees did not view the actions of the children from the perspective of evangelical Anglicans who had been born, raised, and educated in early to mid-nineteenth-century England, and they did not consider the actions to be instances of “impropriety” and “abhorrence”.¹³⁹ Rather, the Settees reserved their criticism for the Reverend and Mrs. Hunt. They suggested that the Hunts erred in their decisions to separate the school children and to supervise them more closely and “efficiently”. Moreover, Mrs. Settee went so far as to “confron[t] and oppos[e]” Hunt, “den[y]” his “authority in this matter”, and “advised the Indian women not to attend Mrs. Hunt’s class for spiritual instruction”.¹⁴⁰

Indeed, because of her strong personality and dominant nature, her familiarity with Aboriginal languages and life-worlds, and her position as the wife of a paid CMS agent, Sally Settee had great influence among many of the local Aboriginal populations. Congregants and potential proselytes therefore sometimes followed her lead rather than that of European missionaries. On December 31, 1850, for instance, Reverend Robert Hunt blamed Mrs. Settee for derailing a “Missionary Meeting” that he had called “to stir up our people to pray for the success of other Missions, and to feel more thankful that the Gospel had been sent to themselves”. Hunt noted that Mrs. Settee frustrated his designs “by not conceal[ing] at all her displeasure that the Indians should be thought fit objects to be introduced to Missionary subjects”; he lamented that, because of her actions, “We had but little encouragement at the meeting.”¹⁴¹

Less than one year later, Sally Settee’s actions again frustrated Reverend Hunt. Hunt had purchased a “young bull” that was being held at a Hudson Bay Company trading post and sent Settee to retrieve the animal. Hunt recorded, however, that the catechist failed to complete his assigned task because, although he had entered the fort and spent the night there, Mrs. Settee’s “ill-feeling” towards the wife of the HBC post-master was so great that the pair refused to enter their house. Consequently, the Settees made no effort to retrieve the bull, and Hunt was forced to make alternative arrangements.¹⁴²

138 AEPRL (P.337), Diary of Robert Hunt, Reverend James Hunter as paraphrased in journal entry of Reverend Robert Hunt, October [?], 1850.

139 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, Reverend Robert Hunt to Reverend Joseph Ridgeman, November [?], 1851.

140 CMS (A89), C.1 / O, Reverend Robert Hunt to Secretaries, June 5, 1851.

141 AEPRL (P.337), Diary of Robert Hunt, journal entry of Reverend Robert Hunt, December 31, 1850.

142 *Ibid.*, August 12, 1851.

The cumulative effect of Mrs. Settee's outspoken nature and her tendency to "den[y]" the "authority"¹⁴³ of European missionaries when she believed them to be wrong was that by the 1870s many Europeans considered her to be not only "quarrelsome" and "worthless", but also a detriment to the Society's work. The Bishop of Rupert's Land, for instance, lamented that Mrs. Settee and her "worthless family neutralize greatly the old man's efforts wherever he is".¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Reverend Cowley observed that "Mrs. Settee's temper & bearing" presented an "insuperable difficulty" to her husband's efforts to disseminate Christianity: "He needs to be where these can in some way be nullified."¹⁴⁵ Reverend W. Stagg, however, most succinctly summarized the reason that many European missionaries expressed consternation with the attitudes and actions of Sally Settee. Stagg informed the CMS that, because Settee's "wife is not in subjection", she was "a great hindrance to him in his work".¹⁴⁶ Reflecting on Sally Settee, Stagg recommended, "It is necessary [that] all Missionaries should be well married, especially our ordained natives."¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

Thus, while the CMS held that God had created all persons equally and that differences between peoples were the result of environmental and cultural diversity, prejudices rooted in racial assumptions continued to govern the attitudes of European-born persons toward their Native-born counterparts, both male and female. The CMS maintained that the wives and daughters of its agents could facilitate its work in northern and western Canada. It also recognized, however, that socio-cultural experiences would shape the abilities of missionary wives to perform the duties expected of them and that European-born women initially did not possess the same knowledge of Aboriginal life-worlds and languages as many of their Native-born counterparts. Moreover, the Society and those connected to it perceived European-born women to be more delicate and less well suited to the physical, emotional, and psychological hardships of work in the Canadian mission field.

While CMS agents acknowledged that the academic and socio-cultural milieus in which the wives of Native CMS agents had been raised differed significantly from those experienced by the wives of European-born agents, many individuals doubted the ability of Native women to overcome

143 CMS (A89), C.1 / O.1, Reverend Robert Hunt to Secretaries, June 5, 1851.

144 CMS (A80), C.1 / M.8, Bishop of Rupert's Land to Reverend C. C. Fenn, December 17, 1870.

145 CMS (A87), C.1 / O, journal entry of Reverend Cowley, June 9, 1866.

146 CMS (A97), C.1 / O, Reverend W. Stagg to Secretary, October 24, 1863. Archdeacon J. A. Mackay agreed with Stagg and suggested that Settee's "deficiency in the ability to rule his own house" rendered "his past career ... a total failure". CMS (A102), C.1 / O, J. A. Mackay to Secretary, June 25, 1877.

147 CMS (A97), C.1 / O, Annual Letter of Reverend W. Stagg, August 25, 1857.

what they believed were racially inherent weaknesses. Furthermore, Victorian “Othering” techniques led European missionaries to question the degree to which the Native wives of CMS agents could embody the personal characteristics expected of true women and perfect wives. They viewed instances of infidelity and outspokenness not as personal moral failings or the result of cultural differences, but rather as proof of the inability of most women of Aboriginal descent to embrace and project the core essential values and ideals believed necessary for middle-class missionary wives. Studies of mission contact situations, and of Aboriginal-European contact situations in general, therefore must acknowledge and account for the fact that, from a Euro-Christian perspective, Native women were in a doubly subordinate position: perceptions about race *and* gender shaped and constrained the roles and activities open to them in the proselytization of Christianity.