



Special Issue Reprint

Reclaiming Voices

Women's Contributions to Baptist History

Edited by
Melody Maxwell

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Reclaiming Voices: Women's Contributions to Baptist History

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Guest Editor

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Editorial

Editorial for Special Issue “Reclaiming Voices: Women’s Contributions to Baptist History”

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Women make up more than half of Baptist church members globally, yet many histories of Baptists have neglected women, focusing instead on men and the institutions they lead. This Special Issue of *Religions* seeks to fill this lacuna. It amplifies women’s voices in Baptist history over the past two hundred years. By highlighting women’s stories, the Special Issue provides a fuller understanding of Baptist history as it actually happened.

Although it addresses women’s roles in Baptist history, the issue does not seek to just describe women’s contributions to male-centred movements, as in Gerda Lerner’s “contribution history”. The goal is not to “add women and stir” to add flavour. Instead, the issue seeks to reconceptualize Baptist history through the lens of gender—to change the recipe entirely. How might we understand the nineteenth century in the Southern Baptist Convention through women’s experiences? How do changes in women’s roles in the Nigerian Baptist Convention help narrate that group’s history? What shifts about our understanding of Baptist history—and Christian history more broadly—when we start with the stories of women?

The authors of the eleven articles in this issue address this question in their writings, which highlight specific women as well as broader movements and trends related to Baptist women. Articles are broad in topic as well as geographical scope. They also use new primary source research to reveal more of the history of Baptist women. I am grateful to each contributor for their important work.

Ian Randall begins the Special Issue with an analysis of missionary work, specifically of female General Baptist missionaries from Great Britain to India in the late nineteenth century. While acknowledging that scholarship about missions is complex, Randall highlights the contributions of British missionaries to education and famine relief in Orissa. He provides new primary source research on the topic using analysis of the missionary periodicals of the day.

Next, Taylor Murray moves the narrative to Canada in the first of multiple biographical articles included in the Special Issue. He profiles Dr. Olive Clark, who was a professor at the fundamentalist Toronto Baptist Seminary in the twentieth century. Clark is a fascinating example of a woman who held fundamentalist convictions—including about women’s roles—yet assumed a position of leadership and authority over others. Murray explores how she negotiated these seemingly contradictory ideas in her ministry.

Andy Goodliff also takes a biographical approach in his article, which focuses on twentieth-century British Baptist leader Lois Chapple. A woman of many talents, Chapple served as a deaconess, deacon, missionary to China, leader of the Baptist Women’s League, and leader in the Baptist World Alliance. Like Clark, she was an exceptional, not typical, woman for her context. Yet her story informs readers of the possibilities available to British Baptist women in leadership during her lifetime.

Laine Scales’s article turns our attention to women affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Baptist convention in the world and one known for its conservative views of women’s roles. Scales examines the writings of missionaries Anna Seward Pruitt and Annie Jenkins Sallee, analyzing their perspectives on singleness, marriage, and motherhood. Both women served during the woman’s missionary movement around the turn of



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the twentieth century, and both had to navigate changing roles due to varied expectations of women in different stages of life.

Gendered expectations among Southern Baptists are also a topic of Joanna Lile's article on women's experiences at SBC colleges during the Progressive Era. Lile analyzes women's publications from colleges that educated women in this period, demonstrating that "the college experience was a blend of many experiences—mischief, friendship, sisterhood, leadership, love, and spirituality—that they [female students] believed, in one way, or another were part of their journey into womanhood." Her chapter provides a fascinating look into women's experiences in higher education in the conservative Southern United States.

With his article, Gordon Heath returns to the Canadian context, this time with a biographical analysis of Rev. Dr. Muriel Spurgeon Carder. Like others profiled in this Special Issue, Carder served as a missionary, which was considered an acceptable and even heroic role for Baptist women. Yet her roles also included preacher, scholar, translator, mentor, and chaplain, among others. Heath demonstrates the ways that Carder both reinforced and undermined common assumptions about Canadian Baptist women in ministry in the twentieth century.

Continuing an emphasis on the twentieth century, Rebecca Hilton moves the reader's focus to Australian Baptist women. Contrary to what some individuals might assume, these women served in important roles in missions work, preaching, management, social ministries, and denominational leadership. Hilton explores the additional responsibilities that some women assumed during World War II because of men's absence, yet she also examines the limitations Australian Baptist women faced in the first half of the twentieth century.

The next article, by Matthews A. Ojo and Ezekiel Oladapo Ajani, features Baptist women in Nigeria from 1914 to 2021. The authors detail the changing status of women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention, which is second only to the Southern Baptist Convention in membership. They conclude that Nigerian Baptist women have moved from subordination to empowerment, as evident through their ordination, education, and leadership roles.

The next two articles return to the Southern Baptist Convention, with Leslie Garrote focusing on the recent history of a list of SBC churches with women ministers, which was created by opponents of women serving in these roles. Garrote analyzes primary sources related to these women, concluding that not only gender but race was a significant issue in this controversy. Black churches were less likely to acknowledge the list or their affiliation with the SBC at all.

C. A. Vaughn Cross also probes the topic of race as it relates to the SBC, a denomination that was founded to send slaveholders as missionaries. In a wide-ranging analysis, she examines the writings, attitudes, and actions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Southern Baptist women related to slavery, discussing what she calls the "1845 Mythos" of the denomination and its founding. Vaughn Cross's writing relays a sobering past on a topic that most contemporary Southern Baptists might prefer to ignore.

Finally, Rosalind Mary Gooden's writing returns to the Australian context, again emphasizing the role of Baptist women in missions, this time to India. She describes the first Australian Baptist missionaries—all women—and reviews their ministries. Her writing concludes the Special Issue by examining themes of gender, ministry, and missions that other contributors have also ably explored.

I hope that future scholars will continue in the trajectory of these authors as they seek to better understand the past. As they have demonstrated, it is important to utilize both traditional and non-traditional archival material for the stories of women that help us more fully comprehend the more than four-hundred-year-old tradition of the people called Baptists. This is especially needed for Baptists in the Global South, where Christianity is growing rapidly, but historical scholarship—especially about women—sometimes lags behind. Until such research is conducted and shared, our understanding of global Christian history will sadly remain incomplete.

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Article

General Baptist Women in Orissa, India: Initiatives in Female Education, 1860s–1880s

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Abstract: This article looks at the General Baptist mission in Orissa, India, from the 1860s to the 1880s, with particular reference to the way women who served within the mission fulfilled a role in teaching and encouraging girls and women, especially by setting up schooling. The challenges of a time of desperate famine, with many orphans being cared for, are examined. The General Baptist mission worked with other bodies, notably and crucially with the interdenominational Female Education Society. A major aim was that, through the work of the female teachers, local teachers would be equipped. The argument here is that there was integrity in what was performed, and thus, this article offers an alternative to interpretations that dismiss the validity of the mission endeavours. The Orissa mission continued on beyond the 1880s, with wider fellowship eventually happening through the Church of North India. This study does not go beyond the 1880s as that would introduce a new phase with the amalgamation in 1891 of the General and Particular Baptists and their overseas missionary societies.

Keywords: Baptist; Orissa; female education; orphans; famine

1. Introduction

The English General Baptists represented a strand of Baptist life which took shape in the seventeenth century and became a denominational body alongside the significantly larger Particular or Calvinistic Baptist denomination. The description ‘General’ signifies ‘general atonement’, an aspect of Arminian theology. In the eighteenth century, when a number of General Baptist congregations were embracing Unitarianism, the New Connexion of General Baptists was formed under the influence of the Evangelical Revival. This took place in 1770. The dynamic leader was Dan Taylor (1738–1816), who had been a Methodist local preacher (See Copson 2017; Briggs 2017; Pollard 2018). In the year of Taylor’s death the General Baptist Missionary Society (GBMS) was formed. The prime mover was John Gregory Pike, pastor of the General Baptist Church in Derby, in the English Midlands. He was Secretary of the GBMS from its formation until his death in 1854 (Shepherd 2009). This study examines GBMS initiatives in India in female education and care, especially those carried out in partnership with the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East (often known as the Female Education Society: FES), from the 1860s to the 1880s. The FES, which began to send women to establish schools in the East in 1836, was, by the 1860s, supporting educational work in China, Malaya, Burma, India and Ceylon, and the Middle East. This article makes use especially of the GBMS *Missionary Observer* (hereafter, *Observer*) and the FES *Female Intelligencer* (hereafter, *Intelligencer*).¹

The methodology used in this article is a close reading of the primary sources, seeking to listen to the voices of the Baptist women—the theme of this issue of *Religions*. Over three decades, from the 1860s to the 1880s, there has been an opportunity to investigate changes and continuity. This article does engage with secondary writers, although other writers have not focussed on the situation among Baptist women in Orissa. The wider context in which the missionaries worked was the imperial rule of India by Britain. There has been a tendency to see overseas missions as working in tandem with the imperialist



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enterprise, but in England, Baptists were not part of the ‘establishment’, and neither were they in India. Another aspect often misunderstood is the nature of mission journals. It is not the case, as can be wrongly assumed, that what was written was presented only to encourage people to give money. It is fair to say that missionaries shaped their content for intended audiences in missionary journals: the public nature of their writing meant they did not necessarily include a full account of their experiences. At times, certainly, there were appeals for financial help, but more significant was an awareness of spiritual bonds and a desire to share at that level. This article suggests that there was a deep desire among the Baptist women to see Indian women being educated, so having their own faith, not an imported version (For more, see my article (Randall 2022)). In this context, this article seeks to show the importance of the local Oriya language that was being used. This did mean that all that was local was accepted, as seen in the issue of jewellery. The fact that visiting European women (not missionaries) were wearing jewellery was not something that the Baptist women could influence. This article is not comprehensive in portraying all the complex missionary issues but seeks to give Baptist women a voice.

2. Developing Female Education

The early formation and development of the GBMS were narrated by those who were involved (Sutton 1833; Peggs 1846). The Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), formed in 1792 by the Particular Baptists, a much larger body than the General Baptists, felt unable to accept a General Baptist as a missionary when a request was made. However, in India, William Carey and his colleagues in Serampore were happy to advise the GBMS in its formative period. The advice was to work in Orissa (now Odisha), eastern India, which, at that time, was part of Bengal. Outreach began in 1822. The years up to 1858 in Orissa have been characterised by Kanchanmoy Mojumdar as a period of ‘preparation’ for wider Baptist activity (Mojumdar 1976, p. 327). Church life was centred in Cuttack, the main commercial centre of Orissa, and the 1860s saw the growth of ‘a large school of local girls’. This was a description by Sarah Buckley, one of 20 GBMS missionaries, who served with her husband, John.² There was one FES-supported teacher in Orissa, Mary Guignard, who had arrived in 1860. She had trained at Homerton College, London, and had been teaching in Sheffield.³ She welcomed into the school significant numbers of children in Orissa who were orphaned, and she trained local teachers, an early example being Komali Shahad, who had been a student in the school. Komali’s husband had become unwell and was unable to work. He was at home with the children while she took up a teaching role alongside Mary Guignard.⁴ This relationship, between the GBMS, the FES, and locally trained female teachers, would develop further as increasing attention was paid to education (For more see (Ingleby 1998)).

In the first months of 1863, the *Intelligencer* carried two reports from Guignard. She was ‘happy in her work’, which involved responsibility for 60 girls. The main subjects covered were reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, scripture, sewing, and history, especially the history of India. The school had set up a library.⁵ Whereas in the Cuttack schools—there was one for boys and one for girls—some teaching was in English as well as in the local language, Oriya, Guignard reported on a ‘Vernacular School’ being started for girls in Chaga. The mothers of the girls were keen to find out about Guignard when she visited the Chaga school in its early stages. They asked Guignard if she had a living mother or father, or brothers and sisters. She answered that she had no close family—her parents had died when she was young—and ‘it seemed to the mothers that she had done something wrong to be so bereft of relations’. However, she explained the importance of friendships. She found that the mothers needed persuading that girls should be given an education from quite an early age. Guignard found the amount of ‘astonishment and pleasantries’ to which this idea gave rise ‘rather amusing’. One child of two or three was held up by its mother, with the question of whether she should be at school. Guignard was not dismayed and was determined to ‘preach’, as she put it, the education of girls.⁶

At this stage, Guignard was joined by Agnes Packer, who had been teaching with the FES in Calcutta, and who arrived in Orissa to augment the teaching team with its increasing challenges. Her arrival meant that more individual attention could be given to the faith development of the girls. The *Observer* noted, in February 1863, that in a baptismal service at the Baptist church in Cuttack at which ten candidates were baptised, six of them were teenage girls who had been in the school. Guignard was trying to help girls whose parents had died, something with which Guignard could herself identify. All ten of those baptised were received into the church fellowship. An Indian church member made a joyful response: 'This is something like the day of Pentecost.'⁷ The July 1863 *Observer* carried reports from both Packer and Guignard on a range of issues. Two of the older girls who had finished at the school were now married, one to the headmaster of the boys' school. Several girls were reading scripture aloud outside the school setting, during church services. They were also making good progress in writing. Guignard introduced the innovation of writing on slates.⁸ The *Intelligencer*, in June 1863, was adamant that the FES was continuing its work in India, against the background of rumours that this might not be the case. It had 49 schools and 128 trained local teachers which it was supporting in India. In the whole of the East, the Society supported 254 schools.⁹

Further advance in Orissa took place from the mid-1860s. A Vernacular Education Society had been formed in 1858, in which Baptists, Anglicans, Congregationalists, and Methodists in India cooperated (Hewitt 1949). Discussions in Baptist conferences in Cuttack focussed on new places for schools. Obvious locations were Christian villages being set up by the GBMS. Brian Stanley notes: 'Christian villages tended to act as a magnet for the outcaste and fellow traveller, and thus helped to inflate the total Christian community to about five times the size of the baptized membership.' (Stanley 1992, p. 163). Sarah Buckley, a regular GBMS correspondent, wrote in 1864 about how 'her heart sank' when visiting a village and discovering that none of the women could read. She asked the mothers if the children could be taught; the reply was that there was 'no one of our caste to teach them'.¹⁰ Supporters of the FES were committed to increasing funding for such needs, with a meeting in Dublin being told that reaching Indian women meant influencing a nation, as was the case in Ireland. Soon a grant was made to provide for an extra local teacher to work with Guignard. A library lending books overseas was in operation.¹¹ The extent of the challenge was indicated by a further letter from Buckley in the *Observer* in May 1865. She had 400 children under her overall care and was feeling 'somewhat bewildered'. However, she had very good assistant teachers. She was delighted that R.L. Martin, Government Inspector of Schools, who worked under T.E. Ravenshaw, the Commissioner, and also an educationist, said that in Bengal, no Indian female teachers operated with such high standards as those at the Baptist Cuttack school.¹²

3. Care and Education in a Time of Famine

A devastating famine hit Orissa in 1866. It is reckoned that one million people in Orissa died, representing about a quarter of the population. The most vulnerable sections of society were worst hit (Mohanty 2022). Already in May 1865, before the famine reached its deadliest, one of the GBMS centres in Piplee (Pipli), a town 27 miles south of Cuttack where an orphanage had been established, was talking about taking in 'little skeletons', but seeing them become 'bright and lively'.¹³ When the worst of the famine struck, the FES made a special grant to Cuttack. An article in the *Intelligencer* in September 1866 described how cholera and smallpox were 'raging all around'. The Maharajah of Dhenkanal, Bhagiratha Mahendra Bahadur, visited and gave a gift. A visitor who was subsequently removed from office for his lack of action to address the dire situation during the famine was Sir Cecil Beadon, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal.¹⁴ During 1867 and 1868, Agnes Packer reported from Cuttack on the growth in the number of girls in the school and orphanage. The increase was considerable, and government help was being given. Orphaned girls in the school numbered 195 girls. This was a larger number than the orphaned boys. Older girls were helping younger ones. There were new additions each month, but also deaths by

famine. The average number of deaths each month was a heart-breaking 25, with some having no family left. In the midst of this tragedy, Packer was praying for God's Spirit 'to be poured out' on the girls and on the teachers.¹⁵

Orphan outreach has been criticised by some writers. Jeffrey Cox asserted that the cooperation between the government of India and the Christian missions to put Hindu or Muslim children into Christian care was one of 'the corruptions of imperial power'. He states that he found no evidence of any missionary who comprehended 'the moral implications of using famine as an opportunity for making Christians' (Cox 2002, p. 163). A comment like this is easily made from a distance, but for the GBMS at the time, there was a calling to respond to an enormous need. Another critic, Clare Midgely, argued that orphan outreach utilised ideas of 'Christian female privilege and providential imperialism' to enact a 'maternalist Christian-imperial mission' which was 'powerfully articulated around the surrogate mothering of the "heathen" girl.' (Midgley 2007, p. 111). However, it was not that the missionaries wished to replace Indian mothers but, in the case of orphans, there was no option other than 'surrogate' (a word never used at the time) care in a community. The outreach in this time of enormous distress was in fact to mothers, where they survived, as well as their children. At the annual meeting of the Auxiliary of the FES in 1868 in Cork, Ireland, there was the affirmation of women in Cork who looked 'with sisterly feeling upon the women of India'.¹⁶ The *Intelligencer* of June 1869 had a report from Guignard, who was moved to tears by the prayers and readings she heard from girls. Packer added a description of weddings in the Christian community, with 600 present and singing going on for three hours.¹⁷ These are hardly 'Christian-imperialist' perspectives.

Caroline Lewis criticised, in her PhD in 2014, on a mission to women and girls in India, what she called 'sanitised and sentimental accounts of orphans aimed at procuring sponsorship from women'. Alongside these, she suggested, were 'problematic examples of orphan work that derived, largely, from accounts of men's missionary work' and included 'intimations of relationships with the colonial state' (Lewis 2014, p. 78). It is strange to describe accounts of the suffering that was actually happening as 'sanitised and sentimental', and in any case, many of the reports were written by women. It is debatable, certainly in the case of Orissa, whether men's missionary work predominated in reports. Also, reports were read by men as well as women, so they can hardly be said to be 'aimed' only at women. However, there was a desire to include outside approval of what was being undertaken. In 1878, the *Observer* looked back on the late 1860s and printed an article, 'The Orissa Mission and its Famine Orphanages'. John Henry Pratt, Anglican Archdeacon of Calcutta, wrote in 1868 about a visit to the Orissa Baptist mission and how he saw 500 girls 'rescued chiefly from the Famine'. He was pleased to hear them sing hymns with Oriya words and tunes. David Smith, Sanitary Commissioner for Bengal, visiting in the same year, said that in his mind, the work of the women of the Baptist Mission reminded him of Florence Nightingale.¹⁸

By the early 1870s, although fewer new girls were being taken into the Orissa orphanages, many who had been taken in earlier were still in the GBMS community and receiving education. In December 1870, the *Observer* reported that local Indian pastors had preached at a baptismal service in Cuttack and baptised 16 candidates, 13 of whom were from the orphanage overseen by Sarah Buckley. There was 'much joy'.¹⁹ Caroline Lewis noted that baptismal records in orphanages had 'unknown' written where the parents and birth circumstances of orphans were not known. She saw this as an 'effacement' of the biological claims on the child.²⁰ The Baptist practice of the baptism of believers, who then enter a Christian community that is, in itself, a family, does not appear in what Lewis writes. Sarah Buckley, energised by the baptisms taking place, hoped that the 20,000 General Baptist members at home would enlarge their vision for India. In April 1871, she expressed in the *Observer* her disappointment that the GBMS home committee did not 'seek to exert itself more energetically to send us more help'. Buckley insisted that there was 'a large field of labour for devoted Christian women whether married or single'. She prayed that more women would 'come over and help us'.²¹

In the spring of 1871, Packer and Guignard were able to take groups of girls on holiday. They walked six miles to the holiday location, something they could not have performed previously because of the debilitating effects of the famine. Now, they walked that distance, singing as they went. In the accommodation provided for the holiday, they enjoyed each other's company and spoke about their lives. In the group led by Packer, one girl said she was the only survivor of an extended family of 35.²² The group led by Guignard met some girls whom they had not met before and, in two cases, relations who had lost contact were re-united.²³ In June, leading this group, Mary Guignard was feeling quite well, but her health suddenly deteriorated, and on 14 August 1871, she died. The *Observer* reported on this loss, of someone aged 45 and known for the 'very high order' of her 'capabilities for teaching', as 'a very heavy one'. She had 'courageously struggled with the disadvantages of an early lot', which should 'encourage those who have still to maintain the struggle'.²⁴ The *Intelligencer*, in an extended tribute, considered that the FES had lost someone who was 'a burning and a shining light'. The Baptist community at Cuttack was 'distraught, adults and children'. Agnes Packer spoke of Mary as 'a faithful, true, generous friend'.²⁵ A way forward was sought in light of such a severe loss.

4. Priorities and Personnel

A pressing issue in 1872 was to what extent government aid for education for orphans would continue. The number of children in the schools receiving accommodation and food as well as education meant that the resources of the mission could not cope. Bina Sarma, in a study of education in Orissa, argues that female education developed in Orissa in the nineteenth century 'only because of the exertion of the missionaries' (Sarma 1996, p. 71). Aid for this work had been forthcoming during and after the famine, but in 1872, there was a substantial government report which covered all schools in Orissa and there was a recognition that, in some cases, government aid could be withdrawn. A Church of England school was warned that this might be the case if there was no improvement in standards. Roman Catholic schools received a favourable report. The Baptist community was happy to read the section of the report on their schools, which had 929 pupils, and which were described as 'admirably conducted'. The girls were said to have made 'remarkable progress'.²⁶ The *Intelligencer* also reported on this and added that part of what had been undertaken was the rescue of children who would have been victims of child sacrifice. Among the Khonds, who lived in a mountainous region and had little contact with the outside world, there had been human sacrifices of local Meriah children, and over time, about 250 Meriah children were taken into Baptist orphanages.²⁷

Throughout 1872, some girls taught by Mary Guignard were baptised. One, from a Muslim background, was blind, and those who interviewed her for baptism spoke of how 'though blind with the bodily eye she could see very clearly with the eye of the mind'. She had 'extensive acquaintance' of scriptures and 'clear views of the plan of salvation'. The report on the baptisms considered that if opponents of immersion had witnessed the event, they would have 'been convicted to give up some of their strong arguments against it'. Those baptised were welcomed into church membership.²⁸ Soon after these baptisms, Harriet Leigh arrived to take the place of Mary Guignard. Her home church was a Baptist congregation in Caversham, on the outskirts of Reading, Berkshire. Part of her support came from young people in Caversham and part from the FES. Leigh, after arriving in Orissa in November 1872, quickly took up a role alongside Agnes Packer. The two women were, as the *Observer* said in autumn 1873, 'in charge of two orphanages and a large Christian community'. In addition, extension work was taking place in villages, including possibilities for buildings for worship. There were also 'innumerable calls for medical help'. It was noted that Packer 'badly requires a furlough'.²⁹ This was possible, as Lydia Hague, who married Thomas Bailey, arrived in 1873, with Leigh taking charge of the educational department, contributing 'ability, energy and practical knowledge'.³⁰

An important issue which had come to the fore in Orissa by the mid-1870s was teaching in the local language, Oriya, rather than in English. The GBMS had always favoured Oriya

as part of a policy of seeking to build up a strong indigenous church. This is not to say that all local customs were affirmed. The Calcutta correspondent of *The Times* noted in 1873 that women in Orissa who became Christians were asked to stop wearing Hindu-related bracelets. These women then looked ‘in astonishment’ at the jewellery worn by visiting European ladies.³¹ However, in the minds of GBMS personnel, using Oriya in preaching, teaching, and singing was quite different from questions of Hindu customs. The 1875 Orissa Baptist Assembly suggested that the first English students of Oriya were not government officers but missionaries. They were in tune with and contributed to developments in promoting the printing of literature in Oriya (For background, see (Choudhury 2015, pp. 44–46)). The Baptist mission statement to the government was unequivocal: ‘We have always earnestly contended that the Oriya Language should always be taught in all vernacular schools in Orissa and have sometimes marvelled at the lack of common sense which has rendered the discussion of the question necessary.’ British policy was being influenced, and the mission was told that it was hoped the ‘the introduction of a number of well educated and trained girls into the villages and rural districts of Orissa will have a great effect on the future of female education’.³² The impact was to be wider, as Pritipuspa Mishra showed: Orissa was to become the first linguistically organised province in India (Mishra 2020).

Agnes Packer returned from furlough in 1875. Her farewell service was held in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, and C.H. Spurgeon, the Tabernacle’s famous minister, gave ‘words of good cheer’ to Packer which would ‘long be remembered’.³³ She was urged by the home committee of the FES to start zenana work in Orissa.³⁴ To reach women in zenanas, where women were cut off from male contact outside the family, was seen as a possible way to influence families (Smith 2007). However, the view in Orissa itself was that priority should still be given to schools. It was reckoned in 1876 that there were 184 villages in Orissa and that the Baptist school in Chaga was the only village school offering female education. Mookta-Ma, a teacher there for several years, had as a child been rescued from being a Khond sacrifice. In the female orphanage in Cuttack, she became ‘a sincere disciple of Christ’. She was guided by Harriet Leigh, and her abilities as a teacher were notable. An inspector said the Chaga school was ‘doing a very useful work in a quiet and unostentatious way’. As in all the mission schools, subjects covered a wide range, with an emphasis on what was appropriate to the context.³⁵ Lewis suggested that there was a process in which the children’s Indian roots were destroyed (Lewis 2014, p. 81). But those with the welfare of the children at heart took a different view. Deputy Surgeon General C.R. Francis, who was deeply involved in Indian affairs, said Baptist schooling impressed him most favourably.³⁶

The GBMS cooperated not only with the FES but also with other bodies. The American Free Will Baptists, with whom the GBMS shared an Arminian theological outlook, initiated a mission in the northern part of Orissa in the 1830s (Hills 1886). There was a long-term GBMS relationship with American medical and educational workers in Balasore, for example, with Lavinia Crawford.³⁷ In 1877, Mary Bachelor, at age 17, became a Free Will Baptist teacher in the Balasore area, and after studying for a medical degree at the Women’s Medical College in New York, she became the first medical missionary of the Free Baptist Woman’s Society. Another missionary of the Society was Harriet Phillips, who began her work in Orissa in 1878 and later supervised the teaching in several girls’ schools (*The Free Baptist Woman’s Missionary Society* 1922). The needs of the FES in India were publicised through newspapers such as the *Friend of India*, which was started in the early nineteenth century and published by the Serampore Press. In 1875m it incorporated *The Statesman* and was published weekly in Calcutta. The FES also had individual backers who took a particular interest in Baptist witnesses, such as Lady Peto, a member of Bloomsbury Baptist Chapel and the wife of the industrialist Sir Morton Peto (Bowers and Bowers 1984). As a small mission, the GBMS needed to seek ongoing support, not least support for its work in female education.

5. Societal and Missional Issues

Further famine affected Orissa in 1877–78. Reports on events were given by Lydia Bailey, who had come to Orissa in 1873 after living in Switzerland and Germany.³⁸ She referred in the *Observer* in 1878 to the ‘Madras Famine’, part of a much wider famine, with Orissa among the regions that were suffering. The price of grain had risen markedly. One area in Orissa, on the borders of the Chilka Lake, which is the second largest coastal lagoon in the world, was suffering very severely. The *Observer* report was critical of the government: those who lived in the region manufactured salt, ‘and on the abolition of this manufacture by Government the distress was very severe’. The harvest had always been very precarious, ‘and when it fails they have no resource’.³⁹ This was one of the recurring periods of famine, and estimates of those who died in the ‘Madras Famine’ reach eight million (For the wider picture, see (Bhatia 1991)). This seems to have galvanised writers in the *Observer* to take a more critical stance towards the British government. A column in 1880 spoke about the government forcing Afghans into ‘a cruel and wicked war, their villages burnt, and their property confiscated’. They had been ‘ruthlessly hunted down and hanged by dozens for defending their country and homes against their Christian (?) invaders’ and taxes ‘wrung out of the poor’ in India, which were supposed to provide famine relief, were ‘expended upon this miserable and murderous war in Afghanistan’.⁴⁰

While fostering awareness of the enormous issues in Indian society, the main focus of the Baptist mission in Orissa was local. In 1877, D.F. Carmichael, government Chief Secretary based in Madras, received a glowing official report on the Baptist orphanage in Berhampur.⁴¹ In Piplee, Lydia Bailey described in May 1878 an ‘immense gathering’ at a special event. The use of a magic lantern was central (Smith 2022). At sunset, a ‘magic lantern’, which had been sent to Agnes Packer by friends in England, was used. The slides were coloured and represented scenes in Palestine—the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane, Bethlehem and Bethany—and three sets represented the Prodigal Son, Joseph, and Daniel. The news about the lantern presentation to be held in the Piplee chapel spread, and people ‘flocked in such numbers that our new chapel was full to overflowing’. Along with Bible passages being illustrated, an Indian preacher spoke, and there was singing.⁴² Gifts such as a lantern were received occasionally. More commonly, the articles needed, especially for schools, were slates, copybooks, pens and pen-holders, picture books, and fine crochet cotton. A request was also made for a sewing machine. Agnes Packer and Harriet Leigh expressed delight that the importance of female education was now being widely accepted in India: ‘Prejudices and false notions have been removed. The possibility and advantage of female education have been demonstrated.’⁴³

The loss experienced in 1871 through the death of Mary Guignard was experienced again in 1879 when Lydia Bailey died after childbirth. On 6 April 1879, she gave birth to a son, Thomas, named after his father, but four days later, her health suddenly deteriorated and she died. The tribute in the *Observer* gave some details, including Lydia’s last words, which were, ‘Simply to Thy cross I cling’, repeated several times. She had come to faith and been baptised early in the ministry at Union Chapel, Manchester, of the outstanding Baptist minister, Alexander MacLaren (Sellers 1987). When she arrived in Orissa, she invested in language learning. Her colleagues became aware of her ‘cultivated mind’. Although she enjoyed European company, she settled in Piplee, working alongside her husband to assist the local Christian community, and, in particular, she gave herself to the orphans she was teaching.⁴⁴ At the next Orissa Baptist Conference, at which Thomas Bailey was present, further tributes were paid. Some notes had been found that Lydia had made of sermons by Alexander MacLaren, one of the sermons having been preached at her baptism. It was on living according to the pattern shown by God. This was what she had undertaken.⁴⁵

One of those within the government’s education inspectorate who especially appreciated Lydia Bailey’s contribution was Radhanath Ray, who, as well as being Joint Inspector of Schools for Orissa, was a poet and a promoter of the Oriya language (Mahanty 1978). The *Intelligencer* of August 1879 reported that Radhanath Ray had described the GBMS

girls' school in Cuttack as 'the most numerously attended girls' school in Orissa' and one that was doing 'earnest and efficient work'. He was pleased that all the girls were taught to read and write Oriya, with some of the older ones learning 'a little English and Bengali'. The *Intelligencer* added that Bloomsbury Baptist Chapel had sent a gift which enabled a new classroom to be built. Psalm 72:4 was quoted: 'He shall save the children of the needy', with salvation being in Christ and to be worked out in practice.⁴⁶ Radhanath Ray added his own tribute to Lydia Bailey, and this was quoted in the *Observer*. He wrote that the education being delivered by Mrs Bailey 'was beyond all praise'. Her death was a great loss. She was someone who 'animated' the girls and who was 'eminently fitted, by her experience and knowledge of the Oriya language and manners', to form their thinking.⁴⁷

There was awareness in Orissa of the work of Baptist missionaries from America, John and Harriet Clough, who were serving in the Telugu-speaking Andhra region, which bordered Orissa. It was the pioneering GBMS missionaries, Amos and Charlotte Sutton, who had urged Baptists in Virginia to begin work among the Telugus. In the early years after 1865, when they went to the region, the Cloughs saw limited response to the Christian message. This changed markedly in the 1870s. In 1877–1878, the Cloughs were deeply involved in famine relief work. During a six-week period in the summer of 1878, John Clough and his assistants baptized nearly 9000 members of the Madiga community living in and around Ongole. Baptisms took place in the Gundlakamma River (Harris 2007). The *Observer* referred in 1879 to 'startling reports' of the Telugu work, with 'ten thousand believers being baptized last year by one American Baptist missionary and his twenty-two native assistants'. 'Bible women' were part of the outreach to other women. The Orissa mission had not seen anything on this scale but there had been 'patient, persevering, prayerful toil; which, sooner or later, will be crowned with the Divine blessing'. The motto was written in capitals: ORISSA FOR CHRIST.⁴⁸

6. Exemplifying and Teaching the Way of Jesus

There was a continuing commitment among GBMS leaders who knew Orissa to the vision for local outreach, not least in the area of female education, with the teachers seeking to give an example to girls and young women as well as teaching classes. In August 1881, Sarah Goadby, who had first gone to Orissa in 1855, wrote a substantial article in the *Observer* on the FES. She suggested that few members of General Baptist churches were aware of how valuable that help had been. 'To our Mission', she said, the Society had 'ever been ready with a helping hand'. Mary Guignard, Agnes Packer, and Harriet Leigh had their salaries paid by the FES. In addition, for 18 years, the FES had supported the girls' school at Chaga. However, the financial situation for the FES was currently demanding, and Buckley was asking for extra giving from General Baptists. She hoped that 'a hearty response may be made, both by private individuals and churches'. Buckley prayed that God's work in Orissa would 'go on increasing and extending', and that those involved in any way would 'never grow weary till Orissa is Christ's'. She wished to touch the 'heart and conscience of every mother and daughter' so that support for spreading the message of Jesus would be forthcoming. She raised the possibility of the formation of a General Baptist Ladies' Missionary Society.⁴⁹ That did not happen, but FES involvement in Orissa continued into the 1890s.

On 12 November 1881, the *Peterborough Standard* reported on the departure of Elizabeth Mary Barrass (usually known as Mary), the eldest daughter of the well-known Peterborough Baptist minister, Thomas Barrass, to Cuttack, India.⁵⁰ A fuller report appeared in the December 1881 *Observer*. About 250 people were present for tea, and a larger crowd gathered for the farewell service in Queen Street Baptist Chapel, Peterborough. Thomas Barrass had come to Peterborough in 1853, to a small General Baptist congregation. Over subsequent years, growth was such that a new building seating 800 was erected. Thomas Barrass, in what the *Observer* described as a 'feeling speech' on behalf of himself and his wife, observed that 'he had often prayed for labourers to be sent into the mission field, and that his prayer had been answered in a way he did not anticipate'. The way had

now opened for Mary to go to India, and he ‘could not act the hypocrite, or stultify his own prayers, by placing any obstacle in her way’. The *Observer* added that Mary Barrass was going out to Orissa ‘as an agent, and at the cost of the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East’. A further farewell meeting was held in London with J. P. Chown, the minister of Bloomsbury Baptist Chapel, giving an address and with FES home committee representatives present.⁵¹

The interdenominational nature of the FES meant that there were opportunities to commend the work being done through General Baptist channels in Orissa to a wider constituency. In the early 1880s, there were 16 GBMS missionaries from Britain, 23 trained local ministers, and six students. The Cuttack Mission Academy meant that, as Brian Stanley notes, the mission ‘had the advantage of having a training institution located at the heart of a geographically concentrated Christian constituency’ (Stanley 1992, p. 163). Indians were taking the lead in much mission work, but there was some excitement in 1882 when it was reported that Thomas Mulholland and his wife were coming from Britain (from Scotland) to superintend the work of the Mission Press at Cuttack.⁵² However, they stayed for under three years. In January 1883, the leading article in the *Observer* was entitled ‘Half as much again’, echoing an appeal by E.H. Bickersteth, the evangelical Anglican, for extra funds to support the ministry of the very large Church Missionary Society (CMS) work. The GBMS asked if ‘half as much again’ could be raised for Orissa.⁵³ At the annual Orissa Conference in 1883, the *Observer* reported that attendance was the largest in the history of the mission. The place of European missionaries, including the newest arrival, Mary Barrass, was recognised but reports especially covered gifted younger Indians, including local teachers trained with the help of the FES. There was no sense of superiority of English over Indian; indeed, it was suggested that over the previous 10 years, the increase in Baptist membership in England had proportionally been much less than in India.⁵⁴

Long-serving FES teachers such as Agnes Packer were given public thanks in 1886, 50 years after the first women went to the East with the Society. At a large meeting in London, with Packer present and Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton in the chair, wide support was expressed for the FES. The society which had the most extensive partnership with the FES was the CMS, and its Editorial Secretary, Eugene Stock, was a strong advocate of the role of women.⁵⁵ He was behind the appointment four years later of Georgina Gollock as the first woman to join the CMS’ home staff (Randall 2023). While Packer was in England, Mary Barrass was a mentor to younger women taking up teaching in Orissa. As well as working in schools, she was visiting some women in villages, accompanied by those she was mentoring. One report spoke of two of Mary Barrass’ European team making visits to a group of women and being asked, as ‘fresh-comers’, a series of ‘amusing questions’ about why they were not married, how old they were, and how they cared for their hair. When this had all been dealt with, some Oriya hymns were sung, and the women ‘listened very attentively’ as Mary Barrass explained the Christian message in Oriya. Some homes they visited were almost devoid of furniture, and the new trainees accompanying Barrass were introduced to one young mother with a new baby ‘lying on a rush mat spread upon the stone floor’.⁵⁶

As with all the Orissa missionaries, Mary Barrass wished to develop local leadership. She reported in the *Observer* in October 1886 that seven Bible women were employed in Cuttack, of whom five were supported by private contributions and two by the British and Foreign Bible Society. Katie, an experienced woman, visited from house to house. The other six went out in twos into the bazaars and outlying villages. Barrass gave an account of one of the women who went to a village some distance away to visit her daughter. In the village, the people received her—to use her own words—‘almost as an angel from heaven’. She was seen as someone bringing an important new message and her personal presence had an impact. The women said: ‘We have never heard these things before; do stay with us and teach us.’ She visited the family of the brother of the prince (the Rajah) of that district, and this family ‘listened with delight, and again and again begged her to come back to them’.⁵⁷ With some Bible women, there was the possibility of their

training as teachers. Harriet Leigh promoted what was seen as ‘the great task of raising the position of Christian womanhood in India’.⁵⁸ A Bible and Prayer Union began in Cuttack, under Indian leadership, with young women who had been in schools where they had FES teachers, and were now married, drawing their husbands into the Union. Leigh was encouraged in 1889 that a new generation of girls was meeting every day, working through material from the Children’s Special Service Mission, which had been translated into Oriya. Several girls had asked for baptism, and Leigh believed they had real faith and ‘are seeking to follow Jesus’.⁵⁹

7. Conclusions

This article has looked at the General Baptist mission in Orissa, India, with particular reference to the way women who served within the mission fulfilled a role in teaching and encouraging girls and women, especially by setting up schooling. The challenges of a time of desperate famine, with many orphans being cared for, have been examined. The General Baptist mission worked with other bodies, notably and crucially with the interdenominational Female Education Society. A major aim was that through the work of the female teachers, local teachers would be equipped. They were to be women who were well-trained and also who were seeking to follow Jesus. The argument has been that there was integrity in what was undertaken, and thus, this article offers an alternative to interpretations that dismiss the validity of the mission endeavours. Caroline Lewis suggested that missionaries associated with the FES used its magazine as a channel for ‘encouraging women readers to imagine that, in return for sponsoring an Indian female, they were helping to create a Christian subject in their own image’ (Lewis 2014, p. 81). This might have been the case with some within the FES, but for the mission in Orissa, the desire was always to have Indian Christian women whose faith as Christians was worked out in their context, not in the image of the sending mission. The Orissa mission continued on beyond the 1880s, with wider fellowship eventually happening through the Church of North India. This study does not go beyond the 1880s as that would introduce a new phase with the amalgamation in 1891 of the General and Particular Baptists and their overseas missionary societies (Briggs 1991a, 1991b). It was recognised that the work of the FES could be carried out under the auspices of established missionary societies—mostly denominational agencies—which, by the 1890s, had learned about giving a proper place to female education and educators.⁶⁰

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Notes

- 1 The *Missionary Observer* was published monthly. The SPFEE published the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*. See (Donaldson 1990).
- 2 ‘Letter from Mrs Buckley’, *Observer*, April 1861, 154. Sarah Buckley had originally been supported by the FES.
- 3 In 1894, Homerton College, which was a Congregational College, moved to Cambridge.
- 4 ‘Report’, *Intelligencer*, 1 September 1862, 160–61.
- 5 ‘Orissa’, *Intelligencer*, 1 January 1863, 8–11.
- 6 ‘Vernacular School’, *Intelligencer*, 1 April 1863, 78–81.
- 7 ‘Cuttack’, *Observer*, February 1863, 79.
- 8 ‘Reports’, *Observer*, July 1863, 274, 279–80.
- 9 ‘Work in India’, *Intelligencer*, 1 June 1863, 126.
- 10 ‘Letter from Mrs Buckley’, *Observer*, May 1864, 195–98.
- 11 A.M. Pollock, ‘The Work of the Society’, *Intelligencer*, 1 July 1864, 153–55; ‘Home Committee’, *Intelligencer*, 1 December 1864, 17.
- 12 ‘Letter from Mrs Buckley’, *Observer*, May 1865, 156–59. For background, see Dinabandhu Dehury, ‘Promotion of Education in Orissa by Ravenshaw’, *Orissa Review*, April–May 2009, 15–21.

- 13 'The Orphanage at Piplee', *Observer*, May 1865, 222.
- 14 'Famine in Orissa', *Intelligencer*, 1 September 1866, 134–39. For more, see (Samal 1999, pp. 6–31).
- 15 'Report', *Intelligencer*, 1 October 1867, 164–66; 'Report', *Intelligencer*, 2 March 1868, 34–36.
- 16 'Cork Auxiliary', *Intelligencer*, 1 August 1868, 125–27.
- 17 'Reports from Orissa', *Intelligencer*, 1 June 1869, 126–28.
- 18 'The Orissa Mission and its Famine Orphanages', *Observer*, August 1878, 5, 10.
- 19 'Baptisms in Cuttack', *Observer*, December 1870, 378.
- 20 Lewis, 'Establishing India', 90–91.
- 21 'Letter from Mrs Buckley', *Observer*, April 1871, 123–24.
- 22 'A Holiday in Orissa', *Intelligencer*, April 1871, 53–55.
- 23 'Orissa', *Intelligencer*, July 1871, 101–3.
- 24 'Death of Miss Guignard', *Observer*, October 1871, 317. Mary Guignard was buried in Bengal.
- 25 'Tribute', *Intelligencer*, December 1871, 178–86.
- 26 'Education in Orissa', *Observer*, March 1872, 98–99.
- 27 'Tidings from Orissa', *Intelligencer*, February 1873, 21–23. See (Stanley 1992, pp. 166–67), also (Gangte 2017).
- 28 'Baptisms in Orissa', *Observer*, October 1872, 324.
- 29 'Reports', *Observer*, October 1873, 399; 'Reports', *Observer*, December 1873, 494.
- 30 'Orissa', *Intelligencer*, January 1875, 11–13.
- 31 'Orissa', *Intelligencer*, November 1873, 171.
- 32 'Language Policy', *Intelligencer*, January 1875, 11–13. See (Mohanty 2002).
- 33 'Metropolitan Tabernacle', *Observer*, November 1875, 440.
- 34 'Zenana work', *Intelligencer*, January 1876, 17.
- 35 'Orissa', *Intelligencer*, January 1876, 17.
- 36 'School Inspections', *Intelligencer*, February 1876, 7. For Francis, see *Indian Medical Gazette*, 2 July 1877, 192.
- 37 'The Beginning of the Work in Balasore: American Baptist Historical Society', *Tidings*, December 1924, 7.
- 38 She married Thomas Bailey, whose first wife had died.
- 39 'Madras Famine', *Observer*, March 1878, 115.
- 40 'Afghan War', *Observer*, January 1880, 39. For background, see (Barthorp 2002).
- 41 'Berhampur', *Observer*, August 1878, 11.
- 42 'Piplee', *Observer*, May 1878, 201.
- 43 'Female Education', *Observer*, August 1878, 322.
- 44 'Tribute', *Observer*, July 1879, 301–2.
- 45 'Orissa Conference', *Observer*, February 1880, 76, 80.
- 46 'School in Cuttack', *Intelligencer*, August 1879, 142–43.
- 47 'Tribute', *Observer*, March 1880, 118.
- 48 'Telugu work', *Observer*, July 1879, 293. See (Sekhar 2021).
- 49 'Female Education Society', *Observer*, August 1881, 318–19.
- 50 'Queen Street Baptist Chapel', *Peterborough Standard*, 12 November 1881, 5. I am grateful to Michael Kennelly, who has written on Thomas Barrass, for his help.
- 51 'Farewell Service', *Observer*, December 1881, 469–70.
- 52 'A New Missionary for Orissa', *Observer*, June 1882, 237.
- 53 'Half as much again', *Observer*, January 1883, 33–34.
- 54 'Orissa Conference', *Observer*, March 1883, 113, 'Notes', *Observer*, May 1883, 157.
- 55 'London Meeting', *Intelligencer*, July 1886, 105–11.
- 56 'Visiting villages', *Observer*, September 1886, 359.
- 57 'Bible Woman', *Observer*, October 1886, 397–98.
- 58 Harriet Leigh, 'Female Education in Orissa', *Observer*, May 1888, 198–99.
- 59 'Bible and Prayer Union', *Observer*, August 1889, 333.
- 60 FES files are held in the University of Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library, Special Collections.

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Article

“She Is the Seminary”: The Life and Ministry of Dr. Olive L. Clark (1894–1989), Canadian Fundamentalist Educator

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Abstract: This article explores the life and contributions of Dr. Olive L. Clark (1894–1989), a long-time faculty member at the fundamentalist Toronto Baptist Seminary (TBS). In the 1920s, Clark sided with the fundamentalists and became a vocal critic of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec. As the first person to receive a PhD in Classics from the University of Toronto, she was a gifted scholar. In 1928, she became one of the first faculty members at the newly-minted Toronto Baptist Seminary—operated by the prominent fundamentalist leader T. T. Shields—and remained there until her retirement thirty-eight years later. Through those years and even into retirement, she took an active role in the fundamentalist community by training pastors, publishing lesson plans and articles, speaking in various churches, and serving as co-editor of *The Gospel Witness* newspaper. In the process, she helped guide and shape the movement, both behind the scenes and in visible ways.

Keywords: fundamentalism; Baptist; women; education

1. Introduction

As historians continue to fill the gaps caused by what Ruth Compton Brouwer has called the “unacknowledged quarantine” between religious studies and women’s history in Canada, there remain a number of notable omissions (Brouwer 1992). Among them, the study of women in Baptist fundamentalist groups in Canada is underdeveloped. Put another way: “the casual reader might be forgiven for thinking that several prominent Baptist fundamentalists never even met a woman aside from his own wife!” (Murray and Wilson 2022, p. 298). In general, women had fewer opportunities than men within the fundamentalist world. In Canada, women were usually restricted from pulpits and most forms of professional ministry; yet, at the same time, they remained involved at various levels of the fundamentalist movement and, in some cases, even wielded significant amounts of influence and authority.¹

One route for women within the fundamentalist world was education. This article explores the life and contributions of one such educator, Dr. Olive L. Clark (1894–1989). As the first person to receive a PhD in Classics from the University of Toronto, she was a gifted scholar. In 1928, she became one of the first faculty members at the newly-minted Toronto Baptist Seminary (TBS)—operated by the prominent Canadian fundamentalist leader T. T. Shields—and remained there until her retirement thirty-eight years later. By comparison, it was not until 1948 that the first woman became a full professor at the purportedly modernist seminary at McMaster University (Dekar and Fleming 2016, p. 162). Clark predated that appointment by two decades. As a professor at the TBS, Clark took an active role in the fundamentalist community by training pastors, publishing lesson plans and articles, and serving as an editor of *The Gospel Witness* newspaper. In fact, her involvement in the movement was so significant that, after Shields, Clark was perhaps one of the most influential people in the entire Baptist fundamentalist community in Canada. One former student called her “a prophetess of note” who “made her mark for God in an hour which gave little encouragement to women in ministry, and excelled in any work she



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undertook.” (Corbett 1990, p. 12). Similarly, on at least one occasion, Shields is said to have remarked: “She is the Seminary”.²

Despite her significant place in the movement, the existing literature on Baptist fundamentalism in Canada has tended to gloss over her life, career, and contributions.³ In an effort to fill this gap, this study approaches the material chronologically, beginning with Clark’s early years and defection from the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec before looking at her teaching career and contributions to the wider Baptist fundamentalist world in Canada. While the fundamentalists in her immediate orbit held strict positions that mandated a subordinate role for women, Clark did not fit the mould of the “traditional” woman. She was not a homemaker—nor did she ever marry—and, shortly after the fundamentalist–modernist controversy, became one of the most visible and respected figures in the Toronto-based fundamentalist movement. Her intelligence, dedication to the fundamentals of the faith, and loyalty to Shields elevated her status in this fundamentalist circle and eventually solidified her place as a leader in a movement otherwise dominated by men. Indeed, it is somewhat paradoxical that an individual who should have had relatively little authority due to her gender actually became one of Canadian fundamentalism’s most influential figures.

While it would be wrong to suggest that Clark’s experiences were normative for fundamentalist women, her example suggests that fundamentalists were, on occasion, willing to suspend or soften some of their theological convictions in order to strengthen the movement. In the end, she had a significant influence on Baptist fundamentalism in Canada as an educator, author, and editor—and she helped guide and shape the movement, both behind the scenes and in visible ways.

2. Early Life

Olive Lucille Clark was born to George and Rosamond (née Clayton) Clark in Hamilton, Ontario, on 11 March 1894. Located on the western edge of Lake Ontario, Hamilton was driven by its steel industry and had a reputation as a rough and industrial city. Clark’s family reflected this blue-collar context. She came from a large family that included one sister, Florence, and three brothers, Ivan, Gordon, and Ivor. Her father worked as a clerk at a dry goods house, and according to one newspaper report from the era, her family was “not overwell to do” (Bright Hamilton Girls 1919). Yet, these financial limitations were not debilitating for the young Clark. In the same report noted above, Clark’s father added that he “had the ambition to give his daughters the benefits of the best education attainable in [the] public system” (Bright Hamilton Girls 1919).

Very early on, Clark demonstrated her academic prowess. When she graduated from the Hamilton Collegiate Institute in 1914, she received gold medals for highest general proficiency and highest proficiency in Classics. For her standing in the matriculation examination, she was awarded fourteen scholarships, including one totalling \$2450.00.⁴ Even though Clark displayed obvious gifts, she also encountered the sexist attitudes of the time, as one local newspaper acknowledged her “phenomenal success” before also adding: “That sum. . . won by a brilliant young Hamilton girl student, could come in handy to start housekeeping. Learning the art of frying beefsteak could then follow.” (Splendid Showing 1914).

Not content with simply “Learning the art of frying beefsteak”, Clark instead decided to continue her educational journey beyond high school. The prospect of a woman with an advanced level of education was still relatively new in early twentieth-century Canada. While universities across the country gradually became co-educational, they often retained sexist attitudes that discouraged and sometimes limited how far a woman could go. In other instances, women were academically segregated, either to women’s colleges or degree programs that were perceived as more feminine in nature.⁵ During the First World War, however, as male students and professors travelled “to the front”, campuses became more populated with women. Clark enrolled in the Classics Department at McMaster University in Toronto, where she received a Bachelor of Arts (honours) in 1917 and a Master of Arts in

1921. Between her two McMaster degrees, she also earned a teaching specialist certificate in Classics from Queen's University in Kingston in 1919.

Clark felt "at home" at McMaster. In 1887, the Toronto Baptist College reconstituted to become McMaster University, named in recognition of the support and financial backing of the senator and wealthy Baptist businessman William McMaster.⁶ Many Baptists viewed the university as a way to establish themselves as a respectable denomination in a society where they were significantly outnumbered by other religious bodies, including Methodists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans.⁷ When Baptists in the region came together to form the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ) the following year, the university took an important part in the life of the denomination as its official training ground. Clark had been raised in a Baptist home. Her family attended James Street Baptist Church (then-pastored by the nephew of the university's namesake) in Hamilton's downtown core. Consequently, Clark would have heard about the university for much of her life and, at some point early on, reportedly developed a strong affinity for it.⁸ Adding to her immediate context, one must also consider that the early twentieth century was a time when Baptist women across the country were taking an increased role in the life of the denomination as missionaries, administrators, and educators.⁹ It was a time when gifted young women, such as Clark, could seek training at a familiar place and even possibly expect to become involved in denominational life.

As an undergraduate and then postgraduate student, Clark continued to add to her already impressive list of accolades. On one occasion, *The McMaster University Monthly* described her by writing, "like a powerful magnet, she draws scholarships and medals toward her" (Olive Lucille Clark 1917, p. 358). This assessment was only a mild exaggeration. Indeed, not only did she accrue numerous scholarships and awards in each program she entered, but she was also a two-time recipient of the Governor-General's Medal for the highest academic standing, once at McMaster (1915) and once at Queen's (1919) (Made Sweep of Scholarships 1915; Miss O. L. Clark gets Medal 1919). "This", wrote one local newspaper, "is a record any girl can feel proud of" (Bright Hamilton Girls 1919).

Clark was not finished with higher education, however, and she soon looked to the University of Toronto (UofT). The university had awarded graduate degrees in the past, but with the formation of a new School of Graduate Studies in 1922, enrollments swelled (Friedland 2002, p. 293). When UofT's Classics Department began accepting doctoral students in the middle of the decade, Clark was counted among the first to enrol. Under the supervision of Norman W. DeWitt, a long-time Professor of Classics and sometime Dean of Arts at UofT's affiliate, Victoria College, Clark completed her PhD in Classics in 1930. Significantly, she was the first person to receive this degree (Olive Lucille Clark, PhD 1930, p. 10). While Clark was a postgraduate student, she held sequential teaching positions at Ingersoll Collegiate Institution and Brockville Collegiate Institution, where she remained for a combined five years before accepting a position as an assistant in the Latin Department at McMaster with purported assurances of an eventual promotion to professor.¹⁰

3. Controversy at McMaster University

Clark joined the faculty of McMaster during a turbulent period in the university's history. During the 1920s, McMaster was the subject of significant criticism within the BCOQ over perceived heterodoxy among its theology professors. According to the critics, McMaster had adopted a modernist curriculum that challenged traditional elements of the faith, including the virgin birth, the authority of scripture, the historicity of the biblical stories, and the deity of Christ. Leading the charge against the university was T. T. Shields, the fundamentalist pastor of Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto. For Shields, the university crossed the Rubicon when it appointed L. H. Marshall, a purported modernist, to the Chair of Practical Theology in 1925. Utilizing the press (including his influential newspaper, *The Gospel Witness*) and his pulpit, Shields redoubled his campaign against the university.¹¹

Initially, Clark remained loyal to the BCOQ and her alma mater. According to a statement written in the late 1920s, she had self-identified as a “fundamentalist” for a number of years. She “believed in the inspiration of the Scriptures, and had no sympathy with the views of those who were advocating Modernist doctrines”, but she rejected the militancy of Shields and his ilk. She summed her feelings at the time by writing that she was “most bitter in my opposition to those who were carrying the Fundamentalist banner”. Having dedicated a significant amount of her life to McMaster, first as a student and later as a faculty member, her immediate response is not surprising. As she admitted, her negative reaction to the fundamentalists stemmed from a feeling of defensiveness for McMaster.¹²

Clark’s feelings toward the situation changed in October 1927 when the BCOQ took decisive action against Shields and his fundamentalist allies by expelling him and his church from the convention (The Baptist Convention 1927, p. 4). At the time, Clark referred to that day as “the day of my awakening” (Clark 1929, p. 6). Using language that resembled a story of one’s personal conversion, she continued:

when I heard the utterance of Professor Marshall, in which he emphatically denied the doctrine of the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible, and when I saw those with whom I had been associating loudly applauding such infidelity, I realized that I was in the wrong company. The conviction was brought home to me that unless I resigned from McMaster University, I would lose my testimony entirely. After a severe inward struggle, the Lord gained the victory and enabled me to surrender all to His will. (Clark 1929, p. 6)

Ultimately, shortly after the convention gathering, Clark made the difficult decision to resign from her position at McMaster.¹³ While she affirmed that she believed many people within the BCOQ were still theologically orthodox, she also added that by not standing with the fundamentalists against modernism at McMaster, “they have refused to obey, and have sold out” (Clark 1929, p. 6). Once the dust had settled, a total of 90 churches had either been expelled from the BCOQ or withdrew of their own accord.¹⁴ The majority of these fundamentalist churches came together to form the Union of the Regular Baptists of Ontario and Quebec with Shields at the helm.

Now within the fundamentalist camp, Clark looked for other teaching opportunities, which came in the form of the Toronto Baptist Seminary (TBS). As a fundamentalist response to McMaster’s modernism, Shields opened the TBS in 1927.¹⁵ It was to be a place where young people could “receive preparation for the Baptist ministry without being exposed. . . to the poison disseminated through the teaching of McMaster” (Shields 1926, p. 22). Based out of Jarvis Street, Shields also served as the president. Tasked with finding qualified and theologically sound faculty members, he soon came into contact with Clark. Generally speaking, Shields believed and taught that women were physiologically and psychologically different from—and inferior to—men, and each had their own separate responsibilities to home and church.¹⁶ At the same time, he also recognized the importance of this historical moment: theological modernism had become pervasive among Baptists, and it was necessary to fight back on all fronts, which included the women. This was perhaps most visible in Shields’ vocal support for the independent and women-led fundamentalist organization, the Women’s Missionary Society of the Regular Baptists of Canada in the mid-to-late 1920s.¹⁷ Faced with the prospect of recruiting such an obviously talented young woman to his fundamentalist cause, Shields made the obvious choice, and in October 1928, *The Gospel Witness* quietly announced that Clark “had accepted a position on the Faculty” (Seminary Notes 1928, p. 14). If there was any opposition to her appointment, it did not manifest in the public forum.

It is unclear how Clark had entered Shields’ orbit. Shields later recorded that he “had heard of her, but knew little about her”.¹⁸ What is clear is that she was an answer to prayer for the Jarvis Street pastor. Shields, who had no higher education of his own, soon came to view Clark as a crucial piece of the fundamentalists’ intellectual puzzle. This is visible in the wide array of teaching responsibilities Clark soon inherited. In her first

year on the faculty of the TBS, she was listed as the Professor of Latin, Greek, and Church History (First Annual Convention 1928, p. 6). Through her time at the seminary, she also taught numerous other courses as needed, including Christian Psychology (Toronto Baptist Seminary 1931, p. 6), Biblical Introduction, Life of Christ, Non-Christian Religions, and Sunday School Work (Description of Subjects 1950, pp. 7–9), among others.

4. Professor at The Toronto Baptist Seminary

One of the reasons Clark fit so well with the TBS was her unflinching conviction of the fundamentalist interpretations of the faith. As already noted, she affirmed the inspiration and authority of the Bible and had identified as a fundamentalist even before separating from the BCOQ. In Shields' orbit, she became even more outspoken in her belief that it was necessary to defend what she understood as scriptural truths from modernism. In short, she viewed modernists as "enemies of the cross" and consequently warned against those "who cast reproach upon the Gospel of Salvation" (Clark 1944, p. 15). Alongside Shields, she believed that the TBS would serve as the front line in the battle against those whom she would later describe as the ones "chiefly responsible for the apostasy of the age", namely those "unfaithful and negligent preachers, the professors, the administrators and leaders in the pulpits, colleges and seminaries" (Clark 1971, p. 12).

In line with TBS's mission to train pastors and missionaries in a fundamentalist mould, Clark was characteristically fundamentalist in her theology. She routinely affirmed 'fundamental' doctrines in the press, including the inspiration of Scripture and the historicity of the biblical narrative.¹⁹ She denounced the ecumenical movement and Roman Catholicism as proponents of modernism and enemies of the Bible, respectively.²⁰ She rejected most modern translations of the Bible, such as the New English Bible, which she believed "in effect degrades the Word of God to the level of a human book" (Clark 1961, p. 2). Moreover, she believed it was necessary to take such hard stances on each of these matters because, as she noted later in life, "Separation from unscriptural doctrines and practices, not conformity, is the way of blessing" (Clark 1970b, p. 4).

Clark balanced her strong commitment to fundamentalist perspectives with a keen belief in the necessity of proper academic instruction. She rejected the stereotypical fundamentalist aversion to education, in particular "that a preacher of the gospel, if he have a trained heart, need not have a trained mind". Indeed, Clark likened the mind to a tool and education to the refining process. One's intellect needed to be "tempered, sharpened, and prepared" so that it would be "of greater use than one which is bent and blunt".²¹ This was reflected in her often rigorous academic standards. As one early report noted, "when she sets the pace for her students we are not sure that they know in what month they are living, or what time of day it is!" (Seminary News 1930, p. 9).

Clark believed that high academic standards alone were not sufficient for a credible education but that it was necessary also to incorporate a significant spiritual element into the curriculum. This kind of emphasis, she noted, "is upon the cultivation of the soul and the ministry of the Holy Spirit to illuminate the mind, quicken the spirit, enlarge the vision and mould the life of the individual as he prepares to the ministry which he believes the Lord is preparing for him" (Clark 1972b, p. 4). Clark's perspective was not necessarily unique for the era and, in fact, reflected the attitudes of many smaller Baptist institutions in the twentieth century.²² At the same time, her conviction on this point was so strong that she even cautioned against "an over-emphasis upon the training of the mind",²³ which perhaps reflected the contemporary fundamentalist attitudes on the dangers of certain aspects of higher education, namely the modernist elements that would call key theological principles into question.

Clark was immediately beloved at the TBS. One early report noted that "by her cheery disposition, [she] brings June weather in December" (Seminary News 1930, p. 9). By all accounts, Clark was a gifted teacher who prioritized her students. This is summarized well in the words of one of her earliest students: "She perfectly combined true scholarship and genuine spirituality with a most efficient way of communication" (Buhler 1990, p. 12). As

this assessment captures, not only did she see herself as an academic guide but as a mentor as well. “She was vitally interested in and concerned for every student that came into her classes”, recalled another early student (Hindry 1990, p. 12). It was this blend of academic discipline and genuine care that endeared her to her students.

The seminary administration understood what a valuable asset Clark was to the TBS. This is visible in a report published in *The Gospel Witness* in 1934, which began its update on the faculty with a glowing paragraph-long assessment of Clark’s contributions to the life of the seminary. It noted: “as a full-time member of the Seminary Faculty, [Clark] has more than fulfilled all our highest expectations entertained when she joined us”. The summary noted that “her influence over and counsel to” female students was especially valuable. Yet, her impact did not end with the female students, as the report also noted that she was “A fine scholar, a splendid teacher, and a woman of excellent poise and judgment, . . . [whose] ministry to the *whole Seminary* is invaluable”.²⁴

The report’s evaluation of Clark was especially important in light of recent events within the Union of the Regular Baptists of Canada. From 1931 to 1933, the Union experienced infighting on several different matters, including the extent to which women should be allowed to independently operate ministries within the fundamentalist community. Not only did this controversy result in a significant schism, but it also led Shields to become even more restrictive in his own stance on women than he was before.²⁵ Where Clark differed from the women who stood at the heart of this controversy was in her loyalty to Shields. Rather than join the women who advocated for the right to operate independent fundamentalist ministries, she quietly continued her work at the TBS. As a result, at a time when Shields was exclaiming his distrust for assertive women in his ranks, he was also expressing his gratitude for the contributions Clark had made to the seminary.

As one of the key faculty members at the TBS, Clark often served as the public face of the seminary. This role took her throughout Ontario and Quebec, as she visited churches to generate support for the seminary and recruit students.²⁶ It also opened doors for her to speak at various churches and conferences. While these were usually not gospel messages on Sunday mornings, they nevertheless provided opportunities for her to address and instruct both women and men. In 1929, for example, she was the speaker at the annual picnic of the “Pastors’ and People’s Conference of Hamilton, Brantford and District”. One report noted that she taught on 1 Peter “For an hour and a half” and that “All [listeners] felt that they learned much”.²⁷ Her place at the TBS also meant that she often represented the seminary in print. Beginning early in her tenure at the TBS and continuing even into her retirement, she routinely took to the pages of *The Gospel Witness* to justify the institution’s decisions or seek additional financial support.²⁸ She also often clarified TBS’s purpose. Following the vision laid out by Shields, she remarked that the TBS existed “to clarify in their [students’] minds and hearts the message which they must deliver, the doctrines taught in the inspired, infallible Word of God” (Clark 1959a, p. 6).

Shields recognized that Clark’s talent and abilities were indispensable for the TBS. For the majority of Clark’s thirty-eight-year career at the TBS, she was the only faculty member with an earned doctorate. On one level, this suggests that the barrier to entry was much higher for women in the fundamentalist world. Clark’s educational background and accomplishments were far more impressive than each of the men on the faculty. At the same time, her abilities did not go unnoticed. With her academic *bona fides*, Shields recognized that she brought a certain level of legitimacy to the seminary. In a letter to Clark, he summarized this feeling by noting “you brought to the FACULTY the prestige which was inseparable from your fine scholastic record. . . Your distinguished academic career, and your marvellous teaching record we feel adds great prestige to THE SEMINARY FACULTY TO-DAY”.²⁹ Aside from Clark, very few women ever served on the faculty at the TBS—and she appears to have been the only one who taught biblical content.³⁰

Moreover, Clark’s loyalty to the TBS was especially valuable to Shields, and very likely helped permanently solidify her place in his fundamentalist movement. Clark had demonstrated her dependability by siding with Shields during the controversy over

women's ministries in the early 1930s, but she was tested even further during the following decade when disagreement emerged within the TBS itself. In the late 1940s, W. Gordon Brown (the Dean of the seminary) and Shields came to blows over operational policies at the TBS. In response, Clark sided firmly with the Jarvis Street pastor, even after it resulted in a major schism that saw the majority of Shields' allies distance themselves from him.³¹ In return, Shields came to rely on Clark as a pillar of support and stability. On one occasion, he noted: "you have been my greatest comfort, because I knew that I could always absolutely depend upon your utmost cooperation and conspicuously able service".³² The feeling was mutual. When Shields died in 1955, Clark eulogized him as "one of those precious gifts of God to His Church" (Clark 1955, p. 14). Shields was a notoriously volatile ally who had a record of lashing out at those whom he believed challenged his authority. Clark's unwavering support (paired with her apparently unmatched intellect) undoubtedly played a part in cementing her place in the fundamentalist world at a time when women were not universally accepted in such roles.

5. Commitments to the Fundamentalist World

Having established herself as a stabilizing force and a respected member at the TBS, she became more involved in the public forum and soon became something of an intellectual heartbeat for the Baptist fundamentalists in Ontario and Quebec. With her academic background and a strong aversion to modernism in all its forms, she became a trustworthy champion of fundamentalist theology for the public. She provided updates on the wider academic world in *The Gospel Witness*, which often took the form of articles and book reviews, and usually included appraisals or warnings about a person's or publication's heterodoxy. Conversely, she was quick to endorse those authors who believed in "the integrity and authority of the Bible".³³

In the late 1930s, Clark accepted another responsibility when she began writing a weekly "Bible School Lesson Outline", which circulated in *The Gospel Witness*. In April 1937, a severe illness restricted Shields—the newspaper's editor—to bed rest, which required several individuals from within the Toronto fundamentalist's immediate orbit to assume some of his responsibilities. Among them, Clark was tasked with writing the lesson outline with the promise that the interim editors "shall no doubt press her into further service" (A Word about the Editor's Illness 1937, p. 6). Each lesson focused on a particular passage from the Bible and one "golden text", which was a particular verse that encapsulated the lesson. She explored each passage with an expository lens that also identified noteworthy details from historical and biblical contexts. On the rare occasion that she divided the lessons into junior and adult classes, she made sure to tailor them appropriately. The junior lessons were comprised of brief and memorable instructions with accompanying Bible verses, while the adult lessons provided comparable and complimentary passages from scripture and significant detail from the surrounding history.³⁴ While initially instituted as a stopgap to fill a void left by the sickly Shields, she continued to contribute lessons in this capacity for nearly fifty years.

Not only did Clark's lessons display her keen understanding of the biblical text and her attentive pedagogy, but they also provided a snapshot of her theological perspectives. Indeed, she used the pages allotted to her to formulate lessons that affirmed the same basic theological tenets that fundamentalists believed were under fire, such as the essential deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the historicity of the Bible (including miracles), the atonement, the resurrection, and the second coming.³⁵ Through them, she also upheld the Bible as literal, inspired, and without error. For example, when writing on the biblical creation narrative, she noted: "The Hebrew word translated 'created' signifies that He caused them to come into being without the aid of pre-existing material. Scripture positively contradicts the evolutionary hypothesis... There is no reason to understand the word 'day' as an indefinite period of time, rather than as a literal day of twenty-four hours" (Clark 1938a, p. 7).

While Clark regularly wrote for *The Gospel Witness*, she only rarely commented on the differences between men and women and their attendant gender roles. In general, she affirmed traditional places for women and men in the church and home. For example, she

noted that from Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden, women had been condemned to experience "subjection" (Clark 1938b, p. 8). At the same time, she did not fit this stereotypical and traditionalist mould. Shields had long taught that women were intellectually inferior to men and that their greatest influence was in the home.³⁶ Clark, on the other hand, had established herself as one of the leading intellectual figures of this Toronto-based fundamentalist movement. Moreover, she remained single for her entire life and made no comment to suggest she sought otherwise. While the reason for this latter decision is unknown, it further underscores Clark's uniqueness as a strong and assertive woman whose example defies easy classification.

In some of Clark's articles, she went as far as to push the boundaries of these gender roles, especially when it came to preaching the gospel. She believed that spreading the gospel message was a task for all Christians, not a select few. This included "sharing the burdens and joys of the Lord's service at home and abroad" (Dr. Clark in Quebec 1933, p. 5). In her view, women were not necessarily barred from speaking to mixed audiences. When writing about the Samaritan woman at the well in John's Gospel, for example, Clark noted that "Christ revealed Himself as the Messiah" to her, "thus qualifying her to speak of Him and for Him".³⁷ This perspective was also visible in the numerous articles she wrote that read more like evangelistic messages rather than essays. Indeed, in these instances, she often confronted her reader with the reality of their sins and then issued an "altar call" in print.³⁸ Later, she expressed her feelings more clearly that "the proclamation of the Gospel" was not "the responsibility of the ministers alone", before closing: "Few realize the tremendous good which might be accomplished if more of God's saints in the pews would put themselves in God's hands to be channels of His grace" (Clark 1953, p. 13).

In addition to regular contributions to the pages of *The Gospel Witness*, Clark also served as an editor. In 1943, *The Gospel Witness* officially added her name to the masthead as an "Associate Editor". She had been unofficially serving in this role since 1937, but now, for the first time in the newspaper's history, Shields formally shared editorial responsibilities. In particular, she was responsible for "S. S. Lesson and Exchanges".³⁹ After Shields' death in 1955, she—alongside the next four successive pastors of Jarvis Street—served as "Editor". In this role, Clark became one of the chief representatives of the newspaper to the public and was usually tasked with writing and presenting the annual report.⁴⁰

Through the pages of *The Gospel Witness* and her lesson plans, Clark carved out a significant place within these Baptist fundamentalist circles. In the words of one writer, "She manages to get into numerous Sunday Schools and Bible Classes every week by means of her very helpful outlines" (W. 1939, p. 14). Shields likewise held a great deal of admiration for Clark's lessons. "It is quite evident to anyone who reads Dr. Clark's expositions that she writes only after the most thorough research", he wrote on one occasion, before continuing, "[she] gives her readers practically the last word on the subject".⁴¹ He closed this same report by writing:

This Editor remarked to our Jarvis St. teachers last evening that any preacher who could not find suggestions for a dozen sermons in Dr. Clark's exposition of last week ought not to try to be a preacher. These expositions are of value, not only to Sunday School teachers, but to everyone who would know his or her Bible better.⁴²

In another, later assessment, Shields went even further. He remarked that he had "received numerous expressions of appreciation from ministers. . . who have said that her exposition is among the very best things they find in the paper", before adding: "Dr. Clark is, as a great many ministers are not, a real theologian" (Shields 1953, p. 12). Through the pages of *The Gospel Witness*, Clark could provide counsel and instruction to pastors and parishioners alike.

6. Retirement and Final Years

In May 1966, owing to apparent “health reasons”, Clark retired from the TBS at the age of 72 (Slade 1966, p. 3). As a sign of her influence over the years, when news of her retirement emerged, “letters showered in from around the world from those who had been inspired by this godly Professor” (Adams 1966, p. 22). It was this legacy that prompted the seminary to honour her as Professor Emeritus.⁴³ She remained a part of the TBS community—still regularly attending events and convocations—but she officially stepped back from teaching. Clark’s role in the life and history of the TBS remained so important that the faculty dedicated the history of the seminary (published in 1987) to her (Toronto Baptist Seminary 1987). She returned to Hamilton after her retirement, where she lived with her sister.

Even though Clark concluded her full-time service to the TBS, she agreed to only a “partial” retirement from *The Gospel Witness* (Slade 1966, p. 3). Her name remained on the masthead, and she continued to contribute regular articles and Bible lessons. Among her many contributions, she often reflected on Shields’ life and the conflict at McMaster, as if to ensure that the story remained before an entirely new generation of fundamentalists.⁴⁴ At a time when Baptists across the continent were debating and dividing over the issue of women in the church, Clark remained one of the most influential figures in this Toronto-based fundamentalist movement.⁴⁵ Through the summer months, as the weather permitted, she would regularly travel to Toronto by bus in order to complete her editorial responsibilities (Wiebe 1990, p. 22). As her age caught up with her, these trips became more infrequent.

When Clark died at the age of 95 on 7 December 1989, tributes again flooded into *The Gospel Witness*. The pastor of Jarvis Street, Norman H. Street, eulogized her as “a most winsome and outstanding handmaid of the Lord”. In an article, he recognized Clark’s uniqueness in the fundamentalist world:

In her time, especially in her youth, the prevailing notion had it that the Lord’s work was to be done by men. Women who desired to devote their lives to Christian work were something of a problem. It was reluctantly admitted that in some cases women might be used on the mission field, but a woman on the faculty of a seminary? A woman teaching men? The very fact that Olive Clark won such a place of respect in what was considered a ‘male preserve’ testifies not only to her superior abilities but to a very gracious spirit. (Street 1990, p. 7)

Street was not the only one to understand that Clark was a woman of singular note among the fundamentalists. One former student remarked: “She made her mark for God in an hour which gave little encouragement to women in ministry, and excelled in any work she undertook. She was a prophetess of note and an encouragement and a challenge to all whom she taught” (Corbett 1990, p. 12).

7. Conclusions

Historians have noted that fundamentalism was a movement comprised of dominant and often competing personalities.⁴⁶ Yet, with few exceptions, historians have also tended to overlook the fact that it was not just men who fit this stereotype. Indeed, for all of the limitations placed on them, women sometimes emerged as strong and influential voices in their respective fundamentalist circles. Such was the case with Clark, who led an impressive life and career among Baptist fundamentalists in Canada.

With very little apparent desire to simply become a housewife, she instead became one of the leading intellectual figures in this Toronto-based fundamentalist movement. She was the first person to receive a PhD in Classics from the University of Toronto and was the recipient of numerous other academic accolades. She had a lengthy career at the Toronto Baptist Seminary, where she trained several generations of pastors and missionaries within the Baptist fundamentalist fold. She served as an intellectual resource in the pages of *The Gospel Witness* and published a regular Bible lesson used by pastors for over fifty years. She

was characteristically fundamentalist in her theology and was fiercely loyal to her friend and comrade in arms, T. T. Shields, who once referred to her as his “greatest comfort”. Her example suggests that, in select circumstances, fundamentalists were willing to soften some of their theological convictions if it meant strengthening the movement.

In the final analysis, it should be reiterated that Clark’s experience within the Baptist fundamentalist world in Ontario and Quebec was not representative of other women within those same churches. She was, by all accounts, what historians would label an “exceptional woman”. Therefore, the purpose of this paper has not been to suggest that her experiences were somehow normative or representative of how women were treated within this community. Rather, it has focused specifically on Clark and her important influence among Baptist fundamentalists in Canada. While she would not have been able to regularly preach from many of the pulpits within the Baptist fundamentalist community, she trained and led the pastors who did. Indeed, it may be said that she was one of the most important individuals in the movement. As an educator, editor, and author, she had a hand in guiding numerous fundamentalist churches, directly and indirectly—and in Canada and beyond. These impressive contributions made her not only a “prophetess of note” but also, by Shields’ own assessment, the Toronto Baptist Seminary personified.

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Notes

- ¹ I have explored this theme in greater detail in Murray (2023a, 2023b, pp. 248–57). For a study that looks at the theme of women in the fundamentalist world more broadly, see Bendroth (1993).
- ² *The Gospel Witness*, 13 August 1970, 14.
- ³ E.g., Toronto Baptist Seminary (1987, pp. 24–25). For a detailed list of available sources on Baptist fundamentalism in Canada, see Murray and Wilson (2024).
- ⁴ Because she opted to go to McMaster University rather than the University of Toronto, she was eligible for only one of the scholarships. See Olive Lucille Clark (1917, p. 358). She also received the “third highest rank in Ontario” on her matriculation examination. See Bright Hamilton Girls (1919).
- ⁵ E.g., home economics and health care. For a good study on women and higher education in Canada during this period, especially on the topics noted here, see MacDonald (2021).
- ⁶ For an important early history of McMaster University, see Johnston (1976).
- ⁷ On the desire toward denominational respectability, see Goodwin (1997, pp. 200–1). Baptists in Ontario held a minority stake in the religious landscape, occupying only 5.3% of the population. They numbered behind the following: Methodists (30.5%), Presbyterians (21.9%), Roman Catholics (17.9%), and Anglicans (16.9%). The data listed here are taken from the Canadian Census Office (1902, pp. 2–5).
- ⁸ As Shields would later note, she “had long entertained an ambition to be a professor of Classics” at McMaster. See Shields (1953, p. 11). Enrolling at the university would be the first step in accomplishing her dream. That Clark was so strongly convicted in her decision to attend the Baptist institution is evidenced by the fact that she declined thirteen of her awarded scholarships in order to attend McMaster instead of the University of Toronto.
- ⁹ For example, see Jones (2016, pp. 135–54); and Whiteley (2016, pp. 113–31). On the roots of this change among Baptists in Ontario, see Colwell (1985).
- ¹⁰ Olive Lucille Clark, PhD (1930, p. 10). Clark joined her alma mater at a time when women outnumbered men in the department. (McKay 2000, p. 22).
- ¹¹ Historians have given this controversy a significant amount of attention. For a recent example, see Adams (2022, pp. 119–56).
- ¹² The above quotations in this paragraph are from Clark (1929, p. 5).
- ¹³ Shields suggests that the resignation came “three or four days” later; however, I have been unable to verify this timeframe. See Shields (1953, p. 12).
- ¹⁴ In addition to the Jarvis Street Baptist Church, the BCOQ expelled 12 other churches. See MacLeod (1928, p. 61). The remainder of the churches withdrew from the BCOQ.
- ¹⁵ For a recent analysis of the formation of the TBS, see Haykin (2023, pp. 105–16)

- 16 For a few examples, see Shields (1924, p. 11; 1930, p. 11).
- 17 On Shields' support, see (Murray 2023a), "'A Call to [Fundamentalist] Baptist Women'", pp. 79–80.
- 18 Shields (1953, p. 11). In the same article, Shields notes that he knew her father. Given the fact that Shields had once held a pastorate in Hamilton before going to Jarvis Street, it is possible that he knew the Clark family from that period. In a separate article, the only detail Clark gives on the matter is that "The next morning two professors from the Seminary came from Dr. Shields and said that if I was interested there was an opening to teach in the Seminary". See Clark (1990, p. 11).
- 19 Clark's affirmation of the fundamental doctrines through the press is discussed in greater detail below.
- 20 E.g., Clark (1959b, p. 5; 1970a, p. 7).
- 21 The above quotations in this paragraph are from (Clark 1934a, p. 5).
- 22 E.g., R. Wilson (2000, p. 140). On Baptists and higher education more broadly, see Brackney (2008).
- 23 Clark (1972a, p. 8). Clark had a strict approach to education, which she believed was both character-building and spiritually enriching. She emphasized that an education rooted in Christian principles was necessarily "characterized by dignity and decorum", which required all students to possess a high degree of self-discipline. As such, she expected obedience from all of her students because "A quiet humble submission to authority is an indispensable quality of Christian character". She reasoned that this kind of "submission" would, in turn, refine students into mature Christian leaders who understood that they were accountable to Christ. See Clark (1963, p. 15).
- 24 Quotations in this paragraph are from Last Sunday and the Seminary (1934, p. 7). Emphasis added.
- 25 (Murray 2023a), "'A Call to [Fundamentalist] Baptist Women'", pp. 138–227. As a representative example, on one occasion after the controversy, he remarked: "God Almighty made man superior to woman, and superior he must always be. . . I rule this church—and no woman shall ever dictate to me". Clarence Griffin to C. K. Duff, 8 December 1940, CBA, as quoted in Russell (1981, p. 18).
- 26 E.g., W. (1944, p. 10); Among Ourselves (1945, p. 16); Bible Fellowship Conference (1950, p. 15); and Graduation Banquet (1957, p. 5).
- 27 Conference Picnic (1929, p. 12). For other examples, see Essex (1931, p. 11), and Ambassador, Windsor (1931, p. 16).
- 28 For a few representative examples, see Clark (1934b, pp. 5–6; 1954, p. 8; 1957, p. 1; 1959c, p. 1; 1975, p. 16).
- 29 T. T. Shields et al. to Olive L. Clark, 6 May 1954, Jarvis Street Baptist Church Archives (hereafter JSBCA), Clark Collection. Irregular capitalization in original.
- 30 Other women appointed to the faculty taught non-biblical classes, such as "Church Music". e.g., Introducing Recent New Faculty Members (1988, p. 19).
- 31 For details about this controversy, see P. Wilson (2017–2018, pp. 34–80).
- 32 T. T. Shields et al. to Olive L. Clark, 6 May 1954, JSBCA, Clark Collection.
- 33 Book Reviews (1933, p. 5). For another representative example, see Book Review (1953, pp. 12–13).
- 34 For a representative example, see Clark (1937b, p. 8).
- 35 E.g., Clark (1937f, p. 8; 1937d, p. 8; 1937a, pp. 11–12; 1937e, p. 8; 1937b, p. 8; 1938c, p. 11).
- 36 For representative examples, see Shields (1924, p. 11; 1930, p. 10).
- 37 Clark (1937c, p. 7). Emphasis in original.
- 38 E.g., Clark (1930, pp. 6–7).
- 39 This change occurred in the 4 March 1943 edition of *The Gospel Witness*. The other new Associate Editor was W. S. Whitcombe, who covered "French Language Translations and Public Questions". The following year, the newspaper also added W. Gordon Brown as "Contributing Editor".
- 40 For a representative example, see Clark (1965, pp. 5–6).
- 41 "Dr. O. L. Clark and the SS Lesson", *The Gospel Witness*, 18 February 1943, p. 10.
- 42 See note 41 above.
- 43 It is unclear when the TBS gave her that title, though she is listed with it in the 1967 prospectus. See Seminary Faculty (1967, p. 7).
- 44 E.g., Clark (1975, p. 16; 1976, p. 16).
- 45 On the larger Baptist world, see Flowers (2012).
- 46 E.g., Brackney (2019, pp. 34–35).

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Article

Lois Chapple (1897–1989): A Life in Service of Christ

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Abstract: This article gives a narrative account of the life of Lois Chapple, a Baptist woman, who served as a deaconess, a missionary in China, and as an evangelist and a secretary for the Baptist Women's League and the Baptist World Alliance. This article offers Chapple as an excellent example of how women within Baptist life found opportunities to serve in the twentieth century.

Keywords: Baptist Missionary Society; deaconess; China; Baptist Union; Baptist Women's League

1. Introduction

I cannot be sure when I first came across the name Lois Chapple, but it might have been in the book *Fire Over the Waters* by Douglas McBain who dedicates it “with grateful thanks to Eunice Lois Chapple, 8 July 1897–27 June 1989” (McBain 1997). In the Preface, McBain describes her as a “truly remarkable woman of God” and goes on to say a few brief words about her life:

Lois was baptised in 1907 in Bessels Green, at the age of 10. In 1923 she went to China as a missionary with the Baptist Missionary Society, working in rural areas and teaching in a girls school. On her return home in 1940 she served the Baptist Union as the secretary for the Women's Department of those days with the Baptist Women's League. It was in 1968 that the Holy Spirit visited her in a renewing way. In all her subsequent years her humble, truthful, astute yet common sense witness, as a member and deacon of an inner-suburban Baptist church in Lewin Road, Streatham, revealed what it means to be really renewed, fully charismatic and truly Christian. May we emulate Lois in our day with the balance of all these characteristics and with many spiritual gifts too. (McBain 1997)

From 1968 to 1982, McBain was the minister of that Baptist church in Lewin Road. It is also the church where I was dedicated as a baby and grew up in, and where my father, Paul Goodliff, was part of the pastoral team from the early 1980s.¹ I do not remember Lois as a child; she died when I was eight years old. My father would pay pastoral visits to her, which he describes as always being more beneficial to him than to her. It was my father who was called to her flat one morning when the care assistant had found her dead in her chair. He was the one to pray over her body before the undertakers arrived. This is all to say there is some personal connection for me to Lois Chapple.²

As McBain's brief tribute suggests, Lois Chapple's life was as one who sought to serve Christ. In this article, I will give an account of that service as a Baptist deaconess, a Baptist missionary in China, a Baptist Union employee with the Baptist Women's League (BWL) overseeing mission and evangelism amongst women, and her involvement in the Baptist World Alliance.³ Lois' involvement in these ministries should be set within the context of other women who also carried similar roles in Baptist life in the twentieth century (see Smith 2005a, 2021; O'Brien 2021), of whom many are still “forgotten sisters” (Smith 2005b).⁴ This article is also a contribution to the growing focus on women in the church and mission (Robert 2002; Dzubinski and Stasson 2021; Maxwell and Scales 2023). The early half of the twentieth century was a changing time for women, and Lois was among a new generation who benefited from new opportunities.⁵ The purpose of this article is to highlight one



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life—Lois Chapple—in the hope that other lives might also be remembered and told. In narrating Lois’ life, I will also reflect on her approach to mission and evangelism.

2. Early Life

Eunice Lois Chapple was born to Stewart (1873–1957) and Amy (1867–1956) on 9th July 1897. Stewart and Amy had married in 1895. Lois, as it seems she was always known, had an older sister Doris, born in 1896.⁶ Lois was born in Bexhill in Sussex, but by 1901 the family had moved and were living in Clapham, South London, and by 1911 had moved again to the bottom of Streatham Common in South London,⁷ about five minutes’ walk from Streatham Baptist Church in Lewin Road. Lois and Doris attended St. Helen’s School for girls, Streatham Common.⁸ The family joined the church in 1904 and Stewart was elected a deacon in 1905, becoming Church Secretary in 1916 until 1953 (Chapple [1919] 1962).⁹ Stewart would become Clerk of the Rules and Orders in the Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty Division at the Royal Courts of Justice, and in 1938 received an M.B.E. from King George VI (Chapple [1919] 1962).

3. Deaconess, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

Lois trained at St. Mary’s Hospital for Women and Children in Plaistow as a nurse.¹⁰ In 1918 she went to Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church as a deaconess. Deaconess’ did a variety of work. Dorothy Rose records that in 1913, “Sisters were taking services, running Life Brigade companies for the Children, visiting prisons, workhouses and infirmaries, and conducting women’s meetings and anniversary services” (Rose 1954). Lois’ appointment at Bloomsbury came the year before the Baptist Union took responsibility for the running of the Deaconess Order and the establishment of a training college in 1920 (Rose 1954). Lois’ time at Bloomsbury is regrettably vague due to the disappearance of church records in the period she was there (Bowers 1999), but what can be learned is that she was offered the position as a sister working with children on 13 June 1918 on a trial basis. It was noted in the Church minutes “that nothing was known about her yet beyond that she comes from a very good home”.¹¹ It seems there was a delay in her starting because her parents were unwell, but by November 1918, there is mention that she “was doing very well with the children in her trial period”.¹² There then was a brief period of unsettlement because of her father’s concern about remuneration, but by 16th January 1919, it is recorded that “Sister Lois has consented to continue on the terms started last month” and that “she is most willing and helpful”.¹³

4. Carey Hall, Birmingham

On 7 December 1920, Lois was accepted by the BMS Candidate Board for overseas mission. In 1914, the Baptist Zenana Mission had been incorporated within BMS as its Women’s Missionary Association (Stanley 1992). All single women missionaries were part of one department within the BMS. Lois arrived at Carey Hall in September 1921.¹⁴ She was 23.¹⁵ She would study there for two years. Fees were £60 a year in 1919 (Martin 1962). Alongside Lois were seven other women preparing for overseas mission work with the BMS.¹⁶ The Principal while Lois was there was Christina Irvine, who understood the aim of the College to be

to provide such conditions as will conduce to the development of a fully consecrated personality, such as can only be attained in and through Jesus Christ: to help the ordinary girl to become a woman of vision, open-minded, able to take long views, to read the signs of the times in ordinary events, to free her from the hampering fears, pettinesses and unrealities of life, that she may use her powers to the full, to foster in her a self-reliance that is God-reliance and will fit her to meet any situation wisely. (Martin 1962)

The study Lois undertook had an emphasis on the Bible, both Old and New Testament, and with that Christian doctrine and church history. This shows a definite overlap with

the content for ministerial training. Additional modules covered missionary methods, other religions, and foreign languages; practical modules with a focus on nursing, running women's meetings and children's play centres; and finally, modules focusing on hygiene, account keeping, voice production, and other subjects considered necessary for the work of women missionaries.¹⁷ Lois appears to have excelled in her work. In a letter dated 19 April 1923, the following report about Lois was sent to Miss Bowser¹⁸ at the WMA:

Above the average in every way. We feel her health would have been more established if she could have had another year here, she has until she came to us, steadily overworked all her life. She has first rate brains, very thoughtful and conscientious, adaptable. Would do excellent work at the head of a Bible Training Institute, in social work of any kind or special work among education of Hindu or Chinese women.

On Friday 12 October 1923 Lois sailed for China to begin work in Tai-yuan-fu.¹⁹ Among the things that she took with her were some gifts from the Streatham Sisterhood and from the church at Lewin Road.²⁰ At the Sunday evening service before she left, Lois "spoke of her desire to undertake Christian missionary work among the Chinese" and that "it had been her aim for a great many years past".²¹

5. Baptist Missionary in China

In 1912, China had become a republic and this brought new religious freedom for all Chinese citizens (Williamson 1957). New Christian institutions were encouraged, as it was the view that Christianity had "a distinctive contribution" to make in Chinese society (Williamson 1957). The Edwards' Memorial Institute in Tai-yuan-fu was opened in 1923.²² The money to build it had been donated by Miss Emily Kemp in memory of her sister, Mrs E. H. Edwards (O'Brien 2021). It was a "beautiful building in Chinese architectural style" (Williamson 1957) and would become the place where Lois worked. Kemp described it as "a kind of club for ladies and high-school girls" (Kemp 1927). "Activities were conducted on the usual YWCA lines" (Williamson 1957).²³ The Institute was run by a committee of Chinese and foreign women, the majority of the officers being Chinese, and the warden and her assistant supplied by the WMA (Kemp 1927). Lois was the assistant or secretary to the warden. On her arrival, the warden was Miss Ada Sowerby, who had been a missionary since 1910 (Williamson 1957).²⁴

Before reaching Tai-yuan-fu, Lois was in language school for eight months in Peking (Beijing) with another missionary Nora Haslop.²⁵ She would write that she liked language study and her time in the school was "very interesting and happy" and that "China [was] much lovelier even than I expected".²⁶

Lois got involved in the Institute very quickly and by September was writing home about plans "to start a little Baby Health Centre"²⁷ that would "open opportunities for friendship and service". Later the same month, she heard about £29 that the Sunday School at Bloomsbury Central had raised and was asking that it be sent to purchase equipment.²⁸ A first major incident happened in November, when Miss Sowerby had what Lois described as a "breakdown". Lois found herself on her own. Miss Goodchild came to live with her. By then, she was teaching English and running a Bible Study.²⁹ In late December, she would write that

I can't help feeling that while I may hold things together, make friends and keep things going, the side which suffers (though I do my best) is bound to be the individual spiritual work which is so all important and which to a large extent outside help cannot touch.³⁰

By March 1926, Miss Sowerby had returned to the UK, and Lois received news that Mrs Wenham was to take over as Warden.³¹ Before Mrs Wenham arrived in June, an incident of more national significance took place in May. In the "International Settlement at Shanghai, some Chinese were shot dead by British police and military" during student

demonstrations. This resulted in “active hostility against foreigners, particularly the British” (Williamson 1957; Stanley 1992). In an August letter to supporters, Lois wrote:

In reference to Shanghai incident—I was ordered to sleep up at the main mission compound as I was living alone. . . The Chinese are people like we are, with about as big a mixture of good and bad, kindness and selfishness, cleverness and foolishness, possibility and failure as we have. Above all they are our brothers and sisters for whom Christ died.³²

In the same letter she would share her aims:

We do want the Chinese mother to have an outlook that is broad enough to help her to bring up her children to be citizens of the world, and to help her to know about and care about putting right the evils of the society in which she lives, but we don't want her to be a restless sort who thinks the only place not worth time and consideration is her own household. The moral of that is that we are not here to westernise.

What is reflected here is the broader understanding of women's work among women, which believed that “women of the world were sisters” and to work among women was about sharing the gospel and latest western methods of “home economics, hygiene, and child nurture” (Robert 2009).

The equipment for the Baby Health Centre had arrived in December 1924 and was up and running in 1925. In her history, Miss Kemp wrote

An Infant Welfare centre, which is a great attraction, has been established by Miss Lois Chapple, and throughout the violent anti-British agitation, when everything else was suspended, mothers brought their babies, and schoolgirls insisted on having baths! (Kemp 1927)

In October 1926, Lois expressed for the first time in a letter, a heart to do more evangelistic work.

I do believe that the Institute may do a great work and have a great future, though it be long in coming, but there are times when I envy the folk whose job is evangelistic work out and out.³³

During the autumn in 1926, Lois was unwell. This was described as gastric trouble and being run-down after so much responsibility over the last two years. She requested to come home early for her first furlough, partly because of illness and partly because if she delayed until 1928, the Institute would be left without any WMA staff, as Miss Wenham was due to return to home then too. The plan was to come home in 1927 and to then return early 1928. Lois left China at the end of April and returned to the UK in June 1927. There was some concern by R. Fletcher Moorshead, the BMS Medical Secretary, about Lois' long-term health and whether she was well enough to continue beyond one more term.³⁴ This delayed her return to the field, alongside another reason, being that the situation in China was not felt to be safe.

In April 1928, Lois conducted a service at Lewin Road and spoke about life as a missionary overseas. She used the opportunity not to speak about any stories of success, but instead the challenges of being a missionary. She said the following:

There was a personal kind of difficulty against which the missionary must fight. They went out with tremendous enthusiasm and eagerness; they started with a run, but they found it somewhat harder than they imagined.³⁵

Here, an insight is given into her own feelings about her first years in China. She went on to say that “they might fall into the attitude of being too busy to do the real work”. The real work being evangelism, and this was Lois' ongoing frustration about her initial years in China. She wanted to do what she deemed and understood as more missionary work.

While she was home, the results of Lois' Chinese language studies arrived. These were very good and recorded that “I am impressed with the evidence of painstaking work, as in

the knowledge of out-of-the-way words and phrases”, going on to say that “Miss Chapple is to be very heartily congratulated on the result of her thorough work”.³⁶ Similar tributes were given to her ahead of her return to China. At a valedictory service, the minister at Lewin Road, Rev T. Cynon Jones, said of Lois “she was a woman of keen and strong intellect, with a very deep devotion to her work”. He remarked also that “she was perhaps the first to obtain a hundred percent” in her language examinations. Rev Dr Phillips of Bloomsbury Central referred to her “preeminent qualifications”.³⁷

Lois finally set sail for Tai-yuan-fu on 28 September 1928 and arrived in November. She returned as Warden at the Institute. On her journey back across China to Tai-yuan-fu, news reached her that a fellow WMA worker, Grace Mann, had been killed by robbers as she was travelling to Hsin-Chou (Williamson 1957; Stanley 1992). Lois would write that,

we don't believe that this life laid down is wasted. We are sure that it is an offering well pleasing to God and that the influence left behind will last and do real service.

In a later letter, Lois complains about Charles Brown (MacDonald 1947), who she had heard wanted “to deny women the right and privilege that they admit for themselves to suffer hardship and to meet danger for Christ's sake should they be called to”.³⁸ Brown was the minister of Ferme Park Baptist Church, which was Grace Mann's sending church, which perhaps gives some reason for his apparent comments. For Lois, women had an equal call to the mission field, despite its potential dangers.

By February 1929, in a letter to supporters, Lois was writing about difficult days at the institute, some of this worry was financial, and yet she was also requesting funds to fund a Chinese nurse in a year's experiment.³⁹ Internally, it appears that there were also tensions about the work of the institute. In a letter to Lois from Miss Bowser it is said,

I quite understand your feeling that you must be allowed a certain amount of freedom. . . I think the Committee realise there are some of your colleagues, as there are some of mine on committees here, who would be somewhat distrustful of the kind of work the Institute seeks to do.⁴⁰

In July 1929, Lois came to an important decision, which she set out in a letter to Miss Bowser:

I believe that God's call to me is to a different kind of work from that of the Institute, and so I want to ask to be released from the Institute as a soon as it is convenient and to be allowed to ask Conference to appoint me to ordinary evangelistic work. As both you and Mrs Wenham⁴¹ know this is not a sudden idea, but has been working in my mind for several years, but I have not felt clear enough as to what might be personal inclination and what is God's will. . .

Please don't misunderstand me, I am not suggesting that the Institute is not a place where one can work for God. It may well be that many people may feel their call to just that kind of work, but I think my own work for him lies elsewhere.⁴²

The frustration she had been feeling earlier here reached a point where she seeks clearly to switch her work to that which reflected her understanding of her call. Lois demonstrates a boldness in her request, highlighting that she felt she had some agency in being able to ask those at home in London. What is reflected in Lois is two views of missionary work, one having a more humanitarian emphasis and the other with a more evangelistic leaning (Stanley 1990); Lois' clear desire was to engage in more of the latter.

In November, in another letter, she says “I am quite willing to go anywhere that is thought best, even to be transferred to Shensi if it seemed advisable, though of course I prefer to stay in Shansi”.⁴³ In the same letter, she references a letter she had received from Miss Kemp:

I had quite a kind, but slightly exasperating letter from Miss Kemp about my resignation! My reasons for leaving were not the difficulties as such, at all, but

rather a real doubt as to the achievability of the whole method (which naturally Miss Kemp couldn't understand) and a conviction of my own unsuitability for this job and possible suitability for the other kind.

In February 1930, Lois transferred to Sinchow, where she worked in the Women's School alongside Beulah Glasby.⁴⁴ From her letters, the years in Sinchow were Lois' most enjoyable. She would write, "I just love the school every minute of it, every woman in it".⁴⁵ She described a typical day as having multiple bible classes, playing volleyball and finishing with a prayer meeting. Lois wrote an article for the *Missionary Herald* in 1931 which explained that "almost all the pupils are married women, and their ages range from fifteen to forty" (Chapple 1931). These women would stay at the school. Lois concludes by saying

We try to bring each women face to face with that Power beyond herself, which, entering in, may give her an ideal, a hope and life-germ which will continue to develop and to enrich her life, even in the most untoward circumstances. If a healthy body and an awakened mind are filled and controlled by the spiritual power which flows out continually from the life-giving God, our student's belated schooling will not have been in vain. Without this our experiment in adult education will have been a failure'. (Chapple 1931)

Lois was someone who liked to teach about the bible. From the beginning, she was a good student, at school, at Carey Hall, and she clearly enjoyed teaching others.

In 1932, Lois was ill again, and in June, had an operation for her mastoid. She took a long time to recover. Her second furlough was agreed, and she returned home to England in early January 1933. In September, she was on her way back to Sinchow. She would write again, very positively, about her work and the community in Sinchow:

There is a very free and beautiful Christian fellowship here too, such real, practical praying and looking for revival and definite seeking and expecting for conversions too. Oh for a real movement by the living Spirit throughout our Shansi field and among ourselves! We must pray and watch and prepare for it. . .

I do feel that we ought to be able to support our village evangelism far far better and to use suitable Chinese women for that purpose. And I feel too that our women's school is a vital work to provide intelligent Christian women who can read and who can become voluntary workers in their own villages.⁴⁶

This desire for a movement of the Holy Spirit was inspired by a holiday in Shansi Hills, in the one of houses of the China Inland Mission.⁴⁷ Here, Lois had a spiritual experience:

For me, there were fears gently taken away, and the still, small voice of his lovely Presence. There were times of darkness and helplessness, followed by sweet peace and joy, and He talked with me in the silence in a deeper way than ever before, so that I cannot but know Him and love Him better. (Chapple 1934)

The work of the Holy Spirit would become something she experienced again in later life, as is mentioned below.

In 1935, Lois was ill again, and she had to leave Sinchow for Tai-yuan-fu. Miss Bowser would write to her that

You must comfort yourself that nothing is outside of God's plan and tedious and unnecessary as this illness may have seemed, there must be some good He can work out of it.⁴⁸

In December, being no better, Lois began the journey again to the UK. This was very disappointing for her, but she reflected the following:

I don't doubt—I never have doubted—the loving wisdom of God. His Will is 'good and perfect' but I have been finding it hard to say 'acceptable' too. But although I can't quite rejoice in it yet, I do choose His will not just suffer it.⁴⁹

Lois would not begin the journey back to China until August 1937. This was due partly to her long recovery and to the situation in China. In July 1937, the Japanese invaded and occupied Shansi and Shantung (Williamson 1957). Lois began sailing on 13th August 1937, with her three new recruits, two of whom were engaged to be married. In September, they reached Colombo in Ceylon (Sri Lanka)⁵⁰ and they were ordered to stay there. Two weeks later, they were on their way to Hong Kong and by November they were in Peking (Beijing). Lois finally reached Sinchow in February. She would write that “it was sad to see signs of war”, but “the Japanese soldiers on the train treated us very well, some of them helps us a lot and we had no trouble”.⁵¹ Lois and the other missionaries were in the Japanese Occupied Zone, but it was also under threat from Chinese guerrillas. In early 1938, it had been “prayerfully decided to re-occupy the northern stations”. (Williamson 1957). In March, Lois wrote that “things here were very precarious a fortnight ago”.⁵²

On 4 May 1938, tragedy struck as two BMS missionaries and their Chinese driver were killed by Chinese guerrillas who mistook them to be Japanese (Williamson 1938). One of those murdered was Beulah Glasby, Lois’ friend and co-worker in Sinchow (Williamson 1938, p. 138). Glasby was 43. In a letter dated May 18th, Lois wrote home that “you will be sharing in our sorrow and loss. . . Beulah has been a wonderful friend to me. . . she has been a really great missionary”.⁵³ In a later letter written to supporters at home she reflected the following:

The events in May with all the sorrow and loss, has not made us regret opening these stations. Neither we, nor those two dear friends of ours, ever imagined that the great cause of world redemption that cost God at calvary would be without cost to those who are privileged to share it with Him. We were and are willing to go where we are sent and to do what He appoints not less willingly than soldiers who fight in an earthly cause. It is not Safety First for any of Christ’s folk. They would have had it so, we would not and nor would you. We take no foolish risks, but our job is more, not less, important than the material ones for which people sacrifice so much. Our Master tells us very plainly what His followers would meet in this world in following Him, and we do not complain if his words are fulfilled, do we?⁵⁴

Lois was a woman “obviously courageous and dedicated,” (Robert 2009) like many other women (and men), as a Christian disciple. Her evangelicalism is clearly described here, with an emphasis on the cross, an active faith, and the importance of conversionism, alongside her regard for the Bible (Bebbington 1989).

Williamson records that Lois and Mr and Mrs Hayward, Mrs Lewis and Mr and Mrs J. Henderson-Smith “tried to maintain work in the city and the district”. In Lois’ words, “our plans and hopes to hold on had to be given up. The situation became impossible, and we were a danger, not a help, to our friends”.⁵⁵ They left on the 6th of August. Lois, like other fellow missionaries, found “other spheres of service”. For Lois, this meant a job in Shanghai for the National Christian Council of China (NCCC). Before this started in February 1940, Lois went on a number of visits to projects working with women across northern China, observing their methods (Chapple 1940). The focus of all these projects was building Christian homes. In Lois’ words, “the ultimate strength of a Christian community lies not only in the life of the Church, but also in the life of the Christian homes of which the Church is composed”. This emphasis on Christian homemaking was widely held (Robert 2008). The new job for the NCCC was an office and administrative one, which Lois wrote was something new to the variety of roles she had held since being a nurse and deaconess.

In May 1940, with war having broken out in Europe, Lois received a letter from her father in England⁵⁶ and this led her to what might be best termed as a crisis of conscience: should she return home or stay in China? Lois describes her parents “badly needing me” because “neither of them very well” and without other support.⁵⁷ Writing to Miss Bowser, she said the following:

When I left home nearly 3 years ago I left my parents in very happy circumstances, my sister near, and friends living with them. . . I did not anticipate the unimagined threat of present conditions. They are now quite alone and do not feel they can leave their home. With all my love for China and for the Mission, and my sense of vocation, I still feel that now my duty and God's will for me may be to return to them [parents] until these serious possibilities are past. . . what I am really asking for is an indefinite leave without salary. . . if they want me to definitely resign, much as it would grieve me I would have to do so. . . I had not until the last two weeks dreamed of it.⁵⁸

In June, Lois was still not certain what to do. If the doors opened up to return to Sinchow, she was considering staying.⁵⁹ It appears that Lois feels that her present role for NCCC was not something that she felt could keep her in China, especially if there was concern for her parents at home.⁶⁰ On the 13 June, Miss Bowser wrote to Lois:

Your parents seem well and fit, they do not seem unduly apprehensive of present difficulties, nor future possibilities, though none of us know what these may be.

My colleagues and I do not think you should come away. On the other hand, you are grown woman and you must make your own decisions and we feel this decision rests with you, but we quite clear that if you come away it cannot be for leave without pay but that you must withdraw from the Society.⁶¹

On 5 July, Lois had made her mind up: "I have decided in view of all the circumstances (including recent developments out here) that if God opens the way I shall take it as his will that I shall go to my parents".⁶² She left Shanghai on the 14th July and was home by mid-August. As the exchange above demonstrates, Lois wanted BMS to give her leave without salary, but this was refused, and she resigned on the 2nd of September. The Home Committee accepted her resignation but did leave the door open for the possibility of future service back in China.

6. Baptist Union, Baptist Women's League, and the Baptist World Alliance

In September 1940, Lois got a "little teaching job" locally in a school. In October 1941, she got a job for the Postal Censorship Department under the government's Ministry of Information, working in the Chinese section. Lois' "special qualifications and abilities were highly valued and from where she was released [in 1944] with great reluctance". (*Fifty Years* 1958).⁶³ She was released because on 7 June 1944, Lois was appointed Assistant to Doris Rose, the Organising Secretary for the Women's Department in the Baptist Union.⁶⁴ In the Baptist Union report, Lois' role was described as "specially responsible for the BWL's organisation, the Girl's Hostel and the Home for Unmarried Mothers".⁶⁵ The Woman's Department had been established in January 1938, under which umbrella the BWL, the Deaconess Order, and the Hostel were included (*Fifty Years* 1958). The BWL had begun in 1908 as a means of organising women to support the Baptist Union's Home Work Fund (*Fifty Years* 1958) and for most of its early history it was an astonishingly good fundraising organisation, supporting Home Work, but also the work of women, like the deaconesses. However, by 1939, the BWL had 644 local branches and the work was described as women "thinking and planning, praying and evangelizing" (*Fifty Years* 1958).

While her new role involved administration, it also provided her with lots of opportunities to do the kind of work she enjoyed. In her early years in the Baptist Union, she made lots of visits to local BWL branches.⁶⁶ There is a record of the kind of talk Lois gave from an account of an address she made at Perry Rise Baptist Church:

[Lois] wanted them to imagine a little house right in the middle of a field. It had many windows. They had thought a lot about windows lately. This little house represented the house of the soul. It had a skylight which looked right up to God, and let the sunlight into their souls, and sometimes the skylight was blacked out. The upstairs windows looked right out on to the field which was the world,

and the need to keep these windows clear and uncovered was very great today. Downstairs windows looked out on to their neighbours. They must keep these wide open because people were trying to depend on themselves instead of on God, and they must try as missionaries here to win these people by friendship and kindness to have faith in God.⁶⁷

Reflected in this talk was Lois' emphasis within the BWL on evangelism. Women should be open to God and open to mission. Her first big project was the Campaign to Women, inaugurated in 1947 and focused on encouraging women to "prepare by prayer and re-dedication for witness and evangelism" (*Fifty Years* 1958). Lois "felt it the time was ripe to appeal to the women of the country to return to God".⁶⁸ In her view "as the international situation has deteriorated and a feeling of pessimism has spread we should have a clear ringing message to the women of this country of which the central theme might be "Christ the answer to the world's need"". ⁶⁹

In 1949, Lois was a key organizer of a rally of Baptist women for the BWL. In her words, it was a "venture of faith" because of the venue's size and she encouraged "earnest prayer... for those who plan, lead, speak and sing, and for those who will form the congregation".⁷⁰ This saw 9500 women gather in Empress Hall, Earls Court, where the general theme was on the Campaign to Women.⁷¹ Following the conference, she wrote a general letter in her capacity as Organising Secretary on "The Next Step in the Campaign to Women". She wrote that "every kind of talent, every part of life, the ordinary tasks of every day must be related practically to Christian faith through Christian Action".⁷² The whole project has some overlap with Lois' time in the BMS, as the purpose is about women reaching other women.

In 1960, on her retirement as Organising Secretary and her appointment as President of the BWL for 1960–61, Lois reflected on the last fifteen years. Having listed the various works that she was responsible for, she wrote, "one heartening sign has been the quickened sense of our evangelistic opportunities and the challenge they present to us as individuals and groups".⁷³ Although she adds, "yet we would all agree, I am sure, that we fall very far short of what we long to be and do in witnessing and winning women for our Lord and Saviour". Lois wrote a small booklet as part of Baptist Union's Ter-Jubilee Celebrations. For Lois, all the various women's meetings and groupings should be understood as related to the centre, which is the church. Each meeting is a "bridgehead" for the "church as a whole in its task for evangelism". (Chapple 1960). Lois' BWL presidential address was entitled "The Great Company and their Task".⁷⁴ The *Baptist Times* reported that "it was an encouragement to those listening to understand themselves as part of Christ's great company as light-bearers, heralds, priests, gift-bearers, peace-makers and choristers".⁷⁵ Whether overseas or in England, Lois saw it as imperative that women played their part.

In the Baptist Union Council report for the year ending in 1950, the following was claimed:

The League sent its organising secretary, Miss E. L. Chapple, to America and Canada to attend the BWA World Congress and make contacts with leaders of Baptist Women's work on that side of the Atlantic. So greatly impressed were the women who received her with great kindness by her capacity and personality that they gave her no rest until she had consented to become the honorary secretary of the Women's Committee of the BWA, which promised to find all necessary help. Our Women's Committee, while anxious that no intolerable burden should be laid on her, feel that they are themselves honoured by the choice and gladly assented to her acceptance of the post. We cordially offer her our good wishes.

A new global sphere was opened to Lois. As a secretary to this new BWA women's work (Patterson and Pierard 2005), she travelled to various countries,⁷⁶ for example, in 1958 to India at the launch of the Asian Baptist Women's Union.⁷⁷ In 1950, she attended a pre-congress conference on Baptist World Missions (Patterson and Pierard 2005), and

at the Congress in Cleveland, Ohio, Lois spoke on the subject “Is Christ the Answer?” At the ninth BWA World Congress in 1955 in London, she was a member of the organising committee and was appointed in the same year to BWA Executive Committee representing the BWA Women’s Department. At the tenth BWA World Congress in 1960 in Rio, Brazil, she retired from BWA Women’s Department,⁷⁸ but was co-opted (and so remained) on to BWA Executive for a further five years.

Lois retired from active work at the end of 1959.⁷⁹ In the Baptist Union Council Report for 1959, the following was recorded:

Miss Chapple was appointed to the staff of the BU in 1944. She has proved herself an excellent colleague, a gifted administrator, a wise counsellor and friend, and will be much missed at the Church House. She has been notably successful in holding together the many different interests and enterprises of her department. The warmest gratitude and good wishes will follow her on her retirement and as she undertakes the Presidency of the BWL for the year 1960–61.

7. Deacon, Streatham Baptist Church

Lois was a member of Streatham Baptist Church, popularly known as “Lewin Road”. Her membership stretched back probably throughout her time in China, and certainly when she returned to England permanently in 1940. During her missionary years, when she returned on furlough, she was living at the family home in Kempshott Road in Streatham.⁸⁰

Lois was the first woman at Lewin Road to be appointed a deacon. In the history of the church, she records in understated words, “In 1958, we made history in a quiet way by electing a woman to the diaconate for the first time!” (Chapple [1919] 1962). Her appointment came in March 1958, when Rev Angus McMillan was minister (Chapple [1919] 1962). For a lengthy period—as deacon—she would be the only woman serving during the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. She would remain a deacon until 1977, when the church meeting appointed her as a life deacon, an honorary role, demonstrating how well-respected she was by all. When Angus retired as church minister, it was Lois who spoke at his farewell on behalf of the church. She was close to both Angus and to his wife Margaret⁸¹, and she wrote a short tribute when Margaret died in 1978.⁸² Lois organised the arrangements for the induction of Rev Douglas McBain. When McBain introduced an eldership into the church structures in the mid-1970s, there was discussion of whether women could become elders. The answer at that point was no, but on her appointment as a life deacon, the minutes of the deacons record that “her name be kept in mind as a possible Elder if and when the matter of women elders was considered”.⁸³

Lois was among many Christians in Britain who were influenced by Charismatic renewal.⁸⁴ In 1972, she records, in a letter in the *Baptist Times*, receiving “a deeper experience of His Holy Spirit’s infilling” which included the gift of tongues.⁸⁵ In the church newsletter in November 1974, Lois described a day of prayer and fasting held in the church in which a visiting minister spoke about revival and visions were shared. She concluded,

Our Fast Day was a joyful time of rich fellowship together, but truly ‘our fellowship was with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ’. Now refreshed, united, rejoicing and filled with His Spirit may we go forward to that great work He has called us to do together.⁸⁶

After she retired from her role at the Baptist Union, it appears she became even more involved in her local church. She offered hospitality and support to others,⁸⁷ hosted meetings, and for six years edited the monthly church newsletter.

After many years of service in the local church and in the wider denomination, by the late 1970s, it seems that Lois was beginning to slow down. In an article from 1978 called “Growing Old”, she wrote that growing old means “we have to lay down the things we love; there is an inevitable slowing down in many ways”, but she wrote also of the “wonderful compensations too” which are being met “with so much kindness from younger people,

such a warmth of loving consideration, such generous helpfulness, so many greetings and messages". At the end of December 1981, it is reported in the Lewin church newsletter that Lois was home from a stay in hospital and a nursing home after a "nasty fall" and had "a substantial way to go before she returned to normal health".⁸⁸ Lois died on 27 June 1989.⁸⁹

8. Conclusions

Lois Chapple lived a remarkable life stretching across much of the twentieth century. She was involved in several areas of service then available to women—deaconess, missionary, and the BWL—and she therefore offers an example of what ministry looked like in these roles. Her life was one in which she faced several different health challenges, but she chose not to let this hinder her. It was one committed to sharing and serving the gospel, sometimes to her own physical exhaustion. There is a sense that Lois knew her own mind and made decisions as she felt led by God, seen in particular in her choice to come back to England in 1940. While that decision closed the door to further overseas missionary work, it led to a new door being opened to evangelistic work in England. Lois held an evangelical commitment to evangelism and to the importance of women's participation in the evangelistic task in the home and the community. She was very respected by all those who knew her well. Lois sought to seize and expand every opportunity she was presented with to serve Christ. She deserves to be a remembered sister.⁹⁰

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Notes

- 1 He was appointed as "Pastoral Elder" in 1982, from 1984 he was training for ministry at Spurgeon's College, London, and was ordained in 1988.
- 2 Throughout this article I will refer to her as Lois, but to many she was known as Miss Chapple.
- 3 There was no obituary for Lois in either the *Baptist Union Directory*, the *Baptist Times*, or the *Missionary Herald*. In wider Baptist history, a few references to Lois can be found in (Williamson 1957; Payne 1959; Randall 2005).
- 4 Although see the recent collection of essays Maxwell and Scales, 2023.
- 5 In 1918, John Howard Shakespeare, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, wrote "I regard the liberation of women from the bonds of prejudice, the growth of the power to serve at the call of new responsibilities, and the gift of her intellect, intuition and moral earnestness as the most hopeful features of our time" (Shakespeare 1918, p. 10).
- 6 Doris married Henry Knight in September 1922 (*Streatham News*, 8 September 1922, p. 3) and died 30 October 1944 (*Streatham News*, 3 November 1944, p. 8).
- 7 1911 Census. The Chapple family were a South London family; Stewart was born in Lambeth and was living there until at least 1891. In 1911, the Chapple home consisted of the four members of the family, but also by then Amy's mother, and a servant.
- 8 *Streatham News*, 31 July 1909, p. 4.
- 9 This does struggle to make sense of McBain's claim that Lois was baptised in Bessels Green (Sevenoaks, Kent) in 1907, but I infer that he must have got that information from Lois herself.
- 10 I have not been able to confirm this, but this seems likely, on the basis that the training was in a hospital and the expectation that "each deaconess was required to take a three to six months' nursing course" (Rose 1954, p. 10).
- 11 *Bloomsbury Central Church Committee Minute Book*, May 1912 to July 1919.
- 12 See Note 11.
- 13 See Note 11.
- 14 The College had opened in 1912—made possible by a gift from the Baptist Emily Kemp—as the United Missionary College for Women, with room for twenty women. For a history of the Carey Hall (see Martin 1962).
- 15 The Carey Hall College Register said she had two years' nursing experience and three years as a deaconess.

16 There were other women training to serve with other missionary agencies.
17 The breadth of this training was a response to a criticism at the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 (see Seton
2013, pp. 46–47).
18 Miss (Eleanor) Bowser was the secretary of the WMA within BMS. In 1946, she would become BMS India Secretary, after the struc-
tures of the BMS changed and the WMA, and with it the Medical Mission Auxiliary, no longer existed (see Stanley 1992, p. 389).
For more on Bowser, see ‘Mary Eleanor Bowser’ in (Clement 1955, pp. 109–16).
19 Tai-yuan-fi is a large town located in the province of Shansi in North China.
20 These were as follows: a picture of an English garden scene, a travelling picnic basket, a Schofield’s Bible, two books (*Democracy
and Education* by John Dewey and *Social Psychology* by William McDougall), and an Underwood portable typewriter, *Streatham
News*, 12 October 1923, p. 6. Before returning back to China in 1928, she was presented with a folding chair and portable folding
table and stools, *Streatham News*, 7 September 1928, p. 4.
21 *Streatham News*, 12 October 1923, 6.
22 Ta-yuan-fi was a key Baptist mission centre, with BMS also running schools and a hospital.
23 YWCA, meaning Young Women’s Christian Association, had been founded in 1855. For a history of the YMCA in China (see
Littell-Lamb 2023). Littell-Lamb argues that “one of the association’s earliest emphases was in providing places for community
and fellowship “where women may meet and make friends with one another, drink tea together, play games, listen to music and
touch other women’s lives.” Bringing these women together provided YWCA secretaries with the opportunity to introduce new
ideas into the lives of their members and visitors. A primary goal for work with “women of leisure” was to involve them in social
service as a way to introduce them to the fundamental precept of Christianity, since to association women, “social service” and
“Christian service” were one and the same” (Littell-Lamb 2023, pp. 28–29).
24 Both Ada’s parents had been missionaries in China too.
25 Haslop worked in Shensi. She married the Rev George A. Young in 1927 and retired from service in 1952 (Williamson 1957, p. 369).
26 Letter 17 June 1924 to Miss Lockhart.
27 Letter 5 September 1924.
28 Letter 24 September 1924.
29 Letter 17 November 1924.
30 Letter 28 December 1924.
31 Letter to Lois, 20 March 1925. Mrs H. V. Wenham before she was married was Miss Margaret Angus, daughter of Joseph Angus,
who had been Principal of Regent’s Park College, London, and after which the Angus Library at Regent’s Park College, Oxford
is named.
32 Letter 30 August 1925.
33 Letter 1 October 1926.
34 A medical examination, back in London, stated that she was experiencing “nervous exhaustion and brain-fag”. While in the UK,
Lois underwent treatment in Brighton and was fitted with a surgical belt, which suggests a problem with a hernia.
35 *Streatham News*, 20 April 1928, p. 8.
36 Report of Language Examinations, attached to letter to Lois, 1 June 1927.
37 *Norwood News*, 7 September 1928, p. 4.
38 Letter 13 March 1930 to Miss Bowser.
39 Letter 8 February 1929.
40 Letter 5 April 1929.
41 Mrs Wenham was back in England, and had retired from overseas service in 1928, but still obviously involved in some way with
the WMA.
42 Letter 15 July 1929.
43 Letter 23 November 1929.
44 Glasby had been in China since 1924.
45 Letter 4 December 1930 to Miss Bowser.
46 Letter 25 July 1934 to Miss Bowser.
47 For links between Keswick and the holiness movement with the China Inland Mission (see Price and Randall 2000, pp. 105–19).
48 Letter 17 May 1935 to Lois.
49 Letter 1 December 1935 to Miss Bowser.
50 Modern day Sri Lanka.
51 Letter 3 February 1928 to Miss Bowser.
52 Letter 18 March 1938 to Miss Bowser.
53 Letter 18 May 1938 to Miss Bowser.

- 54 Letter 12 January 1939 to friends.
- 55 Letter 20 November 139 to Miss Bowser from Peking.
- 56 This letter is not in the collection of correspondence held by the Angus Library.
- 57 Letter 17 My 1940 to Miss Bowser.
- 58 Letter 22 May 1940 to Miss Bowser.
- 59 Letter 13 June 1940 to Miss Bowser.
- 60 Letter 24 June 1940 to Miss Bowser.
- 61 Letter 13 June 1940 from Miss Bowser to Lois.
- 62 Letter 5 July 1940 to Miss Bowser. In a letter written in England explaining her decision, she highlights the fall of Paris and the belief that “it would be very soon almost impossible to enter England”, 24 August 1940 letter to Miss Bowser.
- 63 This history of the BWL was possibly written or at least edited by Lois in her role as Secretary.
- 64 Doris Rose had been appointed in 1933.
- 65 Baptist Union Council report for year ended 1945. The Girls’ Hostel opened in 1912 and the home for unmarried mothers was suggested in the early 1940s, opening in 1945.
- 66 Baptist Union Council Reports years ending 1946 and 1947.
- 67 *Lewisham Borough News*, 4 April 1945, p. 4.
- 68 Minutes of the General Purposes Committee of the Women’s Department, 16 September 1946.
- 69 Minutes of the General Committee of the Women’s Department, 18 September 1946.
- 70 *Baptist Times*, 20 January 1949, p. 3.
- 71 See *Baptist Times*, 5 May 1949, pp. 4, 7.
- 72 “The Next Step in the Campaign to Women”, letter dated September 1949.
- 73 Baptist Women’s Department: Miss Lois Chapple, National President Baptist Women’s League 1960–61, p. 2.
- 74 Based on Psalm 68.11, “The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it” (KJV). Interestingly more recent bible translations translated “company” as “women”.
- 75 *Baptist Times*, 12 May 1960, p. 7.
- 76 In his Foreword to the history of Lewin Road Baptist Church, Angus Macmillian writes, “Space forbids telling of her visits overseas in connection with the Baptist World Alliance”, p. 6.
- 77 Reported in *Streatham News*, 31 October 1958.
- 78 On her retirement, she was given a letter of thanks and a handbag!
- 79 On her retirement, she was presented with a handbag and a cheque! “*The Wind of Change*”. *Report of the Women’s Department for the year ended 31 December 1960*, 3.
- 80 Lois inherited the home after her parents died and she lived there with the family’s housekeeper, Nellie, and also her nephew Victor. [Lois had two other nieces.] When Nellie and Victor died, and the house became too big for Lois on her own, she had a bungalow built in the garden and this became her new home, now in Buckleigh Road.
- 81 Margaret was a President of the BWL in 1948.
- 82 *Lewin News* (November 1978).
- 83 Deacons Minutes, 15 March 1977, p. 3. My father remembers McBain saying that “Lois was the best Elder Lewin never had”.
- 84 McBain was one of the charismatic movement’s leading figures, especially among Baptists.
- 85 *Baptist Times*, 25 May 1972, p. 3. Mentioned by (Randall 2005, pp. 397–98).
- 86 *Lewin News*, November 1974.
- 87 One former church member, whose family had been introduced to Christianity and to the church by Victor and then Lois, remembers how generous and caring Lois was. As a child, both she and her brother received great help and hospitality from Lois, after their mother died and their father wasn’t able to cope, Maxine Hooper in personal conversation Monday 25 March 2024.
- 88 *Lewin News* (December/January 1981/82).
- 89 The funeral was almost certainly led by Douglas McBain, who by then was Baptist General Superintendent of the Metropolitan Area.
- 90 The phrase “remembered sister” is a nod to the work of Karen Smith, in particular, her essay “Forgotten Sisters”.

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Article

“I Did Not Come to China for That!”: Intersections of Mission Work, Marriage, and Motherhood for Southern Baptist Women in China at the Turn of the 20th Century

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Abstract: The private writings of two Southern Baptist women missionaries in China are analyzed to deepen our understanding of women’s perspectives on their daily lives. After reviewing secondary research on married and single women’s work in China, the author uses primary source examples from family letters and diaries to illustrate differences in responsibilities and opportunities for single and married women, and how motherhood changed their relationship to their work even further. Requirements for “homemaking”, and a “civilizing mission” expected of married women, increased pressure on missionary wives. Single women, arriving in larger numbers in the early 20th century, were able to focus only on the mission work and accomplish more. The success and productivity of single women further marginalized married women, particularly those with children, who could not keep up with their single counterparts in the mission work. By exploring these two exemplars we can draw an even more nuanced picture of the many ways Baptist women missionaries negotiated their callings in light of their family status.

Keywords: Baptist women; China missions; missionary history; women’s history



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1. Introduction

When 28-year-old Annie Jenkins arrived in China in 1905 she took her place among a large army of missionaries sent from America to win China for Christianity. In this period of rapid growth, the Christian missionary force of Americans had doubled in number since 1890. It would double again by 1919, reaching 3300 workers (Hunter 1984). Annie’s appointment came from the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, which had 88 workers spread across four missions in North, South, Central, and Interior China. Seventeen of these workers, like Annie, were single women (SBC 1905, pp. 126–27).

Soon after arriving in China, Annie experienced an emotional crisis when her American suitor proposed marriage to her. Eugene Sallee had been serving with the SBC in China and patiently waiting for Annie’s arrival. The marriage proposal sparked an argument. “I don’t want to marry. I told him I did not come to China for that”, she confided to her diary (Sallee 29 December 1905).

Annie’s purpose, what she had indeed come for, was to work with Chinese women and girls and share the gospel, using her experience as a school teacher. As we will see, her diaries explain her fears that marriage would impede this work. Her perceptions of the work accomplished by single (as compared to married) missionary women were most likely shaped before she left the United States. She had easy access to information about life on the mission field from women’s reports published in Baptist newspapers and missionary magazines. In addition, the Baptist Missionary Training School she attended in Chicago offered practical wisdom and contact with missionary visitors and guest speakers, both married and single, who were home on furlough or retired. With these influences and models, Annie made a firm decision not to marry for the first five years on the field and tried to refuse Eugene’s numerous proposals. She confided in her diary that she did indeed

love Eugene; that was not the concern. The problem was, she believed, that a wife could not perform serious missionary work (Sallee 18 February and 17 June 1906).

Annie's resistance to marrying the man she loved raises interesting questions about how her perceptions of marriage and mission work evolved. What messages did aspiring missionaries receive about marriage? Was Annie correct in her perception that marriage would diminish her role? And what about Anna Pruitt's perceptions of her own household duties. Did she agree with others of her generation that managing a household was legitimate missionary work, even if younger single missionaries like Annie Jenkins, might not count domestic work as equivalent to other missionary duties?

To explore these questions, I will pause the narrative of the reluctant fiancé, Annie Jenkins, and provide some historical context on Southern Baptist women, marriage, and missionary life. Then, I will explore the experiences of two case studies: Southern Baptist missionary wife and mother, Anna Seward Pruitt; and Annie Jenkins Sallee. Anna Seward Pruitt arrived in China almost two decades earlier than Annie in 1887. She exemplified the typical married missionary mother raising her family in a mission compound and attempting to perform mission work in the margins. She was classified as an assistant missionary whose role was to provide an exemplary home life as a way of supporting her husband's mission work and as a model home for Chinese women. Any mission work she could manage was volunteer and supplemental to her primary duties at home.

Anna Pruitt would have been acquainted with Annie Jenkins through Southern Baptist mission meetings and conferences in China. Customs of seniority would dictate that Anna would have been a model and mentor for Annie's generation of young missionaries, perhaps leading to Annie's impressions that there was not enough time to be married and "be in the work myself" as Annie expressed it. While each woman participated in a variety of evangelistic activities with Chinese women and girls, they both found their most fulfilling work to be teaching and administering schools.

A close examination of private diaries and letters provides a more intimate and detailed look at how these two Southern Baptist women viewed marriage and parenthood vis-a-vis their missionary work. These records often stand in contrast to women's public writings for missionary magazines and annual reports. Women could confess their frustrations, anxieties, and struggles in private, while their publications remained positive and were focused on promoting support for the mission's cause. To place these two women in context, I will provide a brief historical overview of Southern Baptist missionary women, married and single.

2. Married and Unmarried Women Missionaries

The marital status of a missionary, male or female, greatly affected the work. In her fascinating book about missionary families of the London Missionary Society (LMS), historian Emily Manktelow traces the earliest British patterns of the late eighteenth century, based on a model of "integration". Single protestant men went from London to Africa or Asia planning to marry native converted women and raise bi-racial children within the mission. This early experiment did not turn out well because converts were few, cultural differences were complicated, and racial prejudices overpowered missionary zeal. To change course, the LMS sent four single white women in the first decade of the nineteenth century to join male missionaries and marry them. Thus began the British pattern, and the rationale, for sending white married couples abroad (Manktelow 2013).

American Protestant missionaries, including Southern Baptists, would follow this married missionary pattern as they entered China in the nineteenth century. The husband was appointed as the missionary and the wife sent to assist and take care of the family's household and children. If she had time and energy, she worked with Chinese women and shared the gospel. Dana Robert, along with other mission historians, notes that the missionary wife provided stability for the male missionary as well as an important model for potential converts:

By the 1830s, the Christian home had become a justification for sending women missionaries, as a gender-based mission strategy, and was recognized as essential to the survival of the missionary family itself. (Robert 2005, p. 328)

Southern Baptist missionary couples of the nineteenth century followed the usual pattern of a pre-embarkation wedding as outlined by Manktelow and Robert. Single male missionaries were rarely appointed by the Southern Baptist's Foreign Mission Board (FMB). In fact, when C.W. Pruitt was approved in 1881 to sail to China, the FMB sent him extra money for passage, just in case he could secure a wife before departure (King 1985, p. 133).

Baptists had been sending missionaries to China since 1836, and when the Southern Baptists broke away from Northern Baptists in 1845, they formed the Foreign Mission Board to regulate and support missionary activities. After the end of the American Civil War in 1865, the China mission grew rapidly and by 1898 was able to sustain four missionary units: South China, Central China, North China, and Interior China. By 1910 there were 200 missionaries on the field (Li 1999).

Despite this tremendous investment of effort and resources, missionaries of this period found the Chinese mostly indifferent to their preaching and conversions were few.

This prompted a trend toward expansion into social services that might lead to conversions. Three types of work were primary: medical, educational, and evangelism. Historian Paul Varg points out that this trend shifted the focus from individuals to society; from "rescuing the heathens from eternal damnation" to introducing "a spirit of regeneration", which could only be achieved as individuals become true believers of the gospel (Varg 1958, p. 71). This expansion of focus beyond the individual mirrored trends in the USA toward the Social Gospel and each denomination's response was complex. Southern Baptists at home generally did not come out strong on the side of the Social Gospel, but in their mission efforts in China, they did make the shift to social services as a part of their focus, introducing schools and hospitals.¹ Varg's discussion of this transition in the China missions strategy centers on official documents from the male-led missionary enterprise but women's writings add to the story. Helen Barrett Montgomery reports that in 1861 there was only one unmarried missionary anywhere on the field, but by 1909 there were 1948 unmarried American women on the mission field, in China and elsewhere (Montgomery 1910, p. 243). Dana Robert introduces an analysis of women's work, which included schools for both boys and girls. Methodist women in China during this same period operated two hundred and thirty primary schools, nineteen high schools, and one college for women and girls. Robert notes that after India, China was the second major venue for "Woman's Work for Woman", a nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century missions philosophy based on the belief that "non-Christian religions trapped and degraded women, yet all women in the world were sisters and should support each other" (Robert 1997, p. 133). Southern Baptist women, like our two exemplars, often brought pre-missionary teaching experience from the US and school administration was a good fit for their skills. They worked diligently to create high-quality schools leading to literacy of church members and social improvement for the children of China.

The arrival of single women changed the role and influence of married women missionaries, as they took a back seat to the professionally trained single missionaries able to work full-time without family responsibilities. Emily Manktelow calls this trend the "demise" of the married woman missionary (Manktelow 2014). The two exemplars for this article, Anna Pruitt and Annie Jenkins Sallee, arrived in China 18 years apart and straddled this period of change. Their personal writings provide a more intimate look into how this broader inclusion of single women in the China mission may have affected each of them personally. As we have seen in the opening vignette, Annie Jenkins clung to her status as a single woman missionary because she perceived that a married woman could be sidelined in the work. To understand Annie Jenkins's fears we begin by looking at the daily life of Anna Pruitt, one of the Southern Baptist women who would set the pattern for the missionary wife and mother almost two decades prior to Annie Jenkins's arrival.

3. Anna Seward Pruitt: Homemaker in the Civilizing Mission

Anna Seward Pruitt exemplified the typical mother on the mission field raising her family in a missionary compound in Huang-hsien, the Pruitt's assigned station in the Shandong region of North China. Anna birthed six children and three of them died. She juggled family and domestic responsibilities while still trying to perform mission work in a boys' school and sometimes visiting local Chinese women to share the gospel.

Anna was born in 1862 into the Seward family who were Congregational and Presbyterian homesteaders in Tallmadge, Ohio. She was intelligent, committed to her schoolwork, active in her church, and close to her family (King 1985, p. 52). After graduating from Lake Erie Female Seminary and teaching school locally for two years, she traveled to California to teach at the invitation of a cousin. She had been teaching school in Los Angeles for four years when she received an invitation in 1886 from the Presbyterian women's group in Philadelphia to be their missionary in China (King 1985, p. 56). Like other women missionaries, her thoughts about going overseas were contextualized by her marriage prospects. She writes, "When a mere child I used to think that if ever I were good enough and not within reach of an ideal husband, I would go as a missionary" (Seward 1938, p. 31). After initially declining the Presbyterian's invitation, she wrestled with continued thoughts of the possibility and in May of 1877, she wrote. "The answer to my prayer for guidance has come through a change in my own heart. I now *want* to go to China" (Seward 1938, p. 33). After a brief trip back to Ohio to say goodbye to her family, she sailed in September of 1887.

Anna was just beginning her new life in Chefoo as a member of the Presbyterian mission when she met Cicero Washington (C.W.) Pruitt, a young Southern Baptist widower hailing from Georgia. Five years earlier, C.W. had begun his service in North China by marrying Ida Tiffany, another Presbyterian missionary who died of typhoid two years into their marriage (King 1985, p. 68). C.W. was quick to propose to the twenty-five-year-old Anna and, although she was new to China and had not known him long, she said yes. (King 1985, pp. 65–66). Protestant missionary agencies agreed that when a woman married on the field, she would automatically convert to the husband's denomination and join his mission. After marrying outside the denomination, she was considered "lost" to the denomination that trained and commissioned her and paid her passage. Since Anna left the Presbyterians to marry only a few months after her arrival, the Presbyterians required the Southern Baptists to pay a fee to recover the funds they had invested in this "lost" missionary woman (King 1985, p. 68).

Anna's initial intent as a single woman would have been to learn the Chinese language for two years before working alongside others to make home visits and convert Chinese women; however, her vision for her life changed drastically when she became a wife. The stresses of motherhood came quickly when she gave birth to two children in short succession: Ida, named after her husband's first wife, and John, born 15 months later (King 1985, pp. 68–69). Meanwhile, the Pruitts moved to the district of Huang-hsien to open a new field of service. Consider the demands of Anna's first three years in China: she married, left her Presbyterian mission station, converted to Southern Baptist, moved again with her young family to establish another station, and became a mother to two young children. Four more pregnancies would follow.

The move to Huang-hsien brought a very specific change to Anna's responsibilities when the new mission acquired a magnificent compound of homes purchased from a prominent Chinese family. Anna proudly described her home in an 1891 letter:

We have one of the finest mansions in this village. It cost \$60,000 when it was built some sixty years ago. . . It consists of six separate houses, one behind another, separated by pretty courts, and all enclosed within the same high wall, one of the houses is used for a chapel. Those occupied as living-rooms have been furnished with board floors and glass windows, so were you in our parlor you would not be reminded that we were not in some American parsonage. . . . (Pruitt 1891)

4. The Missionary Homemaker

Anna's task would be to convert this Chinese building into an American-style home that would become a model of homemaking, hygiene, and childrearing. This important job was considered part of the missionary's contribution to winning China for Christ. While homemaking as a missionary strategy has been well-documented in the literature on missionary women of this period, historian Jane Hunter develops the argument particularly for the context in China (Hunter 1984).

Homemaking served the mission by creating a comfortable environment to support the missionary husband but was carried one step further when Chinese wives and mothers were invited into the home to learn from the example set by the American missionary wife. This practice of using women's homes as evangelistic tools developed in nineteenth-century missions and was codified in the twentieth century through missionary training brochures. One of the most popular set of instructions was "The Missionary Wife: Her Preparation, Place, and Program". The Committee of Missionary Preparation invited Mrs. Charles Kirkland Roys to write this very practical instruction from her own experience as a Presbyterian missionary wife from 1904 to 1920 (Roys 1923). Roys was stationed in the same area of Shandong and it is likely she and Anna would have been acquainted. The duties and responsibilities of the missionary wife Roys described were brought to life in Anna Pruitt's example.

Roys was clear that the primary role for married missionary women was to create a domestic oasis for their missionary husbands and children. If she had additional time, she should help her husband in his work and ease his burdens where possible. Roys suggested that if women did the bookkeeping for the household, wrote letters home to families and friends, and were willing to entertain their husbands' colleagues and students, these would all be worthy and supportive acts of a helpmate (Roys 1923, p. 12).

These activities would certainly keep any woman very busy, but Roys and the culture of missions expected more, missionary mothers should engage in volunteer work outside the home too:

The wife's activities are by no means limited to what can be done in the shelter of her home. . . For the missionary wife to have a definite and responsible connection with some form of organized missionary work outside the walls of her own home gives tone to her own Christian living and thinking, and should not be an undue tax on any normal woman. . . . As a responsible member of the mission, and not merely "her husband's wife" each one can and generally does assume some part of the responsibility for station work. (Roys 1923, p. 24)

Roys lists several possibilities for additional work, such as supervision of schools, evangelistic visitation, teaching English, or supervising industrial work with women. Each of these roles could be a full-time job in itself and such rigorous expectations cultivated a "superwoman" mentality, leading women like Anna Pruitt to overwork and exhaustion. Her letters home report many instances of illness and fatigue.²

Marjorie King, in her portrait of Anna Seward Pruitt, described the personal dilemma of missionary mothers attempting to carry out mission work, which brought the following:

. . . the constant juggling of family and missionary roles and the subordination of personal needs and desires to religious duties. . . If many missionary women fell short of the ideal by devoting most of their time and energy to their own families, many others, Anna among them, conscientiously tried to live up to the ideal of playing all of the familial and missionary roles well. (King 2006, p. 25)

Anna believed God expected more of her, something beyond domestic work. In a letter to her friend Hattie written in 1895, she expressed the burden of her calling to do more:

I suppose there are some good women in America who envy the missionary her ability to hire cheap servants and have all her kitchen work done for her. If only those poor deluded women could know what a relief it would be to me if I could

feel that all God expects of me was to tend to my own housework and care for my children. (Pruitt 1894–1895)

Anna's letters home indicate that she embraced the domestic role described by Roys but felt pressure to do "more" in line with what God (and perhaps others such as church supporters and her family) expected of her.

5. The Pruitt Children

Anna's letters home to her family and friends show her delight in her children and the missionary mother typically was responsible for their education. The eldest two, Ida and John, were followed by Ashley (b. 1892), Virginia (b. 1896)—who only lived two months—Robert (b. 1897), and Mac (b. 1902). She recounts in private letters to the grandparents details of their games, what they were learning, and how they fit into the daily life of a missionary family. For example, in 1895, when another missionary gave the Pruitt children hand-me-down dolls, Ida and John (aged seven and six) made a hammock out of an old pillowcase for the dolls to sleep in. Anna reports with pride her daughter's domestic skills: "Ida helped me to make underclothing and a dress for her brown haired Mary. She hemmed and gathered the skirt and sewed on seven buttons with praiseworthy patience" (Pruitt 1894–1895).

While managing a busy household and corresponding with her family and mission boards, Anna still attempted to perform at least some of the mission work she came to China to accomplish. From 1894, she added to her home responsibilities the management of a boys' school (King 1985, p. 177). With such a large compound at their disposal, the Pruitts used one of the houses as a dormitory and could house the Christian headmaster, Mr. Tsang, as well (Pruitt 1978). Anna's study of the Chinese language had been interrupted when she married CW, and her language skills were never as strong as her husband and children. As a missionary wife, Anna was not required to master the language but this handicap limited what she could teach at the school. She taught English and Math and hired Chinese teachers for other subjects.

The Pruitt compound included a church, which C.W. pastored. Chinese Christians dug a hole in the ground and filled it with water to serve as a baptistry for immersing new converts (Pruitt 1978, p. 36). To manage such a busy hub of activity, Anna relied on the help of a few Chinese servants, which was typical for missionary families. The Pruitts hired a Chinese family to live within the compound and serve. The Chinese mother was the "amah" who cared for the children, the father was the cook, and their son was the gatekeeper who ran errands and controlled traffic into and out of the compound (Pruitt 1978, pp. 69, 83).

Sundays were one of the busiest days for Anna, despite being designated a "Sabbath". She listed her activities in a letter home:

On Sunday I sing with the school boys for an hour and a half before church time, then after dinner is S.S. [Sunday School], and after that my exercise if I take any, also my time for teaching my own children their Bible lessons. After supper I have another hour with the school boys. Tonight we studied God's commands about Sabbath keeping. A Holy Sabbath is not easily conceived by either our adult Christians and our boys find it very hard not to play or romp. (Pruitt 1894–1895)

In 1897, the Pruitts suffered a terrible loss when their five-year-old son Ashley died of typhoid. Anna was depressed for months and could barely make it through a day of responsibilities. Her letters express a lack of motivation to perform the work, guilt over what she may have done differently during his illness, and anxiety about the health of her four remaining children (King 1985, pp. 208–9). Illness and death of children was a common fact of life for missionary mothers. The Pruitts would lose one more of their six children. John survived a serious childhood illness in China but then died of typhoid at age 20 when he and his older sister Ida were traveling in the United States (King 1985, pp. 26, 40). Death of loved ones was a facet of missionary life.

In addition to illness, missionary mothers like Anna experienced other threats to the family's safety. Violence was also a cause of death for missionaries, and Shandong, the province where the Pruitts lived, was the birthplace of the Boxer Uprising. This was a populist anti-Western movement brewing throughout the 1890s and culminating in the murder of 200 missionaries and about 30,000 Chinese Christian converts in the year 1900 (King 2006, pp. 31–32). At the first warnings for the missionaries to evacuate the area, the Pruitts refused to leave their station, but at the crisis point, Anna quickly prepared for the household to move to Chefoo, a safer port city. C.W. arranged for the two oldest children, who were away at boarding school, to be brought by mule-cart to meet the family. In a dramatic story of escape, C.W., pedaling as fast as he could on his bicycle, escaped a stone-throwing Boxer, and arrived safely to meet the family in Chefoo. Other children were not as fortunate as the Pruitts. Ida remembered her little classmates at the school for missionary children being called one by one out of the classroom to be told of their parents' deaths. Family life in China could be heartbreaking for parents and children alike (Pruitt 1978, pp. 31–32).

It is not hard to imagine that Anna Pruitt was overworked and exhausted trying to meet the demands of her life as a missionary wife. She juggled the work of maintaining an orderly American-like mission compound as a model for Chinese women while also taking on the full-time job of operating a boys' boarding school. Even with this overwhelming daily work, Southern Baptists classified Anna Pruitt as an assistant missionary and she earned no salary of her own.

For years to come, the Pruitts would serve as models for a younger generation of Southern Baptist missionaries arriving in China, including Annie Jenkins and her husband-to-be, Eugene Sallee. Perhaps Annie Jenkins's fear of not learning the language, or not having time for mission work could be traced to stories she knew about Anna Pruitt and other women who were single on arrival, married right away, and found it difficult to carry out the mission work they had envisioned for themselves while still fulfilling expectations for wives and mothers. As Manktelow (2014) argues, the demise of the missionary wife had begun with the arrival of single professionally trained women. Single women could draw a salary and carry the missionary title, status markers that would marginalize further the work of women like Anna Pruitt.

6. Reluctant Fiancé, Annie Jenkins, Becomes a Wife

As changes to mission strategies in China brought new possibilities, women like Annie Jenkins, appointed in 1905, found new opportunities among Southern Baptists. Single missionary Charlotte "Lottie" Moon had been one single missionary in the latter part of the nineteenth century who demonstrated what unmarried Southern Baptist women could accomplish. Moon began her service in 1873 but was different from the typical Southern Baptist missionary woman. She was independently wealthy, well-educated, and well-supported by Southern Baptists due to her success at winning Chinese converts. Yet most single women did not bring the wealth, connections, and leadership experience Moon had at her disposal. They would need training and preparation to follow in her footsteps.³

Jane Hunter describes the proliferation of single women missionaries in early twentieth-century China and outlines a few practical reasons for how single women were an asset to the China mission enterprise. First, without a husband or children to tend to, this high-energy missionary had more time, more freedom to travel, and could spend her time fully devoted to the mission's cause. Second, housing her was efficient. Rather than building or buying a family home for her, as would be provided for a male missionary, the single woman was placed within a missionary family or grouped together with other single women in "ladies houses". The single woman would have been a bargain for mission boards since she could be paid less than the male missionary who was obligated to support his family. Hunter also notes that without children, medical expenses for a single woman would be lower and, with no one waiting for her at home, she could be sent to remote areas for days at a time (Hunter 1984, p. 63).

With all of these advantages, the single woman still carried a few disadvantages in the eyes of mission boards. There would be a chance, as in the case of Anna Seward, that the single woman would marry into another mission and be lost to the Southern Baptists. In addition, women were not ordained in Southern Baptist life and therefore could not baptize new converts. In Southern Baptist culture, women were forbidden to preach. Finally, most single women of this era lacked the theological training male missionaries received in seminary. As a China missionary, Rev. E.Z. Simmons expressed it in 1900, “When they come to China, they readily learn the language but they do not know how to teach the Bible for they do not know it themselves” (Simmons and Mullins 1900).

Annie Jenkins was the kind of exceptional woman who embodied the advantages of a single woman candidate, and unlike the women in Rev. Simmons’s complaint, she had a thorough knowledge of the Bible and some theological training. She was born in 1877 as the third of nine children descended from an influential Southern Baptist family in Waco, Texas. Her father, Judge W.H. Jenkins, was a lay leader in Waco’s First Baptist Church while her mother played the organ and was involved in women’s organizations of the church. Annie also played the organ, visited the sick, and taught Sunday School (Sallee 1952; Hattox 1977, p. 34).

Annie fit the requirements for being a “professionally trained” missionary and her educational record far exceeded what was typical for Southern Baptist women. She graduated with honors from Baylor University in 1897 and became the first woman to receive a Master’s degree from Baylor in 1899. She was still uncertain whether she would go overseas, but in 1902, after a few years of teaching, she went to Chicago to study at the Baptist Women’s Missionary Training School among Northern Baptists, since there was no Southern Baptist training school for women at that time (Singleton 1968). Annie became more visible among Southern Baptist women when she described her Chicago experiences in an article published by *The Baptist Argus*. She extended a plea in her editorial for Southern Baptists to establish their own missionary training school for women (Jenkins 1904). The Southern Baptist’s Woman’s Missionary Union would do so in 1907 in Louisville, Kentucky, and women who followed Annie to China could take advantage of its program.

With two degrees from Baylor University, a missionary training school certificate, and an evident missionary zeal, Annie Jenkins became a prized asset among Texas Baptists. She joined the Baptist Young People’s Union (BYPU), an organization for faith formation of young men and women, and emerged as a leader wherever she was involved. At a BYPU meeting in 1903, when she was on break from the training school, she made her final decision to become a missionary. At the same meeting she met Eugene Sallee, the brother of her training school friend, Mamie Sallee (Hattox 1977).

When she returned from the training school in Chicago, Texas Baptists engaged Annie in fundraising for missions while she was applying to become a missionary to China. Annie was such an accomplished fundraiser that the Texas Baptists, represented by J.B. Gambrell, wrote to the Foreign Mission Board asking if it would delay her appointment until Spring so she could raise more money for Texas Baptist women before departing. Appealing to the financial need of the board, J.B. Gambrell argued the following:

I believe it would be worth thousands of dollars to missions and not a few missionaries for the foreign field. She gets a tremendous grip in people’s hearts and inspires them with holy zeal. . .Personally, I regret to lose this force just now. Miss Annie appeals mightily to the young people.⁴

Eugene was not Annie’s first suitor, in fact, her college diaries reveal that she had other courtships and opportunities to marry,⁵ and while she would allow men to accompany her to prayer meetings, she turned down any proposals of marriage. (Sallee Diary, 23 February 1897 and 3 January 1899). With Eugene, however, hers was not a final refusal, but a request for him to wait while she established herself as a contributing missionary and then in time she would consider marriage (Sallee Diary, 29 December 1905). Eugene was persistent and continued bringing up his proposal while Annie clearly stated in her diary why she was not ready to marry:

I had decided on so much work I was going to do. I feel a single woman can do so much more work than a married one with house-hold cares. I feel I could have more influence with the young unmarried. I never did feel called upon to keep house for a man. I want to be in the work myself. (Sallee, 31 December 1905)

Opposed to giving up her own mission work, Annie fought the expectations of the two most important men in her life: her father and her suitor. Even though Annie had experienced her own successes as a highly educated woman and a rising leader among Texas Baptist women, her father's voice was ever-present in her mind.

...it is hard for me to give up my plans and just be willing to live over here and not do anything of the actual work, but just help him to do it. I have planned such big things and had such high ambitions for myself as a single woman that I can't give them all up just now. I know what Papa says "a woman's highest possible attainment in this world is to be a wife, and mother", but oh! me I have seen another side. . .and I find when I think of merging my own self-identity and all, literally losing sight of self and all for him, it[s] hard. He said I might help to make something of him. I don't know how it will all end. I hate to let him know I feel as I do, but I have nobody to talk to and so I tell him. (Sallee, 6 January 1906)

Annie's words reflect the fear of what she would have to sacrifice as her own missionary identity faded away and she became an assistant to her husband's work. Although Eugene and Annie had been writing letters since Eugene sailed to China two years earlier, Annie believed they had an understanding that she would take time to perform her missionary work a few years (she suggested five years) as a single woman before considering marriage.

Eugene Sallee would not take no for an answer and continued bringing up the proposal each time they visited each other. In spite of her reluctance, unexpected circumstances caused Annie to change her mind and marry within a few months of his first proposal. When Eugene became seriously ill with dysentery the doctor ordered him to travel to Japan and spend some months in recovery. He did not want to leave without Annie, and she agreed to marry him and assist with his recovery. The couple married in Shanghai on 18 September 1906 and sailed for Japan where she continued language study at home while Eugene recovered (Hattox 1977, p. 42).

7. Change of Heart

Within six months of the wedding, Annie's diaries indicate she was enjoying married life and growing accustomed to her new role as a wife. The couple returned to Chengchow where Annie taught in a mission school. On their six-month anniversary, she declared. "I am very thankful I am married and that God has given me a husband who loves me so tenderly as Mr. S. loves me" (Sallee 18 March 1906). Reflecting on her first few months of marriage, she admitted that marriage may in some ways be helpful to her work and she perceived that Eugene supported her efforts to start a boarding school. She wrestled with how to combine God's calling, the work she loves (teaching), her efforts to start a school, and her love for Eugene.

I can't think that being married must keep me from the work I love best of all on earth! I think more cares are taken from me in many respects and I am the more able to serve. . .I believe I love Mr. Sallee as well almost as it is possible to love any one, yet I find a growing longing to be more and more like Christ and more fully to give myself to His service and I'm sure Mr. S. is glad for everything I can do and wants me to give myself as far as my strength allows. I just believe there will be a way for a boarding school here. If I'm not the one, oh! God show me what the better work is that thou hast in store for me and help me to wait on thee. (Sallee 28 November 1906)

Would marriage lead to motherhood? In an era without modern birth control, it was likely. As a new bride, Annie worried about getting pregnant too soon, perceiving that the

timing of conception would be up to God. She nearly panicked when she thought she might be pregnant within the first year of marriage, writing “I want to get the language first and get the school started, oh, if the Lord will just let me!!” (Sallee 17 October 1906). Annie had witnessed the experiences of an earlier generation of Southern Baptist missionary wives and she understood that having children would further diminish her time for mission work.

In 1908, Annie and Eugene Sallee moved from Chengchow to Kaifeng, capital city of the Honan province. They were the first SBC missionaries to open this area for the Southern Baptist Interior China Mission. Here the couple would settle in and conduct their mission work together for over two decades. Eugene opened a boarding school for boys, which grew into a junior college to train ministers, Kaifeng Baptist College (Ray 1924, p. 11). Annie was finally able to open her own school for girls, which she had been longing to do. In spite of her fears that marriage would keep her from meaningful work, she ran an ambitious educational program and settled into life as a missionary.

Annie’s prediction that her work would be limited by marriage proved to be only partially correct. Unlike Anna Pruitt and most other missionary wives, Annie never bore any children. As a wife, but not a mother, Annie Jenkins found more time and opportunity than most missionary wives to invest in her work. She still had to endure the insult of the label of “missionary assistant”, although the records listed the single woman working under her supervision with a more prestigious title of “Teacher, Evangelist” (Lackey 1921, p. 85).

8. The Mission Work Develops

Annie Jenkins’s school work developed at a time of transition in the China mission practices, when schools and colleges became a focus of missionary energy. When Annie arrived in 1905, China already had a well-established network of mission schools serving girls and young women. Initial education typically took place at local village primary schools, and from there, students would progress to “middle” or boarding schools located at the mission stations (Hunter 1984, p. 16). Graduates of middle schools could go further and proceed to women’s colleges. The curriculum at the mission schools often included the Confucian “three character classic”, parts of the Bible, catechism, arithmetic, and geography (Graham 1995). Some of the students took courses in music, astronomy, physics, chemistry, and other sciences. As part of the missionary goals of cultivating a Christian home, girls were trained in cooking and dressmaking (Burton 1911).

When she first attempted to open her new school, recruitment started slowly. Annie hired a Chinese Bible woman, Mrs. Chen, to serve as a liaison to the community and vouch for the new mission school. The two women worked to increase enrollment and by 1911 the school had 18 boarding students (Sallee 18 May 1911). Annie also started a day school for younger girls within the mission compound to serve as a feeder for the boarding school. When she sent letters and stories home to Texas asking missionary groups to financially sponsor the new school, her many contacts in Texas provided the financial support she needed to build a new building. The women asked for the school to be named the Annie Jenkins Sallee Girls School (SBC 1914, p. 226).

In 1911, the Sallees went back to the USA for furlough and left other missionaries in charge of their school and church work. While they were away, the Revolution of 1911 broke out in China and they came back to find their schools empty and they had to move to a new home, two miles away. It took several months to re-open the schools, but Southern Baptists sent a helper, Loy Savage, a single woman who was completing her language study. Loy lived in residence at the boarding school and helped teach classes. In spite of setbacks from the Revolution, Annie’s two schools were thriving again by 1914 (SBC 1914, p. 226).

Perhaps Annie was surprised when, as a married woman, she was able to perform her mission work successfully and experience the joy of service. She declared publicly in her report to the SBC that 1914 was the “happiest year’s work of my life in China”, as the 23 girls in her school helped her to see “in a larger way than ever before the hopes of seven long years being realized” (SBC 1914, p. 226).

Later that year, Annie launched a new and innovative work in Kaifeng: an industrial school for middle-aged and older women. Here, the focus was on practical skills rather than book learning. The women were taught sewing, embroidery, and other crafts. They were paid a salary of USD 0.12 per day to attend and produce goods, thereby earning their own money. The women, mostly illiterate, were required to attend a one-hour Bible study each day where they memorized verses (SBC 1915, p. 192). Similar to the micro-business techniques of today's global co-ops, Annie sold baby garments, napkins, linens, and other handmade goods that students had made to buyers in the US and China (Singleton 1968). This allowed her school to become self-supporting without dependence on funds from the Foreign Mission Board.

Annie Jenkins Sallee continued to serve in China, even after Eugene's death in 1931, which occurred when the couple was home on furlough. Returning to China as a widow, Annie finally received her own salary and missionary title, which she had given up when she married. She enjoyed a decade of freedom to devote herself solely to the mission cause. This last ten years in China she lived out the single life in Kaifeng that she had imagined when she first appeared in China 25 years earlier.

In 1941, at the time of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Annie and her cousin, Josephine Ward, were arrested in Kaifeng and imprisoned for 8 months by Japanese soldiers. After her release, she retired to the USA in 1942 where she wrote books about China missions and raised money for student scholarships. Annie Jenkins Sallee lived to be 90 years old and was buried in 1967 in her hometown of Waco, Texas (Singleton 1968).

9. Conclusions: Marriage, Motherhood, and Personal Negotiations of Missionary Women

The personal writings of Anna Seward Pruitt and Annie Jenkins Sallee provide insight into the ways individual women experienced changing trends in the marital status of women missionaries. Both women responded to their own personal callings to share the gospel message in China, outside the callings of their husbands. Both women aimed to bring their gifts and experiences as school teachers to Chinese children. Both arrived in China as single women and married within their first year of service.

Anna Seward Pruitt, in the final decades of the nineteenth century, followed the typical model of missionary marriage and motherhood. She did her best to negotiate the roles of wife and mother and at the same time maintain at least some of the work she had planned. As we have seen, she found ways to integrate work and home life by housing her school within the family's mission compound and by inviting her daughter to serve as an assistant teacher to the Chinese children. She also made contributions from her desk at home, writing prolifically for the Baptist women's presses. Anna experienced seasons of grieving for the deaths of three children along with exhaustion, illness, and depression. Despite the trials recorded in her diary, her public writings in missionary magazines, newspapers, and books express her zeal for winning converts, her love for her school children, and her dedication to the mission cause.

Annie Jenkins Sallee exemplified the well-prepared professional missionary, arriving single and with a graduate degree from a premier Baptist university, two years of further education in a missionary training school, and experience in teaching and fundraising. She came to China with great enthusiasm to use her stellar education and many skills and was met by an impatient suitor, eager to marry her. She initially planned not to marry for five years so that she could have time to first establish herself in the work. "I have planned such big things and had such high ambitions for myself as a single woman that I can't give them all up just now", she declared (Sallee 6 January 1906). She finally gave in to her impatient and persistent fiancé and married within her first year. As we have seen, her fears that she would not be able to perform her own mission work decreased as she proved to herself and others that she could accomplish much of what she planned. She never became a mother, and we do not know if this fact pleased or troubled her. Compared to mothers on the mission field, however, Annie had more time to devote to mission work. By 1914, as

she was about to launch a new and innovative project of an industrial school, she wrote about her successes in the SBC Annual's public record and declared this, her eighth year in China, her happiest year. Her long years of service and her return to China after Eugene's death are evidence that she found a fulfilling life of service, in spite of her initial worries about married life.

As scholars Manktelow, Robert, and Hunter explain, the model of the white missionary couple became normative for nineteenth-century missions in China and elsewhere. As more single women were sent overseas, new models emerged in the form of a professionally trained single woman who could focus exclusively on mission work without the responsibilities and demands of home life (Manktelow 2014; Robert 1997). With the proliferation of single women missionaries, women like Annie Jenkins had new opportunities for teaching, nursing, and other kinds of work for women. In Annie's case, she resisted marriage for fear that marriage (and the children that might result) would limit her ability to make her own contribution. She did not want to work in her husband's shadow and, as she put it, "give up my plans and just be willing to live over here and not do anything of the actual work, but just help him to do it" (Sallee 6 January 1906). Advice for married missionary women—passed down informally but also published by authors like Mrs. Roys—clarified the high expectations. The primary expectation for a married missionary woman was to create a domestic oasis for her husband and children. If a woman had time left over, she should help her husband in his work, or perhaps volunteer in mission work herself (Roys 1923). Southern Baptists' use of the title "assistant missionary" assigned to women like our two exemplars underscored that expectation.

The private writings of these two missionaries deepen our understanding of women's perspectives on their daily lives as they managed their family responsibilities with their own mission work. Private writings of never-married, divorced (rare), and widowed women missionaries could provide more models to consider in further research. As scholars are able to uncover more letters and diaries through family bequests and digitization of materials, we will be able to draw an even more nuanced picture of the many ways women missionaries negotiated their callings in light of their family status.

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Notes

- ¹ Carol Holcomb crafts a solid argument for SB's Woman's Missionary Union's embrace of Social Gospel tenets in support of their mission cause in her book *Home Without Walls: Southern Baptist Women and Social Reform in the Progressive Era* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2020).
- ² See for example, Anna Seward Pruitt, "To Mother", 1 April 1895, and "To My Dear Brother and Sister", 24 October 1895, in "Outgoing letters from Anna Seward Pruitt to family and friends (handwritten copies in bound journals): August 1894–November 1895", *Papers of Ida Pruitt, 1850s–1992*, MC 465, 39v. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
- ³ While many biographies of Moon have been written, two of the most comprehensive analyses are Sullivan, Regina D. *Lottie Moon: A Southern Baptist Missionary to China in History and Legend*. Baton Rouge, [La: Louisiana State University Press, 2011], and Hyatt, Irwin T. *Our Ordered Lives Confess: Three Nineteenth-Century American Missionaries in East Shantung*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- ⁴ J.B. Gambrell to R.J. Willingham, 27 July 1905, in Annie Jenkins Sallee file, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, TN. It is not clear whether Annie knew about or consented to this request from Gambrell. His final sentence is, "I write for myself and the work in Texas, not for Miss Annie." If indeed she did not know or consent to Gambrell writing this letter, his actions would have mirrored Eugene's action of asking her family's permission to marry her before asking for her consent.
- ⁵ See, for example, Sallee diary entries on 23 February 1897 and 3 January 1899, *Annie Jenkins Sallee Papers*.

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Article

More than Daughters: Women's Experiences at Southern Baptist Colleges during the Progressive Era

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Abstract: This article examines students' experiences at Southern Baptist colleges that educated women during the Progressive era (1880–1920). Denominational leaders and school faculty attempted to recreate Christian home life on college campuses by tightly restricting students' freedoms and behavior. This article examines female college students' publications to better understand their views on family and home life on the college campus. Their writings indicate that students did believe that the college was like a family. However, students reinterpreted the meaning of home life and family on the college campus by reimagining the use of residential space, developing alternative hierarchical and intimate relationships on campus, and exercising more autonomy over their religious rituals.

Keywords: Southern Baptist; colleges; women's education; Christian home; Progressive era

1. Introduction

In 1910, Pearl Todd sensed that she was “standing on the threshold”. Even though her first week at Bessie Tift College had been filled with excitement, she sensed that something was missing. Leaving her parents' home had created, in her words, “a void in my heart”, which “nothing has yet filled”. She was plagued by a “lonely longing for the tender ties of home”. “Here there are so many interests,” Todd wrote, “can there be a deep undercurrent of love and sympathy, a common tie binding the lives together?” Her homesickness finally abated when she attended her first Twilight prayer meeting on campus. She later wrote that it was within that sacred meeting that she finally felt at home. Gathering for prayer, she and her classmates might be transformed into “one large family, a family bound together with sisterly love. . .” (Todd 1910, p. 81).

Scholars who have examined college women's experiences during the Progressive era have recognized the significance of residential life, the explosion of student activities on campus, and the tight restrictions that colleges imposed. (Kett 1977; Horowitz 1984; Solomon 1985; Gordon 1990; McCandless 1999; Walker 2023). This article looks at those realities alongside the competing definitions of home life and family on the college campus. Denominational leaders frequently portrayed Southern Baptist colleges that educated women¹ as extensions of the home, but they typically viewed the composition and function of the college home differently than did students like Pearl Todd. School administrators believed that a college could be an extension of the home if it provided order, emphasized religious devotion, and kept students in a state of quasi-childhood. Student publications such as yearbooks, literary magazines, and newspapers provide windows into the college experiences in often candid, and surprisingly defiant, ways. Their writings indicate that students reinterpreted the meaning of home life and family on the college campus by reimagining the use of residential space, developing alternative hierarchical and intimate relationships on campus, and exercising more autonomy over their religious rituals. Students largely wrote for their fellow classmates, which means that their writings are filled with inside jokes, archaic slang, and passing references to people and customs that can be difficult for modern readers to discern. While these sources can be challenging, historian Gabrielle Walker explains that using such student publications allows us to “listen in, however muffled the voices”. (Walker 2023, p. 21).



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2. Training Young Men for Ministry and Women for the Home

Baptists in the South founded colleges for men even before the Southern Baptist Convention was created. As Baptists moved west, they founded colleges and academies to train ministers. These early academies offered “a basic education in the ancient languages, English grammar, and mathematics”. (Mathews 1977, p. 87). Later, Baptists in the South founded a number of colleges, including Georgetown College (1829), Mercer College (1837), and Howard College (1841) (Mathews 1977). Over a decade after the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention, Southern Baptists founded their first theological seminary, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in 1859.

While Southern Baptists did not train women to be pastors, they viewed their education as a significant denominational responsibility. Much of the impetus for educating women was grounded in the notion that women, being the primary educators of children, played critical roles in the progress of society (Schweiger 2000). The Great Revival of the early nineteenth century awakened evangelicals to the importance of educating women so that mothers could more effectively steer their children toward Christianity (Solomon 1985). Although the women’s educational movement grew more slowly in the South, evangelicals did establish some early women’s academies (sometimes called female seminaries). The Judson Female Institute, named for Baptist missionary Anne Hasseltine Judson, was founded in Marion, Alabama, in 1838. Virginia Baptists opened the Richmond Female Institute in 1854. Baptists did not establish such schools with the intent of challenging traditional roles for women but rather with motherhood and child-rearing in mind. Evangelicals believed women should be educated “to create respectable, informed, sensible, and intelligent preceptors to shape the next generation of Evangelicals”. (Mathews 1977, p. 120). By offering a separate and distinct academic experience for women, Southern Baptists expanded the role of the Baptist college from one solely devoted to training pastors to one that encompassed instruction they deemed appropriate for women as well.

3. Southern Baptist Women’s Education in the Modern World

Economic and social trends contributed to a dramatic rise in the enrollment of women in college after the Civil War through the first two decades of the 20th century. The expansion of public education, the entrance of more women into the workforce after the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the establishment of new colleges opened doors for more women (Solomon 1985).² Scholars typically refer to women educated between 1860 and 1890 as the “first generation” of four-year college-educated women, with Progressive-era students constituting a “second generation” of college-educated women. These simplistic categories are complicated by regional differences, however, as many Southern women did not have the opportunity to attend four-year colleges until the 1890s, making Progressive-era women the first generation for the South (Gordon 1990). Still, Southern Baptist colleges carried many notable traits of more established “second generation” schools in the North and West, particularly the “flowering of student activities” that were characteristic of this era (Gordon 1990, p. 33).

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Southern Baptist colleges themselves were in transition. As enrollments grew, Southern Baptist schools expanded their course offerings and their campuses.³ Some seminaries and institutes, such as the Judson Female Institute, became four-year colleges for the first time. Monroe College in Forsyth, Georgia, was renamed Bessie Tift College in 1907, and in 1909, the Baptist University for Women in Raleigh was renamed Meredith College. Across the South, institutions that had struggled to maintain high academic standards equal to northeastern colleges began to raise their expectations and expand their course offerings.⁴ (McCandless 1999; Gordon 1990). In addition, several institutions that had traditionally only educated men, such as Georgetown College and Howard College, became coeducational.⁵ With the creation of the Woman’s Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1888, college women could be more effectively recruited to raise funds for missions and were given new opportunities to learn about social reform. Additionally, when the Woman’s Missionary

Union Training School was founded in 1905, college women now had the option of training for missions after college.⁶ (Scales 2000).

In spite of these changes, some antebellum trends remained. For one thing, coeducation was accepted much more slowly in the South, and coeducational Southern Baptist schools like Georgetown and Howard were not yet the norm (Solomon 1985). Even in the twentieth century, Southern women's colleges often looked to the past to inform their policies and standards. Historian Amy Thompson McCandless argues that women's colleges in the South retained the plantation ideal of training students to be "the lady on the pedestal". (McCandless 1999, p. 12). This lady "was to be dependent on men," not economically self-sufficient (McCandless 1999, p. 12). In spite of the expansion of girls' public education and women's work outside of the home in the late 19th century, supporters of women's education "emphasized its applicability to Christian home life" over women's economic independence or intellectual achievements (Gordon 1990, p. 19). Parents therefore valued schools that promised to be "a place to shelter young women until they came of age for marriage, not a place to encourage intellectual development". (McCandless 1999, p. 34). College, then, was a place to protect young women so that they could eventually assume their spousal and motherly roles, but more immediately, they attempted to keep female students "in a state of perpetual adolescence". (McCandless 1999, p. 157).

This complemented the belief that a college education should not dissuade a young woman from marrying. Southern Baptist writer Abbie Benton Bonsteel wrote about this notion in her 1925 novel *Hidden Pearls*. In her book, a young girl named Marcia looks forward to one day being a wife, "the first and highest position that God gave to woman". Her college years play a crucial role in preparing her to be both a Christian wife and mother. Bonsteel believed that girls must use their minds in order to prepare for marriage and motherhood. "The mind must be trained to study, to think deep thoughts, to see and feel beauty, and to embrace the world of arts, science and literature in her realm of learning," Bonsteel explained (Bonsteel 1925, p. 8).

Therefore, in order to prepare young women for motherhood, colleges needed to be as close to a Christian home as possible. Denominational leaders assured parents that they could send their daughters to Baptist colleges with peace of mind. The Baptist campus would be an idyllic place where young women were trained in the faith by parental figures. Colleges that educated women therefore retained many elements of antebellum seminaries. In such institutions, women's lives were defined by insularity and regimentation. Mary Lyon's Mount Holyoke was considered the model female seminary and became a blueprint for other women's colleges (Horowitz 1984). Mary Lyon founded Mount Holyoke on the principle that the seminary ought to train women for the home by educating them in a home-like environment. Lyon required all students to live under one roof, instituted mandatory prayer and meditation, and hired residential female faculty who were instructed to serve as their students' confidants and mentors. In this way, faculty were expected to serve as their students' temporary mothers while they were at school.⁷ (Horowitz 1984). Southern Baptist colleges retained some of Lyon's emphases, particularly mandatory church attendance and prayer in the dormitory. Most Southern Baptist schools also required all boarding students to live together in a single building and to follow highly restrictive schedules with little free time. While some of these practices were based on antebellum customs, historian Joseph Kett argues that Progressive era colleges tended to be even more regimented and structured than earlier generations and that students were kept more dependent on adults than earlier college students (Kett 1977). This was a consequence of Progressive era psychological research that resulted in "the massive reclassification of young people as adolescents" who were seen not so much as dangerous as "vulnerable, passive, and awkward". Experts of this generation largely believed that young people needed much active guidance from adults and authority figures. Youth activities in churches and schools were increasingly planned by adults, resulting in what Kett calls "the artful manipulation of [adolescents'] environment" (Kett 1977, p. 6). Once they began college, students' ability to move about

and interact with the world outside their dormitory, including their own families, was noticeably limited.

4. The Idea of the Southern Baptist College Home

Pastors' and lay people's writings offered glowing descriptions of Southern Baptist schools' home-like atmospheres, and they tended to emphasize these qualities over the schools' academics. The women's dormitory at Georgetown College was called "the most beautiful and commodious boarding hall in all the South". (General Association of Baptists in Kentucky 1896, p. 26). A pastor from Missouri called Bethel Women's College in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, "a marvel," and an institution that was "beautiful... homelike, delightful". (Givens 1922, p. 12). Shorter college in Rome, Georgia, was described as "a comfortable College Home," (Shorter Female College 1890, p. 376) and the Judson Institute was called "a beautiful, refined, Christian happy home". (Alabama Baptist Convention 1880, p. 16). Promoters also assured parents that the colleges' surrounding communities were likewise safe and posed no danger to their children. The Georgetown College catalog noted that in town "the moral conditions are safe" and "there is freedom from the temptations and distractions of a large city". (Georgetown College 1914, p. 8). A Tennessee College for Women bulletin explained that Murfreesboro, Tennessee, was a traditional community that embodied "the gentility of the Old South". The bulletin also touted the positive influence its students received simply from living in close proximity to the grand homes that graced the town. The writer of the bulletin exclaimed, "What home ideals are established by such contact!" The bulletin even featured photographs of stately homes near campus (Tennessee College for Women 1910, pp. 22, 31).

While writers were in awe of the beauty of their denomination's colleges and surrounding communities, conditions inside the dormitories had a far greater impact on the students. The notion that female students ought to be governed by parental figures permeated all sorts of writings about college women. A Tennessee College for Women bulletin stated that the school's governance "is such as would be approved in a Christian home of the highest ideals". (Tennessee College for Women 1910, p. 32). Georgetown College promised that its female students would be governed in a "kind and parental" manner, with each student "being regarded and treated as a member of the family". (Georgetown College 1892, p. 38). Implying that the campus was an extension of the president's own home, Tennessee College for Women promoters assured parents that the president and his family resided on campus. The bulletin also boasted that female faculty boarded alongside students, living in the same halls as the young women they taught in the classroom (Tennessee College for Women 1910). Similarly, the Judson Institute proudly stated that upon entering the school, "[The students] become members of the President's family". (Judson Female Institute 1890, p. 41). The president of Bessie Tift demonstrated his paternalism in a quite visible way by saying a blessing over the students' breakfast in the dining hall every morning (A Day in a 'Non's' Life 1912). While speaking at commencement "in his fatherly way," the president of Shorter College referred to the graduating students as his daughters (An Inspiring Scene 1896, p. 20).

In imitation of antebellum seminaries, most schools utilized a residential system in which all boarding students lived under a single roof alongside faculty or other women. In a striking example of the attempt to keep students in a state of adolescence, women studying at the Judson Institute were still subjected to supervision by a governess in the 1890s. Later, the title of "governess" was changed to "Lady Principal". (Judson Female Institute 1894; Manly 1913, p. 116). Practices like this were a noticeable departure from the way in which male students were governed. Coeducational Georgetown College's publications omitted all mention of the need to govern men in a "parental" manner, and likewise refrained from describing male students as members of a larger college family. In addition, while all women not living with their parents were required to live in the dormitory, the school did not prohibit non-residential men from boarding off campus (Georgetown College 1905). In fact, female Georgetown students as a group were so closely associated with their residence

hall that they were often simply called “Rucker Hall Girls” in student publications. On the other hand, men as a group were never known by their place of residence.

Southern Baptist leaders found campus prayer and worship to be another necessary way to create a Christian home-like atmosphere on campus. Progressive-era writers and pastors preached extensively about the importance of family worship (Lile 2012). The family altar was used in household worship and was considered by Southern Baptists to be the proper spiritual center of family life. Without an altar, the home was merely “built on shifting sand”. (*The Sheet-Anchor of the Home* 1917, p. 6). It is difficult to reconstruct what Southern Baptist family altars looked like. Some nineteenth-century households contained a lectern for Bible reading (McDannell 1994). For some families, a lectern may have comprised their family altar, but Colleen McDannell’s research suggests that for many families, the altar was invisible and entirely symbolic. All that was needed was for the family to be together, attentive to the reading of God’s word (McDannell 1994).

School administrators consciously attempted to replicate the “family altar” on campus. The Judson Institute boasted that students and faculty not only shared meals together but “[worshipped] at the same altar”. (*Judson College, Marion, in Sixty-Eighth Year* 1905, p. 4). Faculty members and dormitory matrons were expected to be involved in students’ religious lives by leading devotions and giving talks on faith and Christianity. Faculty members at Bessie Tift conducted Sunday school for students (McMichael 1921). Schools also typically required attendance at daily Chapel services, and Sundays might be filled with several activities, including mandatory silent meditation. Since “[t]he Southern lady was noted for her piety,” these required gatherings were used to prepare the students for their future roles as mothers gathering children around the family altar (McCandless 1999, p. 56). While molding devout women may have been one of the goals, these religious observances signified yet another important way in which students were sometimes kept in a state of quasi-childhood and dependence. At Judson, for example, not only were students required to attend church, they were required to attend the church of their parents’ choosing, having no say in where they worshiped (*Judson Female Institute* 1901). Judson students were also confined to their rooms during silent meditation while the Lady Principal patrolled the halls to make sure students did not leave. Even outside of the classroom, students’ activities and ideas were influenced by administrators and faculty.

Students, however, frequently found such rituals to be burdensome. Judson student Fannie McEntire complained in a parody of the Ten Commandments, “thou shalt be marched to Sunday school, church, mission class, and prayer meeting”. (McEntire 1909, p. 33). Judson student Lillian Bell bemoaned the fact that her dorm room became a “gloomy cell” during the two hours in which she was confined for silent meditation (Bell 1901, p. 37). Sundays were not the only times when students felt extremely restricted, though. Much of the typical day was governed by bells, lights, and other obtrusive sounds and signals that announced the changing activities of the day.⁸ One Shorter College student complained that students had to grudgingly obey the bells “Every day until next June”. (*Shorter Bells* 1900, p. 134). From mandatory daily walks to prohibitions against talking in the halls, students had little choice over how they used their time (*Tennessee College for Women* 1910). Judson student Ruth Sims cautioned that an urge to talk, “sing, whistle, and run” in the hallways would land a student in study hall (Sims 1913, p. 188). A Tennessee College for Women student expressed her frustrations over such restrictive rules in a poem aptly titled “Don’t”.

Dear little girl in Tennessee,
If among the favored you would be,
Please observe the rules below
And your love of regulations show.
When rising bell rings,
Don’t stay in bed;
But put on your middy

And comb your head;
 [...]

Don't study in chapel,
 Lest you should be
 The cause of a burst of severity,
 Don't run in the hall,
 Don't scream and yell;
 Don't make candy after light bell [...] (Don't 1915, p. 122)

"Don't" hinted at their attempts to exert more autonomy by attempting to stay up past the lights-out bell. Notably, the author also singled out Chapel, suggesting that many students believed that it ought to be a time and place to get extra studying in if they needed it. Some students gave up trying to follow every rule, though. A self-described "Ne'er-Do-Well" argued that "Better late than hurry" was the way of wisdom. (The Proverbs of a Ne'er-Do-Well 1912, p. 119).

In addition to the complaints somewhat playfully presented in these poems and stories, students also resented having few opportunities to leave campus. Southern Baptist schools sometimes isolated their campuses by putting up a barrier, such as a tall hedge or a fence (Walker 2023). One Judson student, fully aware of the purpose of the hedge, commented that the man who allegedly damaged part of the hedge ought to be celebrated along with the school's great financial donors (Carter 1909). Colleges not only restricted female students' movements but also limited their communication with the outside world. For example, Shorter College prohibited students from receiving packages from home without permission from an administrator (Shorter College 1909). A Tennessee College for Women student may not have been exaggerating when she complained about having to seek permission before writing a letter to her own mother (How to Keep Your Privileges 1912). Parents of Judson students had to receive permission from the college before their daughters could go home for a visit (Judson College 1910, p. 44).

All of this amounted not only to an extremely regulated life but to a highly insulated life.⁹ (Kett 1977). Although students expressed disdain for their relative isolation, their insularity proved to be helpful in creating a strong student culture (McCandless 1999). Students often embraced the idea, so frequently extolled by denominational leaders, that the college was indeed a family, but their concept was based less on their relationships with faculty and dormitory matrons than it was on their relationships with their fellow students. Student writings furthermore provide no single understanding of the college student "family". At times, they described all of their classmates as "daughters" of the "mother" college. Students almost universally embraced this identity because of the dignity it conferred upon them. Even so, they rarely thought of faculty and staff as parental figures; instead, they thought of the institution itself as their mother. For example, one student celebrated Judson in verse as "Mother Judson". (When I was a Judson Girl 1903, p. 45). At other times, though, their notions of family centered fully on their relationships with specific classes or with specific students. Sometimes, older students saw themselves as "mothers" to younger classmates; at other times, they wrote about fellow students as their siblings. Other students described certain classmates as being more like their spouses or lovers than their siblings. Some students pushed back against efforts to achieve campus unity and a sense of family by choosing to pursue intense, and often short-lived, crushes on other students.

5. Children, Siblings, and Mothers

Older students clearly had mixed motives when they referred to freshmen as "children". Sophomores particularly enjoyed demeaning and humiliating new students with this term.¹⁰ Freshmen frequently complained about sophomores' pranks and their mistreatment of them. "We are not wholly ignorant of the jeers aimed at us by the members

of the higher classes,” asserted Tift freshman Ruth Parker in 1907 (Parker 1907, p. 38). One of the not-so-subtle “jeers” Parker and her classmates endured was having to publish their class news in the college journal on the so-called “Children’s Page”. The harassment from Shorter sophomores inspired a student to refer to the sophomores not as sisters, but as “Brother Sophs”. (Freshman Feast! 1918, p. 30). For many freshmen, then, the first few months away at college were full of teasing akin to what they might receive from an irritating sibling. While calling freshmen “children” seemed to justify the “jeers” thrown their way, the designation served a more complicated purpose as well. After all, such jeering, hazing, and harassment were all parts of freshmen’s initiation into the college family. While they were still “children,” this was a phase they had to endure on their way to becoming mature members of the family.

Labeling certain students as “children” did not entirely denote immaturity and humiliation, either. At times, this designation also signaled older students’ affection for their younger classmates. While sophomores hazed and harassed the freshmen, juniors and occasionally seniors treated the freshmen differently. These older students typically described freshmen as children who needed love, attention, and guidance from older students. It was common at many schools for the junior class to “adopt” the freshmen, thereby beginning the process of gradually mothering and initiating them into the college family.¹¹ (Horowitz 1984; McCandless 1999; Walker 2023). As the two classes were promoted the next year, they remained bonded and cooperated in planning events and other ventures.

Freshman loneliness could be overwhelming, and these early demonstrations of affection from older students were critical to helping them overcome their homesickness. Judson student Annie Pugh described the coldness with which she was greeted by a nameless female employee whom she called “a majestic lady in black”. She was left feeling like “an exile from home” until “some angel in the disguise of a gracious, sweet girl” befriended her (Pugh 1903, p. 129). Judson student Mary Lee Thomas similarly described the comfort she felt in finding an older girl, most likely a junior, who displayed motherly affection for her upon her arrival at school. Thomas was initially saddened as she watched returning students embrace and kiss. Witnessing such emotional and physical intimacy among the other students made her feel homesick until “a kind-hearted older girl comes up and asks if she can be of any service”. (Thomas 1909, p. 64).

Freshmen themselves embraced their status as “children” when expressing gratitude for an older classmate’s attention. At Shorter College, freshmen were proud to call themselves the junior class’s children because of their affection for that class (*The Chimes* 1918). Older students may have also appreciated the fact that the freshman class was associated with childishness because it allowed them to define themselves in opposition to another group. In 1907, Judson senior Caroline Dormon created a drawing that depicted the college student’s journey. In the left hand corner stands a small girl who is labeled “Freshman”. She gazes through a large telescope towards a grown woman standing on a mountain-top. The poised woman, wearing a cap and gown, is the graduating senior. The typical freshman, whom Dormon likened to a small child, is in awe of the senior woman.¹² No longer being a freshman could also mean gaining special privileges that helped a class grow closer together. Shorter senior Georgia King explained how the privilege of sitting at the senior table at meals had helped the senior class grow closer as sisters. Separated from the younger students, the seniors had “grown to be one large family and ties of friendship ever strong grew stronger and made more perfect the sisterhood of this class”. (King 1918, p. 5).

6. Crushes and Romantic Friendships

Even though descriptions of sibling and mother–daughter relationships abounded in student publications, students also showed romantic affection for other students. One class of juniors at Bessie Tift adopted as their class song the “Junior Love Song”. They declared that they were all “Bound by love’s golden clasp”. (Junior Love Song 1912, p. 55). More often, though, students professed their love for individual students rather than an entire class. Crushes and romantic friendships were relationships that, by their very nature,

pushed back against the idea that all students were daughters who ought to look to the adults on campus for love and guidance. While antebellum seminaries and nineteenth-century colleges hoped that students would look to female faculty as their role models, students more often found this in their crush (Horowitz 1984). A Tennessee College for Women student in 1915 defined a “crush” as:

A girl
In whose arms I find
Oblivion of all mankind. (*Dryad* 1915, p. 122)

Bessie Tift students used their own slang to describe these intense feelings. “Cases” were their crushes, and the word “casing” appears to have referred to flirting with or trying to woo one’s “case”. Whether it was called “casing” or flirting, the younger student tried her best to impress her crush by “bestowing gifts of flowers, candy, poetry, and general adoration”. (Rouse 2022, p. 202; Solomon 1985).

These relationships were not unusual on college campuses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Rouse 2022). Crushes were so common that students usually mentioned them in passing and presented them as normal parts of college life. When Hattie Etheridge discussed the various “types” of students at Bessie Tift, she included the so-called “casing girl”. According to Etheridge, the “casing girl” could be overheard speaking “in accents soft and passionate”. A typical “casing girl” might say the following to her crush between classes:

Oh Lillian, I am simply crazy about you. Every time I look into your eyes I nearly go mad. You may not believe it, but my heart is breaking all the time. Oh, there’s the bell, I am positive it hasn’t been five minutes. But look here, darling, give me all the rest of your dates for this week, won’t you? There’s nothing worth while but dreams of you. (Etheridge 1907, p. 22)

Crushes and cases came up in musings about other everyday occurrences. One student revealed that her friend Clara was having a difficult time keeping her resolution to not case anymore:

Clara Sargent told me very confidentially that her biggest resolution was to stop ‘casing’ with Bertha Lovvorn. Poor Clara! She is crazy about Bertha, and yet tries awfully hard not to show it. It is positively pitiful. (January 12, 1908 1910, p. 32)

The Bessie Tift class of 1913 embraced this part of student culture so much that they incorporated it into their class toast:

Here’s to the Class of lucky ‘13’
Whose chief occupation is making a scene!
‘Casing’ and flirting, which of course, are all right-
Here’s to our colors, Royal Purple and White! (Freshman Class 1910, p. 73)

Another student wrote that daydreaming about a crush could make paying attention in study hall quite difficult. In this story, the daydreaming student’s pleasant reverie is abruptly interrupted when an instructor “intrudes on this most sacred theme- *perhaps* her beloved case”. (A Day in a ‘Non’s’ Life 1912, p. 153).

Some students acknowledged that these romances might not last. Tennessee College for Women junior Fay Poole wrote of her current crush: (Poole 1915, p. 84)

It may not be the deepest love,
It may not be the truest;
But, oh! It is the liveliest love
Because it is the newest.
Within her arms is perfect bliss;
I feel no pain nor sorrow.
I have no thought but for today;

Oblivion is the morrow.
And from her darling face a smile
Will set my heart a-quiver;
A frown upon that face I love
Will set my heart a-shiver.
This love, you see, lasts not forever
For this maiden I adore,
For very soon will come another
Whom I can love, yes, even more.

A story from Shorter College also speaks to the relatively short lifespan of these relationships. The writer quotes a troubled student- perhaps her roommate- who talks in her sleep about her crush who fell in love with another girl:

She haunts me in my dreamy hours,
I feel and touch her wavy hair,
I see her smile as she stands there
Beneath the swaying of flowers.
[. . .]

It is better to have loved and lost

Than never to have loved at all. (Jest and Jollity 1912, p. 33)

Since this story appeared under the “Jest and Jollity” page of the *Chimes*, it may have been the writer’s way of indicating that crushes ought not to be taken so seriously. On the other hand, the writer may have been playing a cruel prank on a classmate by exposing her broken heart.

Aside from the many passing references to crushes, students also used their publications as outlets to express their intense feelings. Crushes might be intense, but they “were typically one-sided” (Rouse 2022, p. 201) as the *Chimes* story illustrates. Students agonized over whether their affections would be reciprocated. Shorter student “E.H.H.” anxiously wrote the following poem to “L.S.S”. in 1899. Like many students, E.H.H. gave her crush a flower:

I sent my lady a rose-
A rose herself is she;
I sent my lady a rose
For the love she gaveth me.

E.H.H. also alluded to the fear of rejection and the uncertainty that came with making herself vulnerable by expressing these feelings:

So I sent my lady a rose,
With a kiss therein to find.
Perchance she will- oh! Who knows?
And then will she- will she be kind? (E.H.H. 1899, p. 68)

When such deep feelings were reciprocated, though, the two students might engage in “physical displays of affection including hugging, kissing, and cuddling”. (Rouse 2022, p. 203). When the relationship lasted longer than the short-lived and often heart-breaking crush, a romantic friendship might emerge. “Romantic friendships shared characteristics of heterosexual romances with exchanges of love and adoration,” historian Wendy Rouse explains (Rouse 2022, p. 201). A few romantic friendships were documented in student publications. For example, in a humorous yearbook essay purportedly written by junior Bessie Simpkins’s stuffed monkey Lulu, Lulu describes all of the goings on in Bessie’s room. She notes, for example, that a student named Mary is very attached to Bessie’s

roommate, Delia. Lulu recounts how Mary helps Delia clean their room and plays “hostess” whenever a group of students comes by to visit. After all the guests leave, “[Mary] and Delia go through with a peculiar little ceremony and then Mary leaves- that is, sometimes she leaves”. Although girls were prohibited from sleeping in their friends’ rooms, Mary was not an infrequent overnight guest of Delia’s. The “peculiar little ceremony” between the two young women at bedtime was given no elaboration (Lulu’s Diary 1912, p. 158).

If the pair moved in together after college, their relationship was known as a Boston marriage (Rouse 2022, pp. 201, 212). Annie Wilson’s and Ruth Violet Hood’s classmates assumed the two would live in a Boston marriage after graduation. They were not only known for frequently blushing around each other but for having a “close companionship”. (State of Georgia, County Monroe 1912, p. 43). One classmate, prophesying what would happen to her classmates in the future, predicted that Annie and Ruth would move to Florida and buy a house together (His Twelfth Labor: A Prophecy 1912, p. 39). Their companionship is also seen in each student’s senior quote. While the quotes were not always to be taken literally or too seriously, the quotes do speak to a student’s character, temperament, or interests. It is unclear if Annie and Ruth chose the quotes or if the yearbook staff wrote them, but each woman’s quote is about the other student. Next to Ruth’s photograph is the statement, “Where Annie is there would I be also”. (*Chiaroscuro* 1912, p. 23) Annie’s quote, almost surely referring to Ruth Hood, cleverly incorporates the vows of Ruth from the Bible: “Intreat me not to leave thee. . . where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy books shall be my books, and thy schedule my schedule”. (*Chiaroscuro* 1912, p. 30).

Romantic relationships and courting could also occur within the longstanding tradition of sister classes (Rouse 2022). Even though Shorter juniors and seniors were fond of calling freshmen and sophomores, respectively, their “children,” the classes also engaged in ceremonies similar to courtship rituals. For example, freshmen invited the juniors to be their “dates” to a Christmas feast, requesting that the juniors, “Come to the gym with yo’ Freshman date”. At the party, juniors and freshmen danced together (*The Chimes* 1918, p. 32). Similarly, members of paired classes at Shorter exchanged gifts on Valentine’s Day (Valentine Reception 1916). One night in 1918, members of the Shorter senior class quietly summoned all sophomores to come to the gymnasium. Once there, the seniors, dressed in their black caps and gowns, took the sophomores to be their brides in a mock wedding, sealing their love by giving rings to the sophomore class. The “nuptial knot” had now “made the Sophs and Seniors one”. A student, dressed up as a local minister, presided over the ceremony (Senior Class 1918, p. 38).

Crushes fell under closer scrutiny in the first two decades of the 20th century for a variety of reasons. The temporary nature of crushes, coupled with the fact that they often created jealousy among students, caused some to worry that these relationships were harmful. Baptist University for Women (later Meredith College) student “B.L.” cautioned against “intimate friendships” in 1908. While her criticism may have mostly been directed towards cliques, cliques were similar to romantic friendships since they “gave each other respect and affection akin to love”. (Solomon 1985, p. 98). From “B.L.’s” perspective, these intimate groupings or pairings broke up the college family unnecessarily:

It is perfectly right for a girl to have intimate friends- indeed, the girl who has not is deprived of one of the greatest pleasures of college life; but oftentimes there is a tendency to carry intimate friendships too far, and form ‘sets’. These ‘sets’ are detrimental to the general social life of our University; therefore we do not want them, for they endanger that *oneness* of spirit and feeling which is, in its truest sense, college spirit. (L. 1908, p. 67)

Crushes, cases, and romantic friendships certainly challenged the notion that students were all sisters under the fatherhood of the school president. After all, the so-called “casing girl” was begging Lillian for a date instead of interacting with her as her sister. Not surprisingly, educators and other experts worried about the impact on young women’s sexual development, fearing that long-lasting romantic friendships might discourage women from marrying and having children (Rouse 2022, pp. 202–12). Students who

expressed a preference for living in a Boston marriage were blatantly dismissive of Southern Baptist colleges' aim of preparing women for motherhood. Rouse explains that in spite of the scrutiny, some defiant students "responded to these oppressive efforts to regulate their relationships by developing a range of innovative strategies from subversively concealing their relationships to boldly pursuing their queer desires". (Rouse 2022, p. 202).

7. The "Little House"

Scholars have remarked upon the profusion of extracurricular activities on college campuses during this era (Kett 1977; Gordon 1990; Walker 2023). Students and faculty often negotiated and collaborated to make these activities possible (Walker 2023). Other student activities, however, have received less scholarly attention. These activities were often less well-organized, more spontaneous, and were typically centered around residential spaces rather than athletic fields or classrooms. Since these activities were sometimes illicit, they tended to create bonds of family and friendship that challenged the notions of family that administrators wished to create. These often subversive activities provided ways for students to build their own understanding of the campus family.

For one thing, an important part of students' reinterpretation of the college family was their reimagining of campus space. When students were not in class, engaging in mandatory exercise, or at church, much of their time was spent in the dormitory. Students, in turn, attempted to create a home life in the dormitory on their own terms. Schools were already designed to make this possible in some ways. Dormitories across the South contained "domestic analogies," including parlors and other spaces that imitated the typical features of upper-class home life (McCandless 1999, p. 137). While students surely appreciated these homelike touches, they also took pride in making their dorm rooms more like a home. The desire to turn a modest room into a home is evident in the way that students considered themselves to be a "hostess" when their friends visited their rooms for refreshments and fun. Decorating was one of the first steps to making a room a home. After first finding sympathetic older girls who welcomed her to campus, Annie Pugh began to feel even more at home after "your trunks are unpacked, and pictures, draperies, and bric-a-brac adorn your room". (Pugh 1903, p. 129). At Christmastime, Judson student "Eunice" found so much contentment in her decorated dorm room that she happily called it "our little house". (Eunice 1903, p. 132).

While students appreciated a home-like space, they also showed some resistance to the administration's expectations for home life in the college. Staying up later than permitted and socializing with friends during unauthorized times were very common. A satirical article in *Bessie Tift Journal* reported that the cause of "the phenomenon of strange lights" in the dormitory had been determined. "The lights are caused by the midnight candles of multitudinous young damsels who are only innocently trying to appease their ravenous appetites," Virginius Freeman explained (Freeman 1908, pp. 41–42). Students who stayed up after lights-out frequently did so in order to secretly entertain their friends. If a student wanted to properly entertain her friends, she might need to break a few other rules as well. Students were known to steal food from the dining hall table for later use, skip prayer meeting to make preparations, and steal items such as coconut, milk, sugar, chocolate, spoons, and pans from the kitchen for a late-night feast.¹³ Those who felt any remorse over their theft did not publish their regrets in the literary magazines or yearbooks. Students also enjoyed the challenge of trying to sneak their friends into their rooms for sleepovers. Not only did students enjoy these subversive slumber parties, they prepared surprisingly elaborate feasts for their classmates. Even though they sometimes pilfered the kitchen first, they still relied on relatively limited resources. Students kept chafing dishes and ingredients such as sugar, butter, and even alcohol in their rooms. It was therefore not uncommon for a student to turn her room into an impromptu kitchen, dining room, parlor, and guest room when she wanted to entertain her friends.¹⁴ When feasting was not possible, students altered the structure of the dormitories in quite small, but still effective ways to make their rooms feel more like home. As already noted, silent meditation was part of many students'

Sunday rituals. Judson student Lillian Bell found a way to get around the required solitude even though the governess was patrolling the halls. Since it was too risky to entertain, she and her friends made small holes in the walls to communicate with their neighbors and used carefully placed pictures to hide the damage. (Bell 1901, p. 37).

Students who frequently gathered together for forbidden feasts seemed to have developed a sense of being part of a family. One “family” at Tift was even photographed together for the “club” section of the yearbook with the motto “Blest be the tie that binds”. (The Family 1912, p. 145). Still, other groups that apparently enjoyed late-night festivities also had group photographs taken for their yearbooks. The 1917 Shorter College yearbook mentioned a “Flashlight Club” whose “Place of Meeting” was, “We don’t tell,” and the 1911 Shorter yearbook included the “Seven Cups of Chocolate Club” with a photo featuring members wearing their robes and holding their cups of chocolate.¹⁵ Many schools also mention informal “Chafing Dish Parties” and “Chafing Dish Clubs”. Students also no doubt took an extreme amount of pride in being able to pull off a late-night feast without getting caught. Turning their rooms into their own parlors surely gave some students a feeling of autonomy they lacked in other areas of life. Late at night after faculty were asleep, their room could become their own little household for a few hours, as long as they did not get caught.

8. The College Family Altar

Students also used religious activities as ways to reimagine not only their place in the college family, but their place in society. Students frequently scoffed at the forced chapel and church services that were used to maintain a Christian home life on campus. Rosa Crawford was not impressed by the Bessie Tift president’s Chapel talks or his attempt to play the part of a father figure. “[A]t chapel, Dr. Jackson gave us a ‘family talk,’” Crawford explained, “but he didn’t speak as my papa does”. (Crawford 1907, p. 10). However, students were by no means indifferent towards religion. Religious activities sometimes contributed to the insularity of schools since most religious gatherings were held on campus. At the same time, involvement in religious work provided students opportunities to play a role in “family worship” and brought students in contact with larger organizations and ministries outside of campus.

For some college women, participation in religious organizations was an extremely important part of their college experience. After all, it was at a student prayer meeting that Pearl Todd believed she had finally found her place in the college family. Students also found ways to achieve some autonomy over campus worship and study. Shorter College students, like many others, presided over their own Twilight prayer meetings in the evenings (Young Women’s Christian Association 1911). Local religious leaders and faculty sometimes spoke at prayer meetings, but students were able to choose which pastors or faculty members to invite. For example, while Meredith’s (previously the Baptist University for Women) YWCA invited ministers and scholars to speak at their prayer meetings, they also recruited their own seniors to give talks on missions and Bible study and to lead the music (Y.W.C.A. Department 1910). Even though the goal of Southern Baptist schools was to provide home influence through religious rituals directed by the administration, students also provided this home influence by leading each other. In this way, female students did not reject the idea of having a family altar altogether, but preferred to worship at, in the words of a Bessie Tift student, “the college family altar”. (Morris 1912, p. 2) “Would it not be glorious,” one student mused, “if this [mission] study would result in some girl or girls hearing the voice of the Lord, ‘Whom shall I send?’” In other words, young women might hear and discern their calling while praying and studying alongside their college sisters (Boykin 1907, p. 27). Students were also able to worship in the spaces that felt more like home to them. One Shorter student, for example, noted that young women enjoyed gathering in one of the dormitory’s parlors for prayer time (Harris 1911). These students wished to imitate the religious rituals their families were expected to keep at home, but

they wrote most enthusiastically about prayer meetings when they were conducted by other students and in the dormitory.

Religious work also gave students rare opportunities to practice leadership and learn about missions and social service. In 1876, a group of Judson students decided to honor their school's namesake by organizing the Ann Hasseltine Judson Missionary Society "with the blessing of male leadership". Walker explains that this seemingly small step granted students, "A small measure of independence to be sure, but these small allowances built confidence in women regarding their abilities to lead organizations, manage finances, and assume non-domestic responsibilities". (Walker 2023, p. 76). Many years later, two students at Bessie Tift College took the initiative to establish their college's Young Woman's Auxiliary. Pearl Todd also explained that students took it upon themselves to teach mission study courses and that the student leaders collaborated each week to write the lessons (Todd 1911). Religious activities on campus also connected students to larger denominational entities and gave them opportunities to become involved in social ministries. Women at Southern Baptist schools typically joined the Young Woman's Auxiliary (YWA) of the Woman's Missionary Union, or the YWCA. By joining either group, a student automatically became connected to organizations that were much larger and farther-reaching than their college campuses. Bessie Tift student Esther Cutts was proud to be a YWA member. She insisted that it was "the Y.W.A. that differentiates our Christian colleges from other colleges". She believed that the Y.W.A. fulfilled a promise that colleges made to parents. Parents wanted their daughters to become a "full-rounded young woman," and YWA was an indispensable part of a young woman's maturation. She also noted that a focus on both prayer and "personal service" were significant components of YWA work. WMU's personal service program wedded evangelism and missions to social service (Holcomb 2020). For students like Cutts, then, the value of a Christian college education was not so much in shielding young women from society, but in nudging them outside the walls of the school into mission and reform work so that they might "Go preach the Kingdom of God and heal the sick". (Cutts 1913, p. 226).

Students like Cutts, who spoke of wanting to be of service in the Kingdom of God, were inspired by the "service ideal" that permeated Southern colleges during the Progressive era (Grantham 1983, p. 270). Gordon explains that female students "used collegiate culture as a blueprint for their future, a way of trying out their social responsibilities as educated women". (Gordon 1990, p. 35). Gordon further argues that since Progressive-era women mostly constituted the first generation of college-educated women in the South, they were particularly cognizant of the potential they had to improve society. In Gordon's words, "self-conscious about their status as educated women, southern college students explored avenues to make their mark on society, particularly through civic and religious activism". (Gordon 1990, p. 50). Bessie Tift student Mattie Morris assumed that she would attain a respected position in her church and community one day. "What awaits the college-trained Christian woman?" Morris asked. "Her greatest opportunity is leadership," she answered. According to Morris, entities outside the home needed the college woman's leadership. "[L]eadership in the social circle, leadership in her school district, leadership in her church;" each area of society needed a college woman "who will lead her comrades wisely, lovingly, and unselfishly!" (Morris 1912, p. 2). Such social involvement went against the official goal of protecting students from the outside world. Students like Cutts and Morris may have each imagined themselves to be what Walker terms the "New Baptist Woman," a woman "who saw the Christian Gospel as liberating women from the constraints of home and hearth and saw themselves as reclaiming a forgotten spiritual legacy". (Walker 2023, p. 126).

9. Conclusions

In the story "Judson in Summer," Judson College is personified. The mother school longs for her students to return from summer vacation. Judson calls the students "my children," but instead of being perpetual adolescents they are also "Women-in-the-Making" who will "reflect honor on these bleak walls". Mother Judson expected her children to

marry but predicted that they would also “minister to suffering humanity in the lonely walks of life”. She anticipated welcoming an array of students into her family. Some would be “thoughtless and frivolous,” and some would be “thoughtful and purposeful”. (Holloway 1917, p. 137). This brief story reveals the ambiguities surrounding the students’ place in the college family and their relationship to the larger world. Even though schools often operated under the assumption that female students were and ought to remain adolescents, students did not always see themselves that way. The 1917 Shorter yearbook featured a sketch of milestones the senior class had experienced during their four years. Feasting with classmates, terrorizing the freshmen, the sophomore–senior wedding, dancing with another girl while the Victrola played in the background, and sneaking out of the dormitory were all presented as part of the journey to becoming a dignified graduate. The artist did not condemn any of the small transgressions illustrated in the story but presented them as a normal part of the college experience. This illustration also reveals the many roles that students played in the campus family and the many ways they tried to make college a home on their own terms (Knight 1917, p. 198). For many college women, rejecting some elements of the family structure imposed on them by their school was a normal part of their college experience. Moreover, some students came to see their place in the contested college family as an important part of their journey toward womanhood. While Progressive-era students’ traditions and activities were sometimes criticized as frivolous by their contemporaries (Gordon 1990), students celebrated these experiences because of how they so often made them feel like part of the student family.

It was fitting that the Bessie Tift yearbook was called *Chiaroscuro*, referring to “the blending of light and shadows”. (Forward 1910, p. 7). Students were not of one mind in their attitudes towards religion, rules, or their places in the college family. Their published writings show that the college experience was a blend of many experiences—mischievous, mischief, friendship, sisterhood, leadership, love, and spirituality—that they believed, in one way, or another were part of their journey into womanhood. They celebrated the deeds they accomplished in “the light,” in full view of faculty, administrators, and church leaders. They were convinced that their mothering of younger students and their leadership in religious organizations helped them move beyond childishness into useful women. At other times, they relished the small acts of defiance they practiced in “the shadows”. They hid their disobedience from staff, much like disobedient children trying to escape punishment. At the same time, they likely viewed their illicit activities as ways of escaping the paternalistic and highly controlling customs of their schools. Students believed that their place in the college home shaped their identity in a significant way and frequently believed that their experiences in college prepared them to live purposeful, useful lives. College women believed they were fit for this task not simply because of their classroom education but because they had already gained practice organizing and leading. Upperclassmen had already come to view themselves as motherly figures responsible for mentoring younger women. College also gave them the opportunity to preside over traditions, activities, and prayer meetings. While administrators imposed rules that at times attempted to keep students in a prolonged state of childhood, female college students found ways to reimagine their place on the college campus as more than daughters.

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Notes

- ¹ I intentionally use this term because not all of the schools examined in this article were strictly women's colleges. This article uses Tennessee College for Women, Shorter College, Judson College, and Bessie Tift college as the primary examples, but is not limited to those institutions.
- ² Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, pp. 43–44. It is important to note that the South had a weaker tradition of supporting public education. McCandless points out that during the time when most of the young women who are within the scope of this study were children, no states in the South required children to attend public schools. This meant that many southern women seeking a higher education were not well-prepared for college-level work. McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), p. 20.
- ³ Historian Amy Thompson McCandless has identified two educational philosophies that school administrators applied to women's education in the early twentieth century. She uses the term "traditionalist" to describe the individuals who believed women should have the opportunity to receive "an education that was every bit as good as that provided for their brothers". Traditionalists placed an emphasis on the liberal arts, classics, languages, literature, as well as science and mathematics. During the Progressive era some schools adopted what McCandless terms a "utilitarian" educational model. The "utilitarian" model "had nothing against intellectual rigor or cultural enrichment," McCandless argues. Instead, the model provided an education deemed more practical for "women's peculiar life experiences". Southern Baptist colleges exemplified elements of both philosophies, making it difficult to place Southern Baptist colleges neatly in one category or the other. See McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, pp. 53–54. This complexity can be seen in schools adopting home economics, for example. For a discussion of Judson's campus building projects and their adoption of home economics courses during this time, see Walker, "If These Walls Could Speak," pp. 157–58; pp. 175–76.
- ⁴ This was achieved by the first Southern accrediting organization, the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools (1895) and later the Southern Association of College Women (1903). Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), pp. 34–36; Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 8. At the same time, many Southern students wanting to attend college had not been sufficiently prepared to meet the colleges' standards. As a result, many Southern Baptist schools had preparatory programs for such students. McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, p. 32. Lynn Gordon similarly notes that "the shortage of good secondary education meant that academic standards remained an issue in the twentieth century". Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education*, p. 48.
- ⁵ Georgetown College became fully coeducational in 1892. After briefly experimenting with coeducation in the 1890s, Howard became officially coeducational in 1914.
- ⁶ Because this article examines undergraduate institutions, the Woman's Missionary Union Training School is outside the scope of this analysis.
- ⁷ Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, Chapter 1. Mary Lyon may have also modeled her seminary off of early nineteenth century asylums. These asylums attempted to bring order to their patients' lives by imposing extreme regimentation and required periods of meditation and prayer. Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, p. 14. Discipline at men's antebellum schools was extremely harsh as well. See Joseph F. Kett, *Rights of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 51.
- ⁸ McCandless explains that this was a common feature of southern women's colleges. *The Past in the Present*, pp. 56–57.
- ⁹ Kett notes that beginning in the late 19th century, this insularity was due to the on-campus residential system as well as the numerous on-campus activities that, according to Kett, tended to foster dependence rather than independence and largely kept students from forming connections with the outside world. Kett explains that, for the most part, "these activities began and ended within college gates". Kett, *Rights of Passage*, p. 174. Overall, administrators' level of control "was now much greater, for authority was being extended as never before over the spare-time pursuits of students". Kett, *Rights of Passage*, p. 184.
- ¹⁰ Sophomores did not always play the role of the rival sibling, however. Sometimes, they welcomed freshmen and planned receptions for them. See, for example, Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, p. 162; Wendy Rouse, "'A Very Crushable, Kissable Girl': Queer Love and the Invention of the Abnormal Girl Among College Women in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 21 (2022): 202. doi:10.1017/S1537781422000147.
- ¹¹ The pairing of freshmen and juniors each year was by no means unique to the schools examined for this article. See, for example, McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, pp. 138–40 and Walker, *If These Walls Could Speak*, pp. 122–23, and Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, p. 159.
- ¹² Caroline Dormon, *Conversationalist* (Dormon 1907), p. 8. Judson College Library, Marion, Alabama. Collection now housed at Samford University archives in Birmingham, AL. Dormon, more than most, would have understood the profound maturing that could take place during college. She entered Judson as a "shy lonely student" whose homesickness was so debilitating that after her first year, she pleaded with her parents not to send her back. However, she was eventually accepted as a beloved member of the college family. Walker, "If These Walls Could Speak," p. 181.

- ¹³ “A Day in a ‘Non’s’ Life,” *Chiaroscuro* (A Day in a ‘Non’s’ Life 1912), p. 155; “Lulu’s Diary,” (Lulu’s Diary 1912), p. 158. Tift College Records, 1880–1986, Mercer University Special Collections, Macon, Georgia.
- ¹⁴ For example, (*The Conversationalist* 1899, p. 71); (Farrior 1917, p. 147); (Carstarphen 1911, pp. 210–12).
- ¹⁵ “Flashlight Club,” *Argo* (Flashlight Club 1917), p. 168; “Seven Cups of Chocolate Club,” *Argo* (Seven Cups of Chocolate Club 1911), p. 168. Shorter University Museum and Archives, Rome, Georgia.

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Article

Rev. Dr. Muriel M. Spurgeon Carder (1922–2023): A Canadian Baptist Renaissance Woman [†]

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Abstract: “Renaissance Woman” is a colloquial expression for someone who excels above and beyond normal in a wide variety of tasks, and Rev. Dr. Muriel Spurgeon Carder (1922–2023) deserves that title, for she was an ordained Canadian Baptist missionary who worked in churches, schools, and hospitals in India and Canada, as well as served as a professor, New Testament scholar, Bible translator (into Telegu), and hospital chaplain. She also published academic articles on textual issues related to New Testament manuscripts, on a biblical theology of sin, as well as on issues surrounding physical and mental challenges. Her personal accomplishments are striking among Baptists in India but also her Canadian denomination, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ). Carder recently passed away at the age of 100, and this research is an introduction to her life and legacy. There is much more to be explored regarding Carder, and my hope is that this brief article provides some impetus for more detailed and comprehensive research on such an iconic figure in the BCOQ. That said, this article does more than merely provide a summary of her life and legacy. It also aims at using the experience of Carder to explore some common assumptions about Canadian women in ministry, identifying when she reinforces some and undermines others. In other words, the example of Carder complexifies what can be assumed about the experience of women in the church and warns against universal generalizations surrounding their experience. In 2008, the denomination changed its name to Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec (CBOQ), and for the sake of simplicity and clarity, CBOQ will be used throughout this article.



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1. Introduction

“Renaissance Woman” is a colloquial expression for someone who excels above and beyond normal in a wide variety of tasks, and Rev. Dr. Muriel Spurgeon Carder (1922–2023) deserves that title, for she was an ordained Canadian Baptist missionary who worked in churches, schools, and hospitals in India and Canada, as well as served as a professor, New Testament scholar, Bible translator (into Telegu), and hospital chaplain. She also published academic articles on textual issues related to New Testament manuscripts, on a biblical theology of sin, as well as on issues surrounding physical and mental challenges. Her personal accomplishments are striking among Baptists in India but also her Canadian denomination, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ). Carder recently passed away at the age of 100, and this research is an introduction to her life and legacy. There is much more to be explored regarding Carder, and my hope is that this brief article provides some impetus for more detailed and comprehensive research on such an iconic figure in the BCOQ. In 2008, the denomination changed its name to Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec (CBOQ), and for the sake of simplicity and clarity, CBOQ will be used throughout this article.

Surprisingly, Carder is rarely mentioned in places where you would expect to find her. No mention is made of her in Harry Renfree’s standard Canadian Baptist textbook (Renfree

1988) or in a recent edited volume on Canadian Baptist women (Bowler 2016). She does not make the pages of older and even newer Baptist histories (McBeth 1987; Bebbington 2010; Chute et al. 2015). Nor is she mentioned in Elizabeth Gillan Muir and Marilyn Färdig Whiteley's *Changing Roles of Women within the Christian Church in Canada*, Joan Sangster's *Demanding Equality: One Hundred Years of Canadian Feminism*, or Kathleen Steeves' PhD dissertation "The Lived Experiences of Women in Christian Ministry in Canada" (Muir and Whiteley 1995; Sangster 2021; Steeves 2017). There is also no published journal article focused on her.

Fortunately, there is a growing body of literature on Canadian Baptist women. Esther Barnes' chronicle of Baptist women missionaries devotes a few pages to her, (Barnes 2013) and Bruce Fawcett notes her in his dissertation on Baptist recruitment of clergy (Fawcett 2006). The most recent textbook on Canadian Baptist history and polity does reference her ordination (and that of other women as well) (Heath et al. 2022). And a more detailed and focused body of research on the experience of Canadian Baptist women is now ongoing. For instance, a recent dissertation by Taylor Murray on Caroline Holman and her lay leadership among Canadian Baptist Fundamentalists in Ontario (T. Murray 2023) and his article on Olive Clark's tenure as faculty member at the Toronto Baptist Seminary, along with Melody Maxwell's articles on the ordination of Maritime Baptist women, has provided a body of growing literature on the experience of Canadian Baptist women in leadership (Maxwell 2020; Maxwell 2020–2021). This work on Carder adds to this developing collection.

As for research on women and missions, there is an extensive body of literature that intersects with Carder's missionary experience. James Elisha Taneti notes how the critical issues related to that of women and missions in India revolve around female opportunity, race, caste, and empire (Taneti 2013). He calls for a sensitive reading of sources that are quite often written by westerners, leaving silent the voices of Indian women. He also urges a sensitivity to narratives of missionary progress among Indians used as an example of western missionary prowess or "othering" portrayals of Indians as needy (and inferior) so as to justify an imperial presence.¹ Another point noted by Taneti is the need to read conversion accounts with a critical eye for the influence of imperial and caste pressures on the conversions of women, but at the same time, take seriously the agency of Indian women who made decisions for themselves (and their families) with their own interests in mind (such as increasing their social standing in a rigid caste system). One must read Carder's reports on her Indian experience with all those considerations in mind. Taneti and others, such as Ruth Brouwer, note how, on the home front in Canada, it is clear that women found opportunities to serve overseas in ways that they could never have found if they had remained at home in Canada (Brouwer 1990). And that certainly was the case for Carder; although, as noted below, she did not necessarily fit within a contemporary view of what constitutes a feminist. On a different note, related to that of a religious impulse for missionaries, those such as Jane Hunter look at the motives of missionaries as being a mix of a religious impulse and self-gratification, a narrative less hagiographic than perhaps other more positive and idealistic accounts of missionaries such as Carder (Hunter 1984).

Chad Bauman's notion of Retrieval, Reconstruction, and Retheorization in the study of women is helpful for this research on Carder (Bauman 2008; O'Connor 1989). The goal is to uncover and preserve voices from the past that have become lost or ignored, to develop a fresh narrative that tells a more nuanced and accurate story of the marginalized, and to develop a more robust historiography through the development of methodologies and theoretical assumptions that further aid in the study of marginalized figures or movements. Due to the paucity of research previously carried out on Carder, the bulk of the work in this article is on recovering the life and legacy of a person that has been ignored by researchers. That said, this article does more than merely provide a summary of her life and legacy. It also aims at using the experience of Carder to explore some common assumptions about Canadian women in ministry, identifying when she reinforces some and undermines others. In other words, the example of Carder complexifies what can

be assumed about the experience of women in the church and warns against universal generalizations surrounding their experience.

The types of sources used in this research are threefold. The first type is the public record in denominational publications. Material in those sources was written for public consumption and needs to be read with that in mind. The second are the records held in the Canadian Baptist Archives at McMaster Divinity College (MDC). Those records include personal letters, denominational minutes, newspaper clippings, bulletins, sermons, letters, and various publications by Carder. There is also material in her husband's records at the archives that are helpful.² The third source of information is from an interview with Muriel Carder's daughter Karen conducted on 10 May 2024.³ A fourth cluster of potential sources is unavailable at the moment. The Carder family has a handwritten autobiography of Muriel Carder that covers her early life, as well as have in their possession several handwritten diaries—both of those sources would be invaluable for further research at some time in the future.⁴

2. Early Years

Muriel was born on 1 November 1922 in Woodford Green, Essex, England. Her father, Carey Bradford Spurgeon,⁵ was not only the son of a former Baptist missionary to India, but was also related to Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the famous British Baptist pastor of the late-nineteenth century. That stellar Baptist pedigree was cherished by Muriel, and she kept the Spurgeon name when married by adding her husband's last name (Carder) to Spurgeon.

Her family emigrated to Canada in the post-Great War years. They arrived February 1928 and eventually settled in Waterloo, Ontario. They joined the King Street Baptist Church,⁶ Kitchener, ON in 1935, the church where she would eventually be ordained. Muriel attended McMaster University and completed a BA, Honours (1944) and BD (1947). She was the first woman in the history of McMaster to graduate with a Bachelor of Divinity. And, in that same year, she was the first woman ordained in the CBOQ, the denomination to which her local church belonged.⁷ Melody Maxwell notes how the experience of Baptist women in the 1970s–1980s seeking ordination ranged from support to discouragement (Maxwell 2020–2021); fortunately for Carder, her experience was the former as she was surrounded by a supportive cast of family, friends, professors, and clergy.

Records indicate she had a vibrant Christian faith from an early age.⁸ Her application to the Canadian Baptist Foreign Mission Board (CBOMB) provides very helpful glimpses of the young woman. She noted that her “best subjects” in school were languages (she writes on the form that she knew Latin, Greek, and French), which explains much of her focus in the following decades. What is most helpful for getting a sense of her faith is her commentary in the section requiring an explanation of her conversion, Christian experience, and fundamental doctrine of Christianity. After mentioning her experience in a “wonderful Christian home”, she wrote “When I was about twelve I began to feel that I should like to belong to Jesus and follow Him. So, one night after evening service, I knelt down beside my bed and gave myself to Jesus. . . The next Easter I was baptized and then I felt much happier”.⁹

Muriel had two calls to Christian ministry and those calls seem to fit within common elements of female calls to ministry (Steeves 2017; Boberg 2017). As Maxwell notes, such calls that were expected for those entering Baptist pastoral work could, especially for women, help the person “persist through difficult circumstances”. (Maxwell 2020–2021). A call also provided a divine imprimatur to their work. The first call came to her when she was a child, and it pressed upon her until she responded. The second call came at a time of transition and disappointment. Regarding the first call, we have some helpful details; as for the second, not much at all.

Regarding her first call related to missionary work, she stated, “Almost as far back as I can remember, I wanted to be a missionary.¹⁰ I remember sitting at the tea table and Daddy said, ‘You have to be specially called for that, you know.’ I felt rather set back at

that, because I did not feel as if I had been ‘specially called.’ I began looking for visions or dreams or something drastic. Nothing came, but I still wanted to be a missionary. I told my minister, Dr. Hinds, about my problem one day and he said, ‘Anybody who feels the way you do about Christ doesn’t need any more call. Then I was very happy.’”¹¹ She reflected on how she wanted to share Jesus with people in India and wanted to respond to the hymn lyrics “who will go?” but realized at that young age, she was too young to do so. In fact, she was afraid that everyone would be converted before she was old enough to be able to go. Over time, she also questioned the necessity of going overseas when the need was great in Canada. When she started to get old enough to actually apply to be a missionary, nagging thoughts about her call returned. She wrote “Later on I had many a conflict within myself. . . that I must be sure it was God’s will and not mine that I’d be doing—you see, I wanted to go to India so badly that I thought perhaps it was my own desire, not His will. So I prayed and thought and talked to men of God, and now I have stopped wavering and am making out this form, for I feel that He has led me by various means to apply for India. It has been a growing understanding, not a cataclysmic call”.¹² Ultimately, it was her conviction that she “could see no other path than the road to India” that led her to apply to become a missionary (Spurgeon 1947a).

She was accepted by CBOMB as a missionary in 1947. Her becoming a missionary was not a unique event, for many precedent-setting Baptist women missionaries had been going overseas long before Muriel. What was unique, however, was her ordination. In 1929, the CBOQ had established a committee to examine the possibility of ordaining women (CBOQ 1929). The following year, a motion at Assembly to allow for women’s ordination was defeated.¹³ However, by the mid-1940s, the CBOQ was ready to act in support of such a motion. After a vigorous debate, in the summer of 1947 the CBOQ passed a motion to ordain women¹⁴ and Muriel Spurgeon was first on the list of potential women to be ordained.

Since their inception in the early seventeenth century, there had been a range of options for Baptist women when it came to serving in the church (Blevins 2002; Leonard 2005, Chap. 9). Being a dissenting group often led to views outside that of the mainstream churches (Gouldbourne 1997). Baptist congregational governance also left certain decisions in the hands of local churches allowing for a variety of views on pressing matters, such as roles of women in ministry (Leonard 2005, pp. 224–25). However, despite the openness among the majority to move forward with the ordination of women, there were those within the CBOQ who, for theological reasons, remained critical of the decision. One non-theological argument raised was whether a woman would have the physical strength to carry out baptism by immersion (Harkness 1947). Others inside and outside the CBOQ were also concerned about Muriel’s views on dancing at McMaster. T.T. Shields, the fundamentalist Baptist pastor at Jarvis Street Baptist, lobbed some harsh commentary towards Muriel, partly because she spoke in favor of allowing dancing at McMaster, but mainly because she had the audacity to seek ordination.¹⁵ One McMaster defender of Muriel who spoke at her ordination was pleased to see his own complimentary words published in the *Link and Visitor* in part to help counter what he believed to be Shields’ “vicious and quite untrue reports” made about Muriel.¹⁶

The ordination service was conducted on 16 September 1947 at King Street Baptist Church (CBOQ 1947–1948; Ordination of Miss Muriel Spurgeon 1947). As per common Baptist practice at ordination services, Rev. Muriel Spurgeon pronounced the benediction. After a whirlwind year of graduation, ordination, and commissioning, the twenty-five-year-old Muriel was off to India to start her dream and fulfill her calling. Her ship left late December 1947 and arrived in India in early 1948. The official administrative record describing her upcoming work in India was summed up (and understated) in one word as “evangelistic”.¹⁷ The fact that she immediately went overseas meant that the denomination did not have to face the realities of what had just occurred, and, as Maxwell suggests, that there had been only one ordination in the denomination meant that opponents to women’s ordination were not too threatened.¹⁸

3. India

Muriel spent close to three decades as a missionary in India. Her years in India included marriage to Rev. W. Gordon Carder (a fellow Baptist missionary),¹⁹ the adoption of two children (Kim in 1959 and Karen in 1961), as well as a wide range of missionary tasks. Interspersed in those decades were furloughs back to North America and further education. What follows is a summary of Carder's work as a missionary.

Muriel and her husband Gordon served in a variety of locations, including Kakinada, Ramachandrapuram, Samalkot, Pithapuram, Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Tekkali, and Vuyyuru. Carder's work included ministry in a variety of contexts. In one statement, she casually described her jobs in India as "everything from soup to nuts—managing Girl's Boarding School, Biblewomen, Leprosy Home, Hospital Chaplain in a Government hospital, accounts, etc".²⁰ Helpful sources for obtaining a picture of her ministry in India were the annual "Letters from the Field"²¹ mailed to supporters, reports published in the *Link and Visitor*, or in the welcoming and farewell addresses associated with furlough. Muriel and her husband traveled extensively throughout India by train or car to churches, denominational meetings, academic conferences, training retreats, schools, and theological colleges.²² Special church services were on the agenda, as were visits to hospitals and homes. She was frequently involved in preaching,²³ what she called her "first love".²⁴ Other responsibilities included Bible studies, hospitality, food supply, acting as an advisor to boarding schools, caring for the sick, evangelism, school accreditation, and chapel sermons (in English and in Telegu) at CBM High School, Visakhapatnam. She was also active in interdenominational work at Andhra College, specifically teaching, mentoring, and involved in curriculum development. She especially appreciated ecumenical theological education. On top of that host of responsibilities, due to her husband's denominational and educational responsibilities taking him on the road quite frequently, she was responsible for much of the child rearing—at least until the kids went off to boarding school.

Much of the focus of her ministry was on education, teaching, writing, and translation. That telos was in keeping with assessments of her in her early years, and her gift for languages can be seen in her adding Hebrew, Telugu, and Sanskrit to her repertoire. Carder had an insatiable desire to learn, and her ministry was also marked by periods of further education. During her furloughs back to Canada, she spent time obtaining additional degrees. It is noteworthy that while obtaining her postgraduate degrees, she also spent time enrolling in additional courses for what she said was the need to take "extra subjects in order to get as broad a background as possible, e.g., Social Anthropology, Geology, History of Philosophy, Hebrew (3 years), Philosophy of Religion, Sanskrit, Hermeneutics, Religious Education, Science and Religion, Comparative Religion, French, Ecumenical Theology".²⁵

On her first furlough, she obtained a Master of Sacred Theology (SMT) at Union Theological Seminary in 1958. She studied under Reinhold Neibuhr, with a thesis entitled "The Ethical Implications of Christ's Atonement for the Church in a Hindu Society". She also taught courses at MDC.

Along with the daily responsibilities of ministry, the archives reveal some glimpses of personal struggles for Carder. In one letter, she wrote of how disappointing it was to not be able to bear a child, as well as how shameful it was in an Indian context to not have a baby. That painful experience led to heartfelt theological struggles, what she called "theological machinations".²⁶ On a different issue, in the *Link and Visitor*, she shared with readers her disappointment, doubt, and despair over the overwhelming task of the Christian cause in India. However, in that same article, she noted how, in 1961, she visited R. J. McCracken, a former theology professor at McMaster University, who had become the pastor at Riverside Church in New York. He reminded her of *Christus Victor*, the Christian doctrine of the cosmic victory of Christ over sin and its effects. Apparently, that was just what she needed to hear, and Carder went back "with renewed faith, able to preach the resurrection message again, with conviction" (M. M. Carder 1977). She went on to say the following:

The best antidote for doubt and mistrust is a new experience of the power of the risen Christ in our own lives. Probably each of us can recall our own private Gethsemanes when, after a winter of dark doubt and deep despair, of feeling that the whole bottom had gone out of our existence, we finally capitulated in surrender to God; and from that death emerged a new person, so fresh, forgiven, and invigorated that it could be called a third birth. Then we could understand the exuberant joy of the first disciples, and each new task appeared extraordinarily easy. (M. M. Carder 1977)

Carder wrote that article a decade and a half after her visit with McCracken, an indication of the lasting impact of that meeting.

In 1965–1967, the Carders returned on furlough to southern Ontario for Muriel to work on her doctorate at the University of Toronto.²⁷ Her attention at that time was in New Testament studies, and, in 1968, she successfully defended her dissertation on the subject of the textual history of Catholic Epistles. Shortly thereafter, in the summer of 1968, Muriel and Gordon flew back to India to serve as faculty at the Ramapatnam Baptist Theological College and at Andhra College. Once there, she taught courses on the New Testament and Greek. In 1973, Andhra College moved to Hyderabad, and the Carders moved with it to continue their teaching. She taught in both English and Telegu. (She also traveled back to North America in 1973 for a three month furlough).²⁸ Andhra College was an ecumenical institution composed of several denominations and was an example of ecumenism forged by missionary necessities in India.²⁹ She excitedly entered that ecumenical partnership as one of the founding faculty members, and ecumenism remained a mark of her ministry in India and Canada from those days forward.³⁰ She also served on a number of commissions for Serampore College, the first Baptist school in India (founded in 1800).

A few comments on her teaching, translating, and publishing are in order.³¹ Carder was a gifted teacher. While on furloughs, she taught courses at MDC (1956–57 and 1965–66).³² After acquiring her ThD, she taught extensively in India. The range of courses was striking, reflecting her interests, experience, and training in languages, New Testament, theology, worship, preaching, ethics, and practical theology. While in India, Carder published a spectrum of works, from the popular to the peer reviewed. She wrote for the church back home in Canada in such denominational periodicals as the *Link and Visitor*,³³ *Enterprise* (M. M. Carder 1976b), or *Visitor* (M. M. Carder 1965a). She also wrote for the church in India. For instance, she composed a children's story about a young Indian boy entitled *Jeevie: An India Boy* (M. M. Carder 1963a). She translated the *Didache* into Telegu,³⁴ published a booklet on baptism into Telegu, published a pamphlet on the conversion and ministry of a Bible woman named Manikyam (M. M. Carder n.d.), and published a series of lectures in the *Bangalore Theological Forum* entitled "The Use of the Bible in the Church's Ministry: The Conservative-Critical (Mediating) Position" (M. M. Carder 1972b). She was also involved with the work of the Bible Society of India in the translating of the New Testament Greek into Telegu, including the making of a Greek grammar text into Telegu.³⁵ Carder also published a few peer-reviewed works while in India. Both were in the field of biblical studies. In 1970, the results of her dissertation were published in *New Testament Studies* as "A Caesarean Text in the Catholic Epistles" (M. M. Carder 1970a). The following year, her article entitled "The Biblical Concept of Sin in Translation" was published in the *Indian Journal of Theology* (M. M. Carder 1971). She was also sought out for her expertise by other scholars carrying out various translation projects.³⁶ In September 1972, she was invited to attend the International Congress of Learned Societies in Los Angeles and was flown there in a plane chartered by the Society of New Testament Studies. While at the conference, she was interviewed on the Voice of America broadcast.³⁷

Carder's almost three-decade tenure in India was concurrent with the independence of India and the retreat and demise of European empires. Western missionary agencies had to adapt quickly if they were going to remain welcome in former colonies such as India. Carder only rarely mentioned the postcolonial political realities on the ground (not

surprising since being too political would jeopardize her welcome in India), and there are only a few clues as to what she thought of politics, the future of missions, and the Indian Church.³⁸ In her early years, she was concerned about the threat of the spread of communism. She surmised that “If . . . [India does] not take up the battle [against poverty and injustice] communism will” (Carder and Carder 1954). She supported a united Indian Church, an ecumenical enterprise that also reflected government policy towards western missionaries. However, while she supported an Indian-led church, she believed that the western churches still had a role to play in partnering for the sake of the gospel in the subcontinent. She described her position as a middle ground, with both east and west in an equal and mutually complimentary relationship (M. M. Carder 1965a). She was also sensitive to issues of race and sought to make her home and ministry devoid of racial animus. For example, Carder noted how her home was continually marked by a “constant mixing of races”.³⁹ That was not by chance, for, in her words: “So we attempt to build, little by little, in ways both tangible and intangible, the Kingdom of God among men and women in this our Indian home”.⁴⁰ In a similar vein, in the midst of riots and stark divisions, she declared that Christians must model a different way: “In a divided province and a country riddled with caste, class, and political divisions, it is more important than ever for Christians to show their unity in Christ” (M. M. Carder 1974).

The “Letter from the Field” for the year 1974 was filled with reminiscing and pathos, for Carder was recognizing that she and her husband were getting old. She reflected on how, at one time decades earlier, she and the other new recruits had looked up to the veteran senior missionaries. But now, she declared, “suddenly, the realization dawned with post-monsoon clarity: we are the seniors!”⁴¹ While she stated in that letter that they were not considering retiring, by the end of 1976, they had changed their minds and had retired from the mission field and returned to Canada. The possible various motives for the change of mind are not clear in the historical records.⁴²

4. Canada

After listing in December 1976 what everyone else in the family was doing as they adjusted to Canada, Carder wrote: “Mum slogs away at Bible translation at home but wants a challenging job outside”.⁴³ It did not take long for her to find it. Despite some difficulties finding a CBOQ church for Gordon to pastor,⁴⁴ and even flirting with a decision to return to India,⁴⁵ Carder threw herself into work that, in various ways, mirrored her work in India, such as denominational committee work.⁴⁶ For instance, she (and Claire Holmes) served on the CBOQ Task Force on Women in Christian Ministry, a committee founded in 1979 by the denomination to respond to a lack of positive movement towards increasing the role of women in the CBOQ.⁴⁷ A few years later, the denomination created a committee entitled “Working Group on Equality in Ministry: Our Response and Responsibility”. Carder did not serve on the committee, but she was interviewed for her input as one of four key women who had made a “significant contribution” to the denomination.⁴⁸

As in India, Carder became active in alleviating the suffering of those afflicted by physical illness or mental challenges. In fact, in a chapel sermon delivered at MDC in 1991, she stated that she had two divine calls in her life.⁴⁹ The first had been the call to India when she was sixteen. The second was after she had returned to Canada and started working in institutions among the mentally challenged. She noted how that second call came through colleagues seeing her passion for the patients as well as the patients themselves, who “asked some of the deepest theological questions”. It also correlated with a time of personal crisis, for in that same sermon, she declared “My second calling also came accompanied by the stunning loss of a job prospect that my whole family desired for me and them”.⁵⁰ What that potential dream job was remains unknown at this time.⁵¹ As a result of acting on that call, Carder’s post-India decades were quickly marked by training for chaplaincy as well as serving in a variety of government-run institutions.⁵²

In 1979, she served as chaplain at D'Arcy Place Development Centre, Cobourg and then was appointed to be a chaplain at East Oxford Regional Centre, Woodstock caring for 700 mentally challenged adults (Moves 1980). Her methods were noted to be thoughtful, innovative, as well as geared towards bringing reforms to those within the care of the institution. For example, she sought to get patients active, included a range of senses in liturgy, used music to free emotions, urged carefulness in the use of guilt, and established pastoral counseling needed to help patients deal with loss and fear of death.⁵³ A further example of her work with the marginalized was how, in recognition of the International Year of Disabled Persons (1981), she was pictured on the front cover of the *Link and Visitor* leading a worship service.⁵⁴

Reflecting her new calling for the care of those in such institutions, Carder's academic attention shifted from the New Testament and its translation to that of spiritual care. By the mid-1980s, she had published two articles in the *Journal of Pastoral Care* that identified the spiritual needs of the mentally challenged.⁵⁵ The first article focused on general spiritual needs (M. M. Carder 1984), the second on understanding the experiences surrounding death (M. M. Carder 1987).

In the process of theological leadership development, something that she had invested significant energy to in India, Carder became qualified to be a Supervisor of Clinical Pastoral Education (assistant in 1981 and full supervisor in 1983).⁵⁶ In the following years, she supervised students from a host of southern Ontario theological schools, such as Conrad Grebel, Huron, McMaster, Trinity, Waterloo Lutheran, and Wycliffe. She also contributed to denominational life by writing⁵⁷ and speaking⁵⁸ on issues related to church life. It is surprising she did not seem to teach as a faculty member at MDC or any theological school for that matter.

By the late-1980s and into the 1990s, Carder was becoming recognized for her many decades of service, and accolades started to come. In 1987, both the First Baptist Church, Woodstock and the Oxford Regional Centre had a special service recognizing Carder on the fortieth anniversary of her ordination.⁵⁹ She was honored in 1988 as Distinguished Graduate by the McMaster Divinity Graduates Association.⁶⁰ Shortly thereafter, in 1991, McMaster University recognized her as a "distinguished scholar, missionary statesperson, chaplain, and outstanding church leader" and granted her a Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa.⁶¹ In 2007, Carder was awarded the Katherine Hokin Award for Global Mission and Ministry, an honor granted by the Canadian Churches Forum for Global Ministries. The service and dinner were held at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, a CBOQ flagship church in Toronto.⁶² A few years later, she received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for service to the community. Those years of accolades were also marked by grief, for her husband Gordon died on 14 March 1997.

Despite an active and feisty life, one that included gardening, hiking, and (daily) jogging into her 80s—not to mention regularly playing badminton into her early 90s—age inevitably took its toll. Carder managed to carry out chaplaincy duties until she retired from Woodstock Hospital in 2018 at the age of 96.⁶³ She also started suffering from dementia in her 90s.⁶⁴ She died on 14 June 2023, in Woodstock, Ontario.

5. Reflections and Legacy

A few final thoughts related to reflections and legacy are in order. In several ways, Carder fits easily into popular stereotypes of a female missionary: married to a prominent ordained missionary-husband, primary caregiver at home, and involved in the care of women and children. Yet, in many other ways, she was no different from the males on the mission field. Her plethora of activities in Indian churches, hospitals, and educational institutions as preacher, teacher, scholar, translator, professor, and mentor lend credence to Benjamin R. Knoll and Cammie Jo Bolin's claim that male and female clergy, "while possibly different in many ways, are not drastically different in their leadership styles and

approach to the ministry".⁶⁵ In fact, she is a rare case of a missionary wife's reputation and recognition eclipsing her well-educated and accomplished missionary husband.

Being a supporter of women's ordination meant for some that Carder was a feminist or "women's libber"—something that Claire Holmes also faced in 1979 when she was the second ordained woman in the CBOQ.⁶⁶ Yet, Carder is not easily typecast. It is noteworthy that while Carder was an advocate for women's ordination, she seemed to avoid taking on the identity of a feminist, probably because her own views did not mesh well with a more radical feminist agenda. It may also have been part of strategy to avoid being associated with a movement that would have led to a loss of support among some in conservative Baptist circles. Whatever the case, when asked if her mother would have seen herself as a feminist, Karen Carder responded "no, oh gosh no".⁶⁷ Karen went on to say that her mother had no time for people who called themselves that; instead, Carder thought people should simply do what they do and not broadcast it.

As Benjamin R. Knoll and Cammie Jo Bolin note, support for the ordination of women opens one up to the suspicion of being "liberal".⁶⁸ But was she? Her writings and actions as pastor, mentor, and chaplain reflect an evangelical Baptist piety marked by enthusiasm for both spreading the gospel and alleviating human suffering.⁶⁹ She also used typical evangelical language of saving souls, importance of the Bible for the Christian life, and divine calling. She also had a conservative theological statement in her application for being a missionary.⁷⁰ Her research on the authorship of the biblical text was fairly conservative, as was her commitment to the work of Bible translation. Yet, she was not a fundamentalist, for her robust life of the mind was on display in her scholarship, in her partnerships with other denominations not necessarily evangelical, as well as being aware of modern critical methods of biblical scholarship. Other factors also make her hard to pigeonhole. She was committed to ecumenical partnerships with other churches in India and Canada, whether it be in missions, education, or chaplaincy. Her supervision was with students across the spectrum of theological schools, from liberal to evangelical. She remained a mother devoted to her children but also pursued ordination and the breaking of traditional gender boundaries. She also sought solace from the pastor of one of the iconic liberal Baptist churches of the day (Riverside Church). Perhaps a helpful clue to her position can be found in the title of an article she published in the *Bangalore Theological Forum*: "The Use of the Bible in the Church's Ministry: The Conservative-Critical (Mediating) Position" (M. M. Carder 1972b). In sum, the middle position was not a waffling indecisive one, but rather one where a person who "has thoroughly examined the views of both sides of that fence and has decided that he wishes to jump wholeheartedly neither into this nor that field of thought because he sees thorns as well as flowers in each field!"⁷¹ It was, in her words, "a freedom from fundamentalism but not from fundamentals".⁷²

A few comments on academic legacy are in order. In the Indian context, her research on biblical and theological issues related to Bible translation, as well as decades of translating the Bible into Telegu, continues to bear fruit for the Christian church in India. In fact, her language expertise influenced theological students up until very recently, as they used her manuscript for teaching Greek to students at Andhra College (now called Andhra Christian Theological College).⁷³ Not finding an academic post when she returned to Canada, Muriel quickly pivoted to the care of the mentally challenged. In fact, she practiced and published in this area longer than the time she spent in India. It was a second call that she lived out right until a few years before her death. Her two articles in *Journal of Pastoral Care*, along with her practical innovations over decades of chaplaincy, provide rich material for those today seeking to shape Christian ministry among those facing such challenges. In fact, a study of her innovations and publications in this area of mental health and challenge would make a good project of resource for today's churches trying to deal with similar issues.⁷⁴

One of the most pressing questions for some is her legacy in advancing the role of women in the church, both in India and Canada. Carder's presence as one of the earliest faculty members at Andhra College, a practice of female professors there that continues

to this day, is an indication of her legacy in the Indian Church. Accolades from Carder's former Indian students attest to her vital legacy in India.⁷⁵ However, as Taneti argues, there needs to be care that highlighting the role of western women in the advancement of Indian women does not lead to an eclipse of the agency of Indian female leaders to chart their own better course (Taneti 2013). In other words, while Carder's example and instruction played a role opening up new vistas for women in the Indian church, her role was simply a part of a larger complex interplay between eastern and western churchwomen's efforts to advance the cause of women.

There is an element of her missionary work that mirrored traditional "women's work," but in India, that was actually an advantage for a female missionary. Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of Christian missions was the participation of "indispensable"⁷⁶ Biblewomen who labored—often in anonymity—to spread the gospel in village after village, going where western missionaries (especially males) could not go or being heard where they could not be heard. And Carder considered her participation in and support of their work to be a vital part of her calling. Near the end of her years in India, she noted how much had changed for herself and for women in India.

In my own profession I have seen a similar, though not commensurate, advance. From my student days 30 years ago when I was the only girl in B.D. and the men laughed good-natured but skeptical laughs at the thought of little Miss Spurgeon being a pastor, to those days when in so many countries of the world and in so many denominations women are being admitted into the ordained ministry. It would require a book to list them all...Christian women in India are waking up to the possibilities of leadership in the Church and more so in North India than South India. The women in the C.N.I. are determined to open the door to ordination for women and men. "Not many may go through it," one medical doctor, wife of a bishop, said to me, "but we are more insistent because the door is closed". Two of them have written good, sensible articles in the C.N.I. Churchman, and so has the General Secretary of C.N.I. who is a forward-looking man. (I have also contributed to it twice).⁷⁷

Of course, missionary impact on India for good or bad is difficult to assess, for, as Mary Farrell Bednarowski notes, western missionaries were "both a conservative force and a modernizing one. . .it both affirmed women's traditional, subservient domestic role and inexorably undermined it".⁷⁸ Carder was astute enough to know about the complexity of social change and her own impact on that process. That said, what she concluded from her own experience was that the roles of Indian women had begun to change over the course of her thirty-year tenure, and that, she concluded, was something to celebrate.

Finally, what did Carder think about the climate for women in the CBOQ? Elizabeth Gillan Muir and Marilyn Färdig Whiteley speak of "persistent male opposition" facing many (most) women entering into Christian ministry (Muir and Whiteley 1995, p. 4). What is interesting is that Carder's experience seemed to lack that opposition. In a letter to a librarian at Union Theological Seminary, 20 January 2016, Carder stated "I can count only 3 or 4 instances in 59 years when I was not allowed to speak or preach, that the hard parts [of ministry] were nothing to do with that sort of thing".⁷⁹ She knew of the kerfuffle made among some during her ordination, and had heard the laughter of some men, but it seems that she did not feel that the CBOQ or missionary realities in India were repressive or restrictive. She may have felt differently if she had stayed in Canada from the start of her first calling, but what did happen for her was that the mission field opened extensive opportunities for a brilliant young woman.

Yet, being successful and brilliant does not always make things (immediately) better. As Sara Maitland notes, women being ordained into a male system may not help; in fact, it may make things harder, for, in being ordained, it may seem that all is now well and patriarchy and injustice have disappeared: "Exceptional women have not always worked to the advantage of the rest of us. Just as people will tell you now that there is no more need

for a women's liberation movement because Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister, so Christians will say that there cannot be anything wrong with the position of women because of St Teresa of Avila or Julian of Norwich".⁸⁰ In fact, by entering into the churches' system of governance, there is the risk of being assimilated into a system that works counter to the aims of those seeking to further women's participation into the life of the church.⁸¹ The fact that the next woman ordained in the CBOQ after Carder was Claire Holmes in 1979, thirty two years after Carder, gives some credence to the comments of Maitland.⁸² However, change takes time, and perhaps a long view provides a different assessment of Carder's impact. For instance, a recent poll of CBOQ women pastors taken for this research indicates that Carder's ordination and subsequent ministry has been an inspiration for many CBOQ women.⁸³ For instance, out of twenty-eight female CBOQ pastors polled, twenty-three knew of Muriel Carder. Of those twenty-three, 83% ranked medium or high when asked about her influence on their ministry. As one woman stated after seeing Carder preach at her church in the 1970s: "She came to preach, and she actually preached. I remember thinking, 'gee, a woman can do this'. I remember that as being a little aha moment" (Anonymous 2022). That woman went on to ordination and pastoral ministry in the CBOQ.

There is much more to be explored regarding Carder, and my hope is that this brief article provides some impetus for more detailed and comprehensive research on such an iconic figure in the CBOQ. That said, this article does more than merely provide a summary of her life and legacy. It also explores some common assumptions about Canadian women in ministry, identifying when she reinforces some and undermines others. In other words, the example of Carder complexifies what can be assumed about the experience of women in the church and warns against universal generalizations surrounding their experience.

6. Postscript

The record of women in India and the CBOQ is complex and follows no simple or single triumphant telos. As Joan Sangster reminds us, we need to avoid seeing the shifts in history as easy to identify and as monochrome narratives.⁸⁴ For instance, recent events among Baptists in India and Canada raise questions and concerns about the telos of history and Carder's legacy.

Muriel Carder's daughter Karen believed that her mother's legacy was greater in India than in Canada, and one important aspect of that legacy was opening up opportunities for women.⁸⁵ Yet, the work of Carder (and countless others) in India remains challenging. In 2016, the All India Baptist Fellowship organized a Women's Forum to discuss the possibilities and problems related to the treatment and roles of women in the church in India. Clearly, there were ongoing issues among Indian Baptists that needed to be addressed in order to provide further opportunity and more safety for women in the church.

Another example of that uncertainty is a recent decision in the CBOQ to reaffirm its commitment to women's ordination in the face of perceived growing disagreement with the denomination's position in support of women's ordination. Some felt that in the past decade or more, there had been a "backlash" against such changes, something that Barbara Zikmund et al. note can happen if gains are not supported.⁸⁶ The CBOQ decision was, to use Mark Chaves' expression, a "symbolic display that is part of a broader process by which denominations construct their public identities".⁸⁷ At the 2023 CBOQ Assembly, the motion (with a reference to Carder mentioned in it) to reaffirm its position of support for women's ordination and opportunity in all areas of the church's life passed by well over 90%.⁸⁸ Fears of an unraveling of past gains seem, at the moment, to be unwarranted, and Carder's legacy on that front remained intact.

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Notes

- 1 This is usually referred to as the creation of an “other,” an expression made famous by Edward Said. See (Said 1978).
- 2 The CBA holds a small box of Muriel’s material, as well as a number of larger boxes of material comprised of documents related to both her and her husband (Gordon). References in these footnotes to this box is Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 3 A summary of that interview is in the authors’ possession.
- 4 Muriel mentioned in a letter in that she had started an autobiography as well as had a file drawer of personal journals. See Letter to the Burke Library, Union Theological Seminary, 20 January 2016, in “Letter with Biographical Information Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA (Muriel Carder Box n.d.). Burke Library, Union Theological Seminary, stated that Carder’s records were never accepted by Union—see personal email to author dated 11 March 2024. Of note is that thirty-five boxes of her correspondence and papers were shredded by her family when she moved out of her house and into a seniors’ home. See interview with Karen by the author.
- 5 Carey’s father was the son of Rev. Robert Spurgeon (a cousin of C. H. Spurgeon). Her mother was Elizabeth Francis (Keeley).
- 6 Later known as Highland Baptist.
- 7 However, a few Canadian women had been ordained before her. In 1901, Ella Hadassah Kinney Saunders of the Reformed Baptists was ordained in Saint John, NB, to go overseas to South Africa. Shortly thereafter, in 1909, Jennie Johnson, a Black Baptist woman from Ontario was ordained in Michigan, US, but served as a pastor in Southern Ontario. In 1954, Maritime Baptists ordained Josephine Moore and the BUWC ordained Mae Benedict in 1959. See (Heath et al. 2022, pp. 72–73). For a history of Canadian Baptist Jennie Johnson, see (Reid-Maroney 2013).
- 8 Letter dated 1 September 1944 in “Missionary Appointment Correspondence 1944–1947 Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA; “Presentation of Muriel Carder,” in “Biography Documents Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 9 Application to Candidates for Missionary Appointment, in “Missionary Appointment Correspondence 1944–1947 Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 10 An article in the *Globe and Mail* claims that her missionary interests were also sparked by a glass case filled with Indian items brought back from India by her grandfather. See (Pitcher 1962).
- 11 See above note 9.
- 12 Emphasis in the original. See Application to Candidates for Missionary Appointment, in “Missionary Appointment Correspondence 1944–1947 Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 13 (CBOQ 1930). See also “The Convention Resolution—Ordination of Women,” *Canadian Baptist*, 31 October 1929.
- 14 (CBOQ 1946–1947). See also unpublished (at the moment) paper entitled “‘It takes a while for people’s hearts to catch up with their heads’: Women’s Ordination in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1947–1979” by Leanne Friesen and Taylor Murray on the ordination of women in the CBOQ (Murray and Friesen n.d.). Thanks to both Leanne and Taylor for allowing me to view their paper.
- 15 (Miss Muriel Spurgeon 1947). That attack no doubt influenced Muriel’s future husband, W. Gordon Carder, when he wrote what Doug Adams calls his “particularly hostile treatment of Shields” assessment decades later. See (Adams 2015). See also (W. G. Carder 1950).
- 16 See letter dated 14 July 1947 in “Missionary Appointment Correspondence 1944–1947 Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 17 “Missionary Appointment Correspondence 1944–1947 Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 18 (Maxwell 2020, p. 54).
- 19 The wedding was in India on 3 March 1951. For wedding announcement and ceremony, see (The C.B.M. Wedding at Kakinada 1951).
- 20 Biographical summary for MDC Distinguished Graduate, 1988, in “Muriel Carder Biography Documents Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 21 It seems as if she wrote these on behalf of herself and her husband.
- 22 See “Gordon and Muriel Carder Letters from Field (India) Envelope” in MC Box, CBA; Farewell and Welcome Address, India, in “Muriel Carder Biography Documents Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 23 (Barnes 2013, p. 164).
- 24 (Spurgeon 1951, p. 163).
- 25 See her CV in “Muriel Carder Biography Documents Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 26 Letter to the Burke Library, Union Theological Seminary, 20 January 2016, in “Letter with Biographical Information Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.

- 27 Her dissertation was entitled “An Inquiry into the Textual Transmission of the Catholic Epistles”. For correspondence to supporters at the beginning and end of her furlough, see “Muriel Carder, letter to Mr. Dorai Raj Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 28 Letter dated Summer 1974 in “Gordon and Muriel Carder Letters from Field (India) Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 29 The Church of South India was a Protestant union of churches necessitated by the independence of India in 1947. For some supportive comments by Carder on the ecumenical impulse among the churches in India, see Carder comments from an interview in an unpublished paper by Mark Sceviour (n.d.) entitled “The Church of South India: From Schemes to Success” (2015).
- 30 For commentary on ecumenism, see letter dated Summer 1974 in “Gordon and Muriel Carder Letters from Field (India) Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA; letter dated 8 May 1975 in “Gordon and Muriel Carder Letters from Field (India) Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA; Elizabeth Smith, “Christian Religion in India Could Be Model for the World,” *Spectator*, 1 June 1973, 2 a copy in “Muriel Carder Clippings Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 31 See her CV in “Muriel Carder Biography Documents Envelope” in MC Box, CBA. One biographical summary states that her work in teaching and translation was “perhaps her most significant contribution”. See *Link and Visitor*, July 1980, 33. That month saw a union of all Canadian Baptist papers under the title *Baptist Canada*.
- 32 <https://alumni.mcmaster.ca/s/1439/17/interior.aspx?sid=1439&gid=1&pgid=1737> (accessed on 26 July 2024)
- 33 (Spurgeon 1947b, 1951; M. M. Carder 1953, 1954, 1956a, 1956b, 1957a, 1957b, 1958, 1961, 1962, 1963b, 1964, 1965b, 1965c, 1970b, 1972a, 1973, 1974, 1976a, 1977, 1980, 1981; Carder and Carder 1954, 1956, 1962, 1969, 1973; Muriel Carder Mission Circle 1957; Missionary Translator 1976).
- 34 Published by Telegu Theological Literature Board.
- 35 For instance, see letter dated 11 November 1969 from the Bible Society of India asking Carder for assistance in the translation of certain books of the Bible into Telegu. See “Muriel Carder 2000-0467 Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA. See also extensive correspondence in “Muriel Carder Bible Society Correspondence File Folder” and “Muriel Carder Bible Translation Files File Folder” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 36 For instance, see letter dated 10 November 1975 in “Muriel Carder Correspondence Containing Theological Article Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA; “Bible Society Files Envelope” and “Bible Translation Envelope” in MC Box, CBA.
- 37 See clipping dated November 1972 in “Muriel Carder Clippings Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 38 When asked about her mother’s political views on the post-colonial situation in India, Karen said that her mother did not speak much of politics. Rather what best described her position was a posture of how “may I help to make your life better and to help you see my faith?” See Interview with Karen by the author.
- 39 Letter dated 8–10 April 1964 in “Gordon and Muriel Carder Letters from Field (India) Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 40 See above note 9.
- 41 Letter dated Summer 1974 in “Gordon and Muriel Carder Letters from Field (India) Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA. Emphasis in original.
- 42 One former faculty member from McMaster Divinity College suggested to the author that one important contributing factor to the decision was the financial crisis of the 1970s and the subsequent paring down of the number of CBOMB missionaries.
- 43 Letter dated 12 December 1976 in “Gordon and Muriel Carder Letters from Field (India) Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 44 Gordon eventually ended up pastoring Honeywood-Hornings Mills United Church, Dufferin-Peel Presbytery. See (Moves 1980).
- 45 (Interview with Karen Carder 2024).
- 46 She became a member of James Street Baptist Church, Hamilton, ON.
- 47 “Report to the Department of the Ministry on Behalf of the Task Force on Women in Ministry,” in file titled “Department of Ministry-Executive, 1979–1980”, in box titled “Department of Ministry—Various Committee & Executive Minutes” at CBA (Task Force on Women in Ministry 1979–1980). A few years later the denomination created a Working Group on Equality in Ministry: Our Response and Responsibility. Carder did not serve on the committee, but she was interviewed for her input as one of four key women who had made a “significant contribution” to the denomination. See (CBOQ 1993).
- 48 See (CBOQ 1993).
- 49 “McMaster Divinity College Chapel, May 12, 1991,” in “Muriel Carder Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 50 See above note 50.
- 51 Perhaps further access to her personal dairies will cast light on the subject. Her daughter Karen thought it could possibly be a reference to a teaching position at MDC or a pastoral position at a local Baptist church, but she was not sure what her mother was referring to in that statement.
- 52 Clinical Pastoral Education (1977–1978) and Supervisor Training (1981–1984).
- 53 (Rothwell 1983). For examples of chapel services, see bulletins in “Muriel Carder Biography Documents Envelope” in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.
- 54 She also had an article in that issue. See (M. M. Carder 1981).

55 She also reviewed Stanley Hauerwas' edited volume entitled *Suffering Presence: Theological Reflections on Medicine, the Mentally Handicapped, and the Church* (1986). See (M. M. Carder 1986).

56 See above note 25.

57 (M. M. Carder 1985). See clipping in "Muriel Carder Clippings Envelope" in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.

58 For instance, she spoke at Knox Presbyterian Church Women's Missionary Society Thanksgiving Meeting. See (Former Missionary Will Speak 1980).

59 See service bulletins in "Muriel Carder Biography Documents Envelope" in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.

60 See letter in "Muriel Carder Biography Documents" in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.

61 <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/List-of-Honorary-Graduands.pdf> (accessed on 26 July 2024) See also letter from Peter George, McMaster President, dated 9 December 1996 located in "Muriel Carder McMaster University Letter from Peter George 9 December 1996" in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.

62 <https://www.yorkminsterpark.com/downloads/newsletters/YPBC%20Newsletter%20June%202010.pdf> (accessed on 26 July 2024).

63 Facebook post: <https://www.facebook.com/WdskHospital/photos/a.2310592048965999/2459348204090382/?type=3> (accessed on 26 July 2024).

64 Interview with Karen by the author.

65 (Knoll and Bolin 2018, p. 214).

66 (Baptist Minister 1976). For a summary of her ordination, see (Coombs 1979).

67 See above note 65.

68 (Knoll and Bolin 2018, p. 11).

69 (Hinson 2002; Fiddes 2008). It would be interesting to examine how her views of empire and spirituality coalesced, especially in the postwar demise of the British Empire and the independence of India.

70 Her paragraph on doctrine is a statement of orthodox and evangelical Christianity. (No doubt she could have said more, but the space provided on the form was quite limited.) See Application to Candidates for Missionary Appointment, in "Missionary Appointment Correspondence 1944–1947 Envelope" in Muriel Carder Box, CBA. It would be interesting to explore how being on the mission field impacted her theological development. For instance, see ponderings over the meaning of 1 John 4:7 and salvation for Indians in Letter dated 26 April 1972 in "Gordon and Muriel Carder Letters from Field (India) Envelope" in Muriel Carder Box, CBA.

71 (M. M. Carder 1972b, p. 17).

72 (M. M. Carder 1972b, p. 31).

73 Email dated 16 April 2024 from Dr. James Elisha Taneti.

74 There is a sense of urgency for this research, since today there are those living who could be interviewed about their experience with and observations of Carder.

75 (Punnaiah 2010, p. 23).

76 (Montgomery 1910, p. 114). For a more recent assessment of the vital role of Biblewomen, see (J. Murray 2000).

77 Letter dated 8 May 1975 in "Gordon and Muriel Carder Letters from Field (India) Envelope" in Muriel Carder Box, CBA. Her use of the term "pastor" indicates the expectations of the host of activities that Baptist pastors were traditionally expected to carry out, such as preaching, teaching, evangelizing, baptizing, discipling, counseling, and presiding over the Lord's Supper (communion). And Carder carried out all such functions as a missionary in India.

78 (Bendroth 2008, p. 315).

79 See above note 27.

80 (Maitland 1983, p. 10).

81 (Gouldbourne 1997, pp. 29–30).

82 By the time of Holmes' ordination, the CBOQ had a base of support (72%) for women in ministry. See (Beverley 1980). However, as Bruce Fawcett notes, a CBOQ study in the 1990s indicates that the denomination realized that it had failed to do a good job at encouraging and supporting female pastors seeking ordination. See (Fawcett 2006), p. 69.

83 The anonymous polling was carried out the first two weeks of April 2024. I have the complete results in my records.

84 (Sangster 2021, p. 359).

85 See above note 65.

86 (Zikmund et al. 1998, p. 132).

87 (Chaves 1999, p. 143).

88 The vote was carried out by delegates raising their hand.

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Article

Women in the Australian Baptist Denomination in Peace and War, 1920–1945

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Abstract: Exploring the roles and activities of Australian Baptist women is essential to present a complete history of the Australian Baptist denomination. Many historical narratives do not include women’s work in the denomination despite their numerical dominance. This article provides a brief overview of women’s work in their congregations and the broader denomination from 1920 to 1945. Women’s organisations were important as a vehicle for women’s ministries and fundraising, and they enabled talented individuals to be involved in leading and managing organisations, as well as demonstrating their theological views through speeches.

Keywords: Baptist; women; church; Christianity; Protestant; history; Australia

1. Introduction

When Lily Higlett died in 1943, an obituary by Helen Cousin in the Baptist denomination’s paper, *The Australian Baptist*, stated that “she has been the leader of the women of our churches in New South Wales.”¹ Her inspiration has touched every department of our church life” (Cousin 1943). Due to her work for the Baptist denomination, Lily Higlett must have been considered a truly remarkable woman. There were many Australian Baptist women who worked to develop and maintain the Baptist denomination between 1920 and 1945. Yet, in the 21st century, few Baptists would know anything about the work or life of such women.

Australian Baptist women’s work within the denomination is largely ignored or overlooked within the historiography despite many women being active in their Baptist congregations, in Baptist mission work, and in various state and national Baptist women’s organisations. Some of this omission is because women were not ordained into ministry during this period at a time when leadership was often akin to ordination.

This article specifically examines areas of women’s ministries, with an emphasis on how they worked towards establishing peace in the 1920s and 1930s, and their work during World War II. Examples include women’s work in all Australian states, particularly noting the significant work undertaken by Cecelia Downing in Victoria, Florence Benskin and Edith Wilcox in South Australia, and Adelaide Bamford and Lily Higlett in New South Wales (NSW). Largely, the article does not examine men’s views on women’s roles: an analysis of men’s views could be the subject of a complete article. Instead, the article demonstrates how women were able to work in a conservative denomination and were able to fulfill their Baptist evangelical views.

2. Who Were Australian Baptists?

The 1921 Australian Census indicated that nearly 55,000 women considered themselves Baptist, representing just over 2% of women in Australia at that time (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2024). The denomination developed from the 1830s and was slow to grow. The proportion of Australian Baptists of the Australian population was never more than 4% and consisted mainly of Baptist adherents who migrated to Australia from the United Kingdom



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(UK) (Parker 2005). Indeed, until the mid-20th century, the UK was very important to Australian Baptists, and travel to the “old country” occurred regularly (Farewell to Miss Sharp 1931).

Women made up a greater proportion of Australian Baptists than men. Over half of the foundation members of Australian Baptist congregations were women.² Within Baptist congregations, women represented around two-thirds of congregations’ membership, and more women attended worship services than men.³ Women were aware of their numerical dominance. In 1925, Florence Benskin wrote:

Baptist women, numbering two-thirds of our congregations, are ready to stand shoulder to shoulder and to help in every possible way the coming of the Kingdom of our Lord (Benskin 1925b).

Baptists had four key distinctions that set adherents apart from other Protestant denominations. These were: personal conversion accompanied by adult baptism; the priesthood of all believers; civil liberty, or separation of the church from the state; and religious liberty, or freedom of religion (Bebbington 2018; Manley 2006). Theoretically, women were active and equal participants in the congregation’s activities because of the application of Baptist distinctions: believers’ baptism through full immersion was undertaken by both men and women; the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers meant that all believers were equally close to God, and women did not need a mediator or “third party”—often male—to connect to God; and civil and religious liberty drove the creation of independent Baptist congregations, where all members of congregations made decisions about the congregation’s policies. Practically, equality between men and women did not occur, specifically with respect to the ordination of ministers, which is discussed below.

Australian Baptists held evangelical beliefs, as did UK Baptists. In 1989, historian David Bebbington noted that evangelicalism was characterised by the four marks of conversionism, biblicism, crucicentrism, and activism. While these marks continue to be debated by historians and theologians, they are a useful means of understanding Australian Baptist women’s evangelicalism from 1920 to 1945. Often, these marks can be seen in women’s actions and their written works. As a pertinent example, most evangelical women held the view that converting “unbelievers” to Christianity through spreading the gospel—usually referred to as mission—was an essential task of Christians. Australian Baptist women were involved in various mission activities, including as missionaries and in mission management.

In the latter half of the 19th century, as Baptist numbers grew, colonial Baptist unions were established, as in the UK. The unions were independent, had slightly different theological beliefs, and had different constitutions (Manley 2006). Issues, such as those regarding membership policies and communion practices, caused conflict within and between Australian Baptists in all states and possibly hampered the development of the denomination (Hughes 1937; Prior 1966; Moore 1996; Parker 2005; Manley 2006).

Thus, new Australian Baptist members and congregations replicated worship practices, management structures, and theological views from their congregations in the UK. In addition, Australia was a patriarchal society established through colonial rule (Manley 2006). Australian society went through significant changes regarding the role of women and opportunities for enhanced educational and legal rights at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Yet, within most Australian Christian denominations until late in the 20th century, women were limited with respect to the roles they could undertake in the denomination. For Baptist women, this meant that they were not ordained as ministers, nor allowed equal participation in management roles with men (Manley 2006).

Australian Baptist women were committed to applying their skills and their time to supporting the denomination. Despite social constraints and different theological viewpoints across Australia, Baptist women were able to work both within their Baptist congregations and the denomination more broadly.

3. Baptist Women's Work Prior to 1920

Australian Baptist women were always active within the denomination. In line with Baptist beliefs and evangelical activism, women's activities were accepted and expected within Baptist congregations, where they undertook roles such as deaconesses and Sunday School teachers, as well as roles in fundraising (Wilson 2000).

Baptist women created women's organisations in their congregations, but also at the colonial/state level. In 1872, Victorian Baptist women established the first colonial women's group to support the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in England. A woman's organisation supporting evangelism commenced in NSW in 1878, and a woman's organisation supporting Australian Baptist foreign mission activities formed in South Australia in 1885. Following the Australian Federation in 1901, state women's organisations were established in Western Australia (1906) and Queensland (1909). By 1920, these organisations had large numbers of members and were relatively influential. The work of women within these organisations provided funding and unpaid labour to the broader denomination for larger projects and home missions.

4. Women and Foreign Mission

Australian Baptist women's strong commitment to evangelicalism was evident in the work they did in the foreign mission endeavour. From the mid-19th century to the late 20th century, a significant number of evangelical women, particularly in the UK and USA, but also in Australia, worked as foreign missionaries or were involved in the support of foreign mission work. The term "foreign mission"—now considered ethnocentric—was used extensively by Australian Baptists and other Christian denominations to describe work undertaken by Christians spreading the gospel in non-Christian countries. Australian Baptist women represented around 10% of Australian women engaged in foreign mission work (O'Brien 2005).⁴

Until 1882, Australian Baptist mission work was restricted to financial support provided to the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in England. However, from 1882, Australian Baptists funded their own missionaries. Until the mid-20th century, there were more Australian Baptist missionary women appointed than men, and the first 10 Australian Baptist missionaries were women.⁵ From 1882, they worked in different mission stations within East Bengal, now Bangladesh, which remained the only location of Australian Baptist foreign mission work until 1949. Initially, the Australian Baptist mission work was run on a colonial/state basis, but in 1913, the state mission organisations federated to become the Australian Baptist Foreign Mission (ABFM) (Cupit et al. 2012).

From 1920 to 1945, 70 Baptist women worked as missionary women in the ABFM, compared to 23 men (Cupit et al. 2012). Missionary women undertook all available roles within the foreign missions, and they had significant autonomy and leadership of their work within the ABFM. Several factors allowed this to occur, but the predominant reason was that as there were so few men, inevitably, women were called upon to establish, lead, and preach in the missions (Gooden 1998). A further factor relates to the interplay between race and gender, whereby women were able to lead and manage foreign mission work because the Baptists overseeing the work believed missionary women were more skilled than the local people. Indeed, most missionary women had post-secondary training, including seven women who had completed university degrees, which was a significant number at a time when most women—and men—did not attend university.

From the late 20th century, various academics criticise foreign mission work, largely because of the conscious or subconscious beliefs of missionaries that a Western (Christian) culture was the ideal and that non-Christians convert to a Western form of Christianity. Recent scholarship, including that undertaken by mission historian Dana Robert, examines the multifaceted relationship between mission and Western colonialism (Robert 2009). Robert states that views of Western superiority were held by most Western people at that time, and evidence shows that missionaries were less racist than other Westerners. In addition, on many occasions, foreign missionary women and men advocated for the rights

of local people against colonial governments (Robert 2009). Such actions can also be found by Australian Baptist missionary women.⁶

Due to the importance of women undertaking foreign mission work within the Australian Baptist denomination, significant further research could be undertaken about Baptist women in the mission. However, to date, the subject has received relatively more attention than work undertaken by other women in the Baptist denomination.⁷ This article acknowledges both the criticisms of foreign missions alongside the significance of the work undertaken by missionary women but does not have the scope to adequately examine the Australian Baptist mission, colonialism, and gender due to the complexity of the issues.⁸

In addition to undertaking missionary service, Baptist women undertook roles in Australia to support the ABFM: in Board and Executive Committee membership, in the dissemination of missionary information and correspondence, and in fundraising and other activities promoting missionary work. This work is discussed further below.

5. Women in Baptist Congregations

Most Australian Baptist women worked within local congregations. Women offered their services as unpaid labour to sustain Australian Baptist congregations. Women undertaking roles in their congregations often spoke of the fulfillment that they received in doing this work. The congregations relied on these services, particularly in activities that prepared the church building for worship services, such as cleaning, flower arrangements, and preparation of communion. Women found these services meaningful. For example, in 1931, Enid Elphinston wrote: “We give flowers to comfort in sorrow, and how many hearts have been strengthened by the gift of a flower!” (Elphinston 1931). Women undertook spiritual activities, such as Sunday School teaching and providing music or singing in the choir. Often, these were lifelong activities, as in the case of Rose Smith, who taught Sunday School in Newtown Baptist, NSW, for over 50 years (Called home: Mrs Rose Smith 1943). Women undertake broader activities supporting their congregations, such as catering for functions, helping members and other adherents in need of physical support, and fundraising. In 1936, Dr. Frank Hone, then-President of the Baptist Union of South Australia, was reported as saying, “It is men who do the talking, while the women do the work!” (South Australian Baptist Union Annual Assembly 1936).

Much of the work undertaken by women occurred through an organised women’s group and most congregations prior to 1945 had a women’s group. Women in Baptist congregations usually established such groups to assist the congregation through practical and financial support. Meetings were held regularly—often weekly—and included prayers and Bible readings. Women’s groups enabled women to develop connections with other women in the congregation and to support each other, as well as fundraising for activities within and outside the congregation.

Between 1920 and 1945, several women served on diaconates or were appointed to executive positions, especially in new, small, or regional Baptist congregations. From 1924 to 1929, Myra Norman was the first secretary of Pennant Hills Baptist, NSW. In 1929, she advised the membership that she was not accepting nomination for the position again, “feeling that as there are now a number of men members, one of them should fill the office” (More or Less personal 1929). From 1911 to 1926, Edith Dorse served as Secretary of Stroud Baptist, Tasmania, and she remained on the diaconate until at least 1930 (Harris 2013). Thus, in some congregations and under certain conditions, women were elected to executive positions that were usually reserved for men. However, most congregations did not have women on their diaconate or in executive positions.

About 10% of congregations appointed unpaid deaconesses up to 1945.⁹ The deaconesses’ committees had three shared features. First, deaconesses’ committees met separately with the deacons.¹⁰ Deaconesses were involved in activities in the congregation, and they did not formulate policies (the latter task was undertaken by male deacons). Tasks assumed by the deaconesses included aiding women in the process of baptism, interviewing potential new members, visiting those who were unwell in the congregation,

and organising cleaning and upkeep of the church building (Deaconesses North Adelaide Baptist 1882–1941; Wilcox 1936).

Second, being a deaconess was considered a privilege, alongside that of deacons.¹¹ In 1926, *The Australian Baptist* obituary for Mary Watson stated:

The highest office to which a member of the church can be called is that of deacon or deaconess. To this office, Mrs. Watson was called many years ago and has consistently carried out its duties (Aberdeen Street Baptist: Memorial service to Mrs. J. Watson 1926).

Finally, the deaconesses' roles were not emphasised, their ministries were minimized, and the minutes of the meetings were rarely retained (Peterborough Baptist 1980; Helyar 1995). Despite their limitations, deaconesses appear to have known and responded to both the physical and spiritual needs of others in their congregations.

6. Women in Ministerial Leadership

Some Baptist congregations across Australia established paid roles for women to assist with home missions or within congregations. In 1920, Grace Taylor stated that there was “value of a godly woman’s assistance in a pastor’s work” (Dixon 1920). They were paid between one-third and half of the salary of a Baptist minister.¹² The women had titles such as “sister” or “deaconess”, and their roles and ministries were extensive, including organising and leading weekday study groups for women, visiting sick people in the congregation, and undertaking evangelistic activities for non-Christians in the local community, such as visiting prisons.¹³

From the end of the 19th century, Deaconess Orders within Australia were supported within the Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations. In the 1920s and 1930s, Baptists in other Australian states discussed the merits of establishing a Deaconess Order. For example, in Victoria, the Baptist women’s state organisation recommended establishing an Order, but, ultimately, the state union did not proceed.¹⁴ Likely the impetus for Baptist Deaconess Orders came from both the establishment of other Australian Deaconess Orders and the UK Baptist Deaconess Order (O’Brien 2005; Baptist Women’s Training Sisterhood Committee 1936).

NSW was the only state that established a Baptist Deaconess Order as a framework within which women could work. It was operational for a short period from 1917 to 1925, and, ultimately, only six women were appointed within the Order (Hilton 2024a). A unique feature of the NSW Order was operated and funded by women, so it was independent of the Baptist Union of NSW.¹⁵ Possibly, Australian Baptist state denominations were too small to maintain Deaconess Orders. For example, records of meetings from the NSW Order indicate that members were disappointed with the small number of suitable women attracted to the positions. In 1924, the Order asked:

Should any of our people know of a scheme that will mean a larger and greater influence in the women’s share of the Home Mission work, we shall be only too happy to learn of it or accept any suggestions for the more effective working of Home Mission interests in our churches (New South Wales: Baptist Deaconesses’ Association 1924).

However, Australian Deaconess Orders and the UK Baptist Order experienced similar issues with respect to struggling to engage and retain suitable women, in part because the salary was low and women were expected to resign if they married. Plus, the role of a deaconess was not clearly defined—tasks ranged from minor maintenance to preaching (O’Brien 2005; Baptist Women’s Training Sisterhood Committee 1936). Instead of using a formal Order, individual congregations engaged deaconesses or sisters where and when required. For example, the Brisbane Tabernacle employed four deaconesses in the period from 1920 to 1945, including Fanny Aldridge, who was appointed in 1944 and served until 1966 (Baptist Heritage Queensland 2009).

Clearly, these Deaconesses were eager to minister or serve in leadership positions in the denomination, yet there were no ordained Baptist women ministers in Australia until 1978 when Rev. Dr. Marita Munro was ordained in Victoria. In the early 20th century, the exclusion of women from Baptist-ordained ministry was assumed, as opposed to a specific exclusion. Most Australian Baptists believed that women and men had different ministry roles, with a key distinction being that women did not lead a congregation, thereby limiting women's roles to those such as deaconesses and missionaries (Manley 2006; Bebbington 2018).

Only a small number of Christian denominations in Australia ordained women to the ministry before the 1960s, including the Salvation Army, the Unitarian Church, and the Congregational Church. The ordination of women in the Congregational denomination is significant as there are many documented links between women from the Congregational and Baptist denominations (Wilcox 1945). Julia Pitman believes that independent congregations allowed for the ordination of women in the Congregation denomination (Pitman 2016). Australian Baptists shared the principle of independent congregations, and still women were not ordained. In England, women commenced being ordained to Baptist church ministry in the 1920s—50 years before the Australian Baptists. One possible reason for this was that English Baptists had retained the radical beliefs of the Baptist faith and thus created a point of difference between themselves and the Anglican Church of England. In comparison, Australian Baptists were socially conservative and aligned with other Australian denominations, including the Anglican Church. Ordination was not encouraged within the denomination, so a woman who may have privately expressed such a desire was not encouraged to seek ordination.

There is currently no evidence to light of discussions regarding ordination occurring in women's groups within congregations or in state or national women's organisations, and no Australian Baptist women sought ordination through official channels.¹⁶ Potentially, the lack of documented discussion regarding ordination indicates that women arranged their ministries to fit within boundaries that were accepted within the denomination. Women did not seek ordination for themselves or others if they believed such actions may reduce available opportunities. Elizabeth Flowers concluded that this was the case for women in the United States of America (USA) (Flowers 2012). For example, in the 1940s, Adelaide Bamford was on a preaching roster for a regional congregation in NSW and preached at least once a month, yet when discussions regarding women's ordination occurred in the early 1960s, she stated that such arrangements should be a "temporary measure" (Bamford 1960). Women in the Australian Baptist denomination were able to minister and lead through work other than formal ordination. The focus on foreign missions, described above, led talented women in the denomination to volunteer for this work rather than seek ordination. A woman could work as a deaconess or within a congregation in other roles. Certainly, there is no evidence that women left the Baptist denomination because the denomination was conservative and they could not be ordained.¹⁷

Between 1920 and 1945, a small number of women undertook the role of minister in their congregations. For instance, Emily Smith ministered in Greenslopes Baptist, a new congregation in southern Brisbane, Queensland. Officially, the first minister of the congregation was employed in 1924. However, from 1920 until 1924, Emily Smith was effectively the minister of the Greenslopes Baptist congregation (Young 2020).

In the 1940s, three women undertook ministerial roles in South Australia. They were appointed by the Baptist Union of South Australia, with their salaries being paid by the South Australian Baptist Women's League (BWL). Margaret Speck's ministry career commenced in 1940 when she was appointed to work as a "sister" (South Australian Notes: Sister Margaret 1940). She undertook the role of minister at both Hilton and Whyalla Baptist, filling in when the ministerial role was vacant (Notes from The Churches: Baptist 1941). She was described as "an able speaker [with] much experience in church work" (Social notes 1947). She left the work in 1954 when she married. In 1941, Florence Hogan and Myrtle Stribling commenced work in the Mount Cooper Circuit at Port Kenny Baptist,

600 kilometres west of Adelaide. South Australian Baptist Union officials appointed the women reluctantly, as the preference was for a man, “but they went there and made good with self-sacrifice and devotion” (South Australian Notes: Sister F. Hogan 1960). The women conducted weekly worship services in four different locations, officiated at funeral services, and were accredited by the Baptist Union of South Australia to undertake marriages. They described themselves as “acting pastors” (Morris et al. 1943). They successfully continued in this role for 12 years until Myrtle Stribling resigned to marry, and Florence Hogan was asked to return to Adelaide and work in a position in the Baptist West End Mission.

There is evidence of women preaching in all Australian states between 1920 and 1945 (Hilton 2024a). Congregations often welcomed women as preachers on Mother’s Day, the second Sunday in May. For example, on May 13, 1945 in Perth, Western Australia, women preached at five of the fourteen Baptist congregations (Advertising 1945). In addition, most missionary women in the ABFM preached at various congregations when they were on furlough from mission work, although their preaching was often called an “address” or “speech”.¹⁸

Unfortunately, few sermons preached by women are extant.¹⁹ A small number of sermons delivered by Edith Wilcox in South Australia have been retained. She encouraged the congregation to use their “Character and Opportunities” and work to build a better world. She said: “We don’t start equal in physical or any other endowment. . . Our ancestry is not our choice, but honesty is. In a word—CHARACTER” (Wilcox 1999). Another woman who preached regularly was Adelaide Bamford in NSW. Her sermons have not been retained, although other published material is extant, including her writings in *The Australian Baptist* and two books of short messages, which were written as short sermons, titled *The Sunlit Road* and *Hills of Home* (Bamford 1945; Bamford 1950). In these published sermons, Adelaide Bamford focused on Christian themes such as praying, the effective use of time, definitions of home, and the importance of undertaking regular family worship.

Another important role for women in Baptist congregations was that of the minister’s wife. It is probable that some women who were interested in ministry work chose to marry a minister so they could undertake roles supporting their husbands’ ministry. Certainly, Melody Maxwell postulates that this occurred in the USA (Maxwell 2018). The minister’s wife had a high status within Baptist congregations: the president of women’s groups was usually the minister’s wife (Jireh Branch Q.B.W. Union 1929–1948). Most ministers’ wives appear to have embraced their role and undertaken tasks such as visiting adherents or chairing women’s groups, and ad hoc preaching.²⁰ Indeed, most congregations would have an expectation that they *would* work with their husbands. When two Baptist ministers celebrated 50 years in the ministry in 1983, it was written that the ministers’ wives “were ‘ordained’ by God to be their partners [in] Christian service” (Two Pastors celebrate 50 years in the ministry 1983).

7. Women’s Activities in the Broader Australian Baptist Denomination

Several women were writers in the Australian Baptist denomination, which regularly published their work in denominational journals, particularly *The Australian Baptist*. Adelaide Bamford wrote a regular column for women in *The Australian Baptist* between 1939 and 1960, using the pen name Keturah. While her early columns contained “homely hints”, later columns were usually an examination of a Christian attribute using a Bible passage. On 13 January, 1942, her column exhibited David Bebbington’s four evangelical distinctions. She encouraged her readers to ensure the Bible “becomes the living word” (biblicism), to confess and “humble ourselves before the cross” (crucicentrism), to “bring others” to Christ (conversionism), and to trust that God will “make the way plain and open” for the work (activism) (Bamford 1942a). Florence Benskin was another regular writer of a denominational paper, the South Australian *The Baptist Record*, between 1922 and 1926. Her columns were similar to Adelaide Bamford’s format and were also evangelical in nature. For instance, on 15 January, 1925, she wrote that:

If we want to make the Bible our own, we must make a real study of it, we must get our roots deep in, and, as the pages unfold to us, new life will spring to the glory of His name (Benskin 1925a).

Other women wrote in denominational papers on a regular or ad hoc basis. For example, in NSW, Susan Davey authored monthly summaries of meetings of the NSW Ladies Zealan Missionary Society (LZMS) in *The Australian Baptist*.²¹ Other women submitted articles, and, while many were based on “women’s issues” such as children and family life, the articles were thoughtful and theological. For instance, Elizabeth Hewison’s 1931 article on “The Building of Character in the Home Life” states:

The secret of growing strong characters in our homes will be that other presence, unseen, but wonderfully read, for is He not the counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace? (Hewison 1929)

These women’s writing, including works by Baptist missionary women in the Baptist denomination, meant that the activities and views of women were available to all Australian Baptists.

Women organised state women’s organisations to support home and foreign missions. Such organisations were essential to the denomination in that they provided significant unpaid labour, for instance, in catering for denomination events, as well as significant financial support.

As noted above, prior to 1920, many state-based women’s organisations had commenced operation and had gained influence in the denomination. Usually, a foreign mission state organisation was established before an organisation supported the home mission. This was possibly because women could undertake home missions within their congregations and because there was an intense interest in foreign missions. The interest in foreign missions was, in itself, influenced by women’s actions. The Victorian Baptist Women’s Missionary Union (BWMU) aimed to ensure the “promotion of missionary zeal in the Churches” (Victorian Baptist Women’s Fellowship Missionary Committee 1968). Australian Baptist women were committed to the notion that women needed to undertake foreign mission work for other women, known as “women’s work for women”, and this was reflected in reasons for establishing women’s mission organisations. As an example, in 1884, the LZMS stated that there was a:

Great necessity for increased interest, and more direct effort on behalf of the women of India in a social, as well as a religious, point of view, which work could only be effected by woman herself. The deep need for the establishment of such a society was felt by all present.²²

Women in mission organisations in the period from 1920 to 1945 continued to believe that women’s work for women remained essential. In a 1920 meeting of the LZMS, Elizabeth Dovey was “assuring [missionary candidates] of our continued interest in their progress, and our deep sympathy with them in their chosen work for the Master” (Zenana Missionary Society 1920).

Arguably, Baptist women’s organisations had not reached their zenith until the 1920s and 1930s. At that time, all Baptist women around Australia were represented by well-organised women’s state organisations within the growing denomination. Their work was expansive and driven by state needs, such as the NSW deaconess work described above, the infrastructure provided by South Australian women in the Baptist Women’s League, and the support of the Baptist school, Carey Grammar School, by Victorian women (Wilcox 1945; Victorian Baptist Women’s Association 1945). Obviously, the organisations had areas in which they provided similar support—all women’s state organisations catered at state Baptist union meetings. The Baptist women’s state organisations were increasingly communicating and collaborating with each other, and Baptist women established two national organisations: in 1929, the Federal Senior Girls’ Missionary Union (SGMU); and in 1935, the Australian Baptist Women’s Board (ABWB).

From 1922, women in Baptist congregations created groups called Senior Girls' Missionary Branches, which were part of a state SGMU. The SGMU was a mechanism for younger women to become involved in foreign and home missions, although usually the focus was the work of the ABFM. Alice Barber and Margaret Findlay, Baptist missionary women from Victoria, were the instigators of the SGMU, which was modelled on a similar structure in the Australian Presbyterian Church (Victorian Notes 1922). The SGMU commenced in Victoria and was taken up by Queensland (1923), South Australia (1923), and NSW (1926). The SGMU was not established in Tasmania and Western Australia until 1945 and 1947, respectively, in part because the denomination was small. The SGMU was successful in its aim of galvanising young women to support missions. By the end of 1922, the Victorian SGMU was fully funding Ruby Brindley's work in the ABFM, and by the end of 1930, the NSW SGMU was funding five missionary women.²³

Across states, the SGMU had consistent aims and activities, undertaking fundraising events, conducting annual camps, and encouraging interest in missions. It was inevitable that members of the SGMU volunteered for mission service, and, consequently, SGMUs supported these women.²⁴ The state SGMUs shared advice and study resources between states, and a federated SGMU was inevitable. In 1929, the Baptist Union of Australia approved the federated SGMU (Earnest work: Girls' missionary union 1929). The federated SGMU was simply a mechanism to enable state SGMUs to meet annually, but it was a national platform for young women's activities in supporting missions, and for that reason, it was significant.

In 1935, the ABWB was established following numerous discussions among Baptist women across Australia through the early 1930s. Victorian woman Cecilia Downing led the work to establish a national organisation representing Australian Baptist women (Catt 1932; Devonport Baptist Church 1933; Men have failed: Women must save the country 1935). She wanted Australian Baptist women to collaborate nationally so they could be represented among peak bodies seeking to achieve world peace.²⁵ Cecilia Downing, along with other Baptist women such as Elizabeth Rees, believed that promoting peace could assist the country recover from the 1930s economic depression (Rees 1937). A further benefit of a national organisation was that it could represent Australian Baptist women in meetings of Baptists in the Asia-Pacific region and in the women's committee of the Baptist World Alliance (Downing 1935).

The 1935 Australian Baptist Assembly amended the constitution of the Baptist Union of Australia to include the ABWB, with Cecilia Downing appointed as its first president (Ham 1985). The ABWB aimed primarily:

To inspire and encourage women's work in the churches of the denomination, and, by co-ordinating existing work, to bind together Baptist women in a fellowship of prayer and service for the Kingdom of God in Australia and throughout the world (Downing 1935).

Ultimately, the ABWB was not significant, in part because women continued to focus on state women's organisations, which had more power and influence. Despite this, the ABWB operated until the end of the 20th century and enabled women to have "a voice in the Baptist Union of Australia" (Ham 1985). In addition, as Cecilia Downing had hoped, the organisation allowed Baptist women to be part of groups outside the denomination. For example, the ABWB was a member of the committee that organised Pan-Pacific Women's Conferences (Fourth Pan-Pacific Women's Conference 1936).

The state-based and national women's organisations were important to the women as a vehicle through which they could fulfil their desire to be active in their faith. They could unite with other Baptist women, and they could develop and use skills in management and leadership. Lily Higlett is presented as an example of a Baptist woman who was actively involved in several different groups within the Baptist denomination, including women's groups in the congregations she attended, the NSW Baptist Women's Home Mission Auxiliary, and the NSW LZMS, of which she was the president between 1931 and

1943. She visited and spoke to the women's committees of many Baptist congregations in NSW.²⁶ Lily Higlett was intelligent and articulate, but she does not appear to have any published work. However, in 2019, one of her notebooks was deposited in the NSW Baptist Archives. The notebook contains numerous speeches and prayers for meetings of the LZMS between 1938 and 1943, showing evidence of her Baptist and Evangelical beliefs, and highlighting her commitment to foreign missions (Higlett, Lily 1939–1943). At the July 1942 meeting of the LZMS, she stated:

It is our privilege at home to provide the means for the carrying on [of the] difficult task [of foreign mission], and to pray more earnestly than ever before that whatever else falters, the Christian Missionary Work will go on.²⁷

Lily Higlett's active faith is an enduring feature of her notebook, with her words showing how she was committed to promoting and ensuring ongoing funding for the Baptist foreign mission.

In addition to women's organisations, some women were members of state and national Baptist organisations, especially mission organisations. Baptist women in the UK and North America created women's mission organisations, which directly engaged missionary women, although by 1920, most of these organisations had been, or were being, subsumed into the larger mission organisations. (Kemp 1927; Robert 1996). In Australia, Protestant denominations established women's organisations to support missionary women within the respective denominational mission organisations. Thus, Methodist women instituted a Women's Missionary Auxiliary, the Congregational denomination had a Federated Women's Guild with state auxiliary committees, Presbyterian women established state Presbyterian Women's Missionary Associations, and Anglican women established a Women's Auxiliary Board (Mitchell 1985; Godden 1997). Due to the relatively small number of Australian missionary women compared to the UK and North America, distinct Australian denominational women's mission organisations would not have been viable. Arguably, the women's organisations became a fundraising mechanism for the denominational mission organisations, and women had limited opportunities in managing general mission activity (Mitchell 1985).

The small Australian Baptist denomination had, from its beginnings, not only a feminised foreign mission workforce but *constituted* women's involvement in mission management: a feature that was not part of other denominations' mission organisations. Most Baptist state mission committees had either informal or formal requirements that women were members, and this was not a condition stated for other committees within the denomination, nor for women in other Australian denominations.²⁸

Most significantly, Baptist women were members of the denomination's mission board, the ABFM Board. Indeed, it was a requirement of the Board's constitution that at least two members were women. In addition, from 1920 to 1945, one-third of the attendees of annual meetings of the ABFM were women, and all attendees had full voting rights.²⁹ The women on the Board had an impact on decisions taken, especially regarding the engagement of prospective mission women, whose initial interviews were regularly undertaken by a woman on the Board.³⁰ Presumably, the large number of women attending the annual meetings of the ABFM also impacted decisions with respect to mission policy and funding arrangements.

8. A Time of Peace (1920 to 1939) and a Time of War (1939 to 1945)

Inevitably, Baptist women's roles changed over the period from 1920 to 1945, and this was evident in their activities between the two world wars (1920 to 1939), compared to those undertaken during World War II (1939 to 1945).

While it is true that most Baptists supported the reasons for war, many Australian Baptist women spoke and wrote about the importance of peace in the interwar period, particularly in the 1930s (Manley 2006). In addition, the connection between the ABW and

the issue of peace was strong, as described above. Baptist women believed that “peace should prevail”.³¹

The Second World War was devastating for many Australian Baptist women. Some women suffered the loss of close family members and friends.³² Women were prepared to increase their workload to assist their congregation and the denomination more broadly. When meetings were held during the war, women put in extra effort to ensure the smooth running of events, such as ensuring that necessary food was available (New South Wales notes 1945). Many women undertook tasks where there were not sufficient numbers of men available.³³ Some women were appointed to executive positions.³⁴ As an example, from 1939 to 1944, Halley Nicholls was elected deaconess and treasurer at Redland Bay Baptist, Queensland.³⁵ Potentially, the ministerial roles undertaken by Margaret Speck, Florence Hogan, and Myrtle Stribling described above were possible because of the lack of suitable men during the war. Indeed, in their 1942 annual report, the Grange Baptist Ladies’ Guild in South Australia noted:

Sister Margaret Sinclair told us about her work as a deaconess and made us realize how much we womenfolk are needed to attend to the pastoral work of the churches as so many of the menfolk are called up for military service (Grange Baptist Ladies’ Guild 1942).

Women regularly referenced the war in their speeches and written work. Edith Wilcox used her 1941 sermon on the story of Noah to remind her listeners that, despite the war, Christians needed to be active in society to work towards peace:

The deluge of war that threatens to destroy the world today has not been sent by God. It is the outcome of the same lack of mental energy, sincerity, and co-operation that turned the flood into a disaster and tragedy... all involved in it together (Wilcox 1999).

Likewise, on 3 March, 1942, Adelaide Bamford based her column on John 14:13 “And whatsoever ye shall ask in MY NAME that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son”. She stated that she had “prayed and prayed that wars should cease” (Bamford 1942b). On 20 July, 1943, Adelaide Bamford commented that the German nation was “flee[ing] from God.” She wrote: “Any individual or nation that thinks God may be evaded and forgotten has forgotten that God is knowledge, all-seeing and all-searching” (Bamford 1943). Missionary women used letters and published articles to discuss the impact of war on their work. In 1942, Effie Baldwin wrote that “war talk is on everyone’s lips” (Baldwin 1942).

9. Work Outside the Baptist Denomination

Between 1920 and 1945, Baptist women worked in various organisations and activities outside the Baptist denomination, where they were able to exert significant power in large women’s organisations. While this article is focused on work in the denomination, it is useful to briefly consider other organisations and the women who worked in them. The evidence appears to indicate that very few Baptist women volunteered for work in non-Christian organisations (Hilton 2024a). Possibly, Baptist women were involved but are not documented, either because within the denomination women’s achievements in non-Christian organisations were not recognised, or because there was no connection to the Baptist denomination noted in the organisation.³⁶ Potentially, the importance of Baptist distinctions and a focus on Baptist foreign missions did not facilitate widespread collaboration with other Protestant women, and Baptist women’s state and national organisations provided adequate opportunities for service along denominational lines.

Yet, some women’s involvement in non-denominational organisations was inevitable due to the small size of the denomination. The work was limited to social welfare and social reform organisations, particularly the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and city mission organisations. Between 1931 and 1939, Victorian Baptist woman Elizabeth Rees was the editor of *The White Ribbon Signal*, the journal of the WCTU, and Cecilia Downing was involved with other non-denominational organisations. This work may not have

strengthened the Australian Baptist denomination, but, arguably, it equipped them to be more effective within the Baptist denomination. Certainly, both Elizabeth Rees and Cecilia Downing were committed and hardworking members of their respective congregations and the broader Baptist denomination (Wilkin 1939; Smart 1996).

Australian Baptist women also worked as missionary women for organisations outside the Australian Baptist denomination. As noted above, from 1920 to 1945, 70 women worked for the ABFM, while nearly twice that number of Baptist women worked for home or foreign mission organisations *other* than the ABFM (Hilton 2024a). While their work was not as visible in the denomination, many retained links with their congregations and spoke in various Baptist forums about their work.³⁷

A small number of Australian Baptist women published books outside the denomination, such as Winifred Embery, who wrote of her experiences in the China Inland Mission; and Isabel Stafford, who published books of short sermons (Embery 1945; Stafford 1942). Certainly, Australian Baptists engaged in these writings.³⁸

10. Conclusions

This paper has demonstrated why Australian Baptists should acknowledge the vital roles and ministries that women undertook between 1920 and 1945 within the denomination. Women's achievements have been forgotten in the history of the denomination when, clearly, women were influential, and their roles were essential. Women undertook significant leadership roles in foreign missions, in management, preaching, and other ministry roles within congregations, and in denominational affairs, where state-based women's organisations guided large Baptist social welfare projects. Women demonstrated the central tenets of their Baptist evangelical faith, with its belief in the priesthood of all believers and a desire for activism and mission.

In 1943, following the death of Lily Higlett, the NSW Women's Home Mission Auxiliary was addressed by Adelaide Bamford, the then-president, who said that: "If [Lily Higlett] was present, she would say to us, 'Carry on! Be fully surrendered and follow Christ.'" Arguably Lily Higlett—and Adelaide Bamford, and the many other women involved in denominational activities between 1920 and 1945—were role models for later generations of Australian Baptist women, the women who continued to "Carry on!" and work in the Australian Baptist denomination and broader Australian society in the latter half of the 20th century through Baptist organisations that provided mission, aged care, and health services.

Adelaide Bamford's statement is just as relevant for Baptist women in the 21st century: continue being active participants in the denomination; be role models for other women; and write and preach theological insights. May they "Carry on!"

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Notes

- ¹ The Australian Baptist denomination is not a single organisation. However, for the purposes of this article, the word 'denomination' is used as a broad description of Australian Baptist congregations and colonial/state unions.
- ² Women made up fifty-three per cent of the foundation members of over fifty Australian Baptist congregations. This proportion increases to sixty-eight per cent for Baptist congregations established between 1920 and 1945. For details, see (Hilton 2024a).

3 See, for examples: (Petersham Baptist 1922; Benskin 1925b), Worldwide the Baptist denomination also has more women than men
(Bebbington 2018).

4 As O'Brien notes, calculating the exact number of missionary women is difficult given inaccurate record keeping.

5 From 1882 to 1945 there were one hundred ABFM missionary women and thirty-five men.

6 In the Australian Baptist context, see, for example (Harris 1938).

7 See for examples, (Gooden 2016; Gooden 1998; Hilton 2023).

8 There is a significant body of work examining mission. See for example (Robert 2009). Her work examines themes of both women
and imperialism within the foreign mission endeavour.

9 There were at least fifty congregations with deaconess committees. See (Hilton 2024a)

10 See, for examples: (Helyar 1995, p. 17; Deaconesses Norwood Baptist 1872–1903; Deaconesses Glen Osmond 1934–1936; South
Australia: Goodwood 1927).

11 See, for examples obituaries of (Called home: Mrs. Alice Garrett 1944; South Australia: The late Mrs. Samuel Kennett 1926; The
late Mrs. E. Whittle 1956).

12 See, for example, two earlier advertisement for the Deaconess at the Brisbane City Tabernacle and the NSW Order, for which
the salary was about one-third of a (male) minister's salary: (New South Wales Union: Deaconess' Association 1917; Deaconess
wanted 1917). See also summary of the discussion by Baptist women around Australia regarding deaconesses, where the stated
salary was about half of a minister's salary: (Baptist Sisterhood 1937).

13 See, for examples, (Churchill Baptist Women 1936; New South Wales: Waverley 1939).

14 (Baptist Sisterhood 1937). For a discussion on other Deaconesses Orders see, (Hilton 2024b).

15 As noted above Deaconess Orders in other Australian denominations were managed by men. See, (Hilton 2024b).

16 The author has examined a significant number of women's archival material and has found no direct evidence of discussions
regarding ordination or women who might be seeking ordination.

17 Janet West suggests that women left the Baptist denomination because of the conservative view of women (West 1997). However,
there is no evidence this was the case except perhaps for Margaret Vernon in Victoria, who became a minister in the Pentecostal
Assembly of God Church in Richmond (Hilton 2024a).

18 (South Australia: Sandringham 1928). Dr Alice Barber "was the speaker" at Sandringham, South Australia, whereas Basil Rogers
and Alfred Holland were "preachers" at East Ringwood, Victoria. Alice Barber had completed study at the Baptist College of
Victoria, along with a medical degree, while the men were still completing their study at this date.

19 In South Australia John Walker noted there were few unpublished sermons by both men and women, see, (Walker 2006).

20 See, for example, (Mother's day observance: Devonport 1944).

21 See, for example, (Davey 1945).

22 (Ladies' Zenana Missionary Society 1884–1895), NSW Grace Taylor underlined the word woman in the original minutes.

23 Australian Baptist Foreign Mission, Board Minutes.

24 Examples of SGMU members volunteering for service, are Florence English, whose ABFM work was sponsored by Hurlstone
Park Baptist in Sydney, and Mabel Burgess, who became a missionary in the Solomon Islands with the South Sea Evangelical
Mission. See (Sturgess 1940; Night of rejoicing: Women's missionary triumph 1930; Church news: Hurlstone Park 1944).

25 C. D., (Letter to the editor of 'For our women' 1932). While Celia Downing is not identified as the author of this letter, she
was currently writing to each of the state Baptist women's organisations on this issue, and it is probable that she wrote to *The
Australian Baptist*.

26 (Cousin 1943). The three published obituaries for Lily Higlett which were published in *The Australian Baptist* show a high degree
of respect and love for her.

27 Higlett, Notes for Meetings of the N.S.W. Women's Missionary Society. Lily Higlett had underlined these words.

28 See, for examples, (Baptist Union of Victoria 1892; Baptist Union of New South Wales 1878–1888)

29 This figure was obtained using minutes from the ABFM Board meetings. See (Australian Baptist Foreign Mission 1922–1932;
Australian Baptist Foreign Mission 1925–1934).

30 See, for example, Ellen Shepard's summary of her interview with prospective missionary women, in Australian Baptist Foreign
Mission, Executive Minutes: Volume II, December 1924.

31 In May 1935 Baptist women in Victoria passed a resolution at their meeting indicating that "peace should prevail." Similar
sentiments were made by women in other states at this time. See, (Women and World Peace 1935; Baptist Women 1935; Women's
Stand for Peace 1936).

32 For example, two of Annie Yorkston's three sons were killed in March 1945. See, (New South Wales: Annie Estill Yorkston 1945).

33 There are many instances where this occurred. For example, see, (Grange Baptist Ladies' Guild 1942).

- ³⁴ Such women included Hazel Brainwood, Treasurer of Dee Why Baptist, NSW, and Grace Fildes, Treasurer of Katanning Baptist, WA. Other women are noted in state Baptist union handbooks. For examples, see, (Baptist Union of New South Wales 1951; Hilton 2024a).
- ³⁵ Halley Nicholls resigned and married the Rev. Charles Nicholls in 1945. See, (The Baptist Union of Queensland 1940).
- ³⁶ The author has examined records of organisations such as the Australian Red Cross, the and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in Australia and has identified less than five Baptist women who were involved in the organisations, as Baptist women were more likely to be members of non-denominational organisations, such as the National Council of Women, the Young Women’s Christian Association, and the Australian Student Christian Movement, there are few Baptist women who were actively involved.
- ³⁷ There are many instances in which this occurred. See, for examples, (South Australia: Goodwood 1927; Baptist 1933).
- ³⁸ For example, see, (Jill 1942).

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Article

Changes in the Role and Status of Women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention, 1914–2021

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Abstract: This study interrogates the changes in the roles and status of women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention, the largest Baptist denomination in Africa, with over 10,104 churches and about 11 million members. This paper attempts to answer the critical question of how and what processes stimulated and sustained the changes in the role and status of women among Nigerian Baptists from the colonial period to the contemporary era. This paper relied on primary source publications, interviews, and secondary publications, which provided invaluable data in analysing the historical and contemporary issues that have resulted in the changing roles and status of women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. This study found that against patriarchal traditions that subordinated women to domestic activities in the homes, such factors as access to formal education, the formation of Women's Missionary Union as an institutional framework to mainstream women's religious activities, the employment of women with doctoral degrees as theological educators in Baptist seminaries in the 1980s, the ordination of women as Baptist ministers in the late 1990s, and the appointment of women to key positions in the Nigerian Baptist Convention were major factors that moved women from traditional subordinate positions to public leadership in the church. Generally, this has indirectly stirred a process of empowerment for women and agitation for equality with men in the NBC in the past one hundred years. This study concluded that this development has moved women from supportive roles to taking up significant leadership positions within an African patriarchal cultural system.



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Keywords: women; empowerment; equality; leadership; Baptist; Nigeria; Nigerian Baptist Convention; women's ordination; subordinate; patriarchal

1. Introduction

From a historical perspective, this study interrogates the changes in the roles and status of women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC), the largest Baptist denomination in Africa, with over 10,104 churches and about 11 million members. Among other things, this paper discusses factors such as access to formal education, the formation of Women's Missionary Union as an institutional framework to mainstream women's religious activities, the employment of women with doctoral degrees as theological educators in Baptist seminaries, and the ordination of women as Baptist ministers as some of the factors that stimulated the changes that indirectly stirred a process of empowerment for women and agitation for equality with men in the NBC in the past one hundred years. This article will also discuss how women themselves conceptualise their roles and status and how women's new roles have extended beyond existing social and cultural constraints of patriarchy in African society. Further, with the appointment of two women theologians as heads of two Baptist theological institutions in 2019 and 2020, this study explores factors involved in women moving from supportive roles to taking up significant leadership in the Baptist faith within an African patriarchal cultural system.

Drawing on primary source publications, interviews, and secondary publications, this paper attempts to answer the critical question of how and what were the processes that stimulated and sustained the changes in the role and status of women among Nigerian Baptists from the colonial period to the contemporary era.

2. An Overview of the Beginnings of Protestant Christianity in Nigeria and the Nigerian Baptist Convention

Protestant Christianity was introduced into Nigeria in 1838 when liberated slaves who had settled in Sierra Leone (Fyfe 1962) undertook an entrepreneurial venture and visited Badagry, a coastal town in southwestern Nigeria, with merchandise to trade with the indigenous people. Having received an enthusiastic welcome from local rulers because some spoke the local language, more freed slaves emigrated to Badagry and Abeokuta, two major Yoruba towns. These settlers then wrote to their churches in Freetown for missionaries. After an exploratory mission visit in 1842 and 1843, the Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1845 and 1846, respectively, sent resident missionaries to assist these emigrants. Likewise, the Church of Scotland began mission work in Calabar in southeastern Nigeria in 1846, while the Baptists from the southern states in the United States of America and Roman Catholics from Europe began mission work in Yorubaland, southwestern Nigeria in 1850 and 1862, respectively.

In the nineteenth century, most parts of Nigeria were still engulfed in inter-ethnic wars, a major means that supplied captives as slaves to the European slave merchants. Against this background, Britain tried to enforce the abolition of the slave trade and open the country to legitimate commerce. It was in this milieu that Western missionaries operated, and eventually, they became the vanguards of a new civilisation and a new culture that stimulated much social change.

By the late nineteenth century, mission activities had made tremendous progress in the southern part of the country, and in 1900, Christian missions were extended to northern Nigeria. These mission endeavours among the indigenous peoples generated far-reaching cultural, socio-economic, and political transformations largely through their educational, vocational, and medical services. Equally important is the response of Africans to the Christian gospel (Ajayi 1965; Ayandele 1966; Ekechi 1972; Makozi and Ojo 1982; Sanneh 1989; Graham 1966; Tasie 1978).

The Nigerian Baptist Convention is a product of the missionary activities of the Southern Baptist Convention, USA, in Nigeria, dating back to August 1850, when the pioneer missionary, Thomas Jefferson Bowen, arrived in Badagry, then the main seaport into the country. Bowen had been preceded eight years earlier in Yorubaland in southwestern Nigeria by the Anglicans and the Methodists working under the Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, respectively, and four years by the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) Mission that concentrated its mission work around Calabar in southeastern Nigeria (Ajayi 1965, 2010). With the support of additional missionaries from 1853, mission work progressed steadily such that by the end of the century, Baptist churches had been planted in major towns in southwestern Nigeria, indigenous clergy trained by the missionaries had emerged, a few elementary and secondary schools had been established, and an organisational framework for Baptist churches had been formed.

Formed in 1914 as a national body uniting all Baptist churches, the Nigerian Baptist Convention is the organised body of Baptist churches tracing their roots to the Southern Baptist Convention, a conservative evangelical denomination in the USA. The Nigerian Baptist Convention is one of the leading evangelical denominations in West Africa, with a 2021 estimate of about 9 million members in 10,104 churches with over 5000 pastors (NBC 2022; Akanji 2023). The Convention is the oldest, largest, most visible, and most organised institution of all Baptist bodies in Nigeria. Other smaller Baptist bodies have been in existence since the 1940s, either by secession or as extensions of Baptist groups from the United States.¹ Of the estimated 80 million Christians in Nigeria at the end of the twentieth century,² Nigerian Baptists are second, perhaps only to the Anglicans, who are about

10 million nationally. However, the Nigerian Baptists are more dynamic in missionary commitments, which have been extended to about fourteen other African countries. In general, NBC has significantly impacted Nigerians and the country through its numerous educational and theological institutions, medical facilities, vocational training centres, and the numerous media centres that specialise in publications for both the Baptist faithful and the larger society.

There are four major epochs in the history of Nigerian Baptists. The first is the missionary era, as already noted, which began with the arrival of the pioneer missionary. The second period, starting in 1888, marked a period when indigenous leadership became more assertive. The schism in the Lagos Baptist Church in February 1888, when some indigenous members left the church following a disagreement with the white resident missionary to create a new one, the Native Baptist Church, was a notable event. This incident precipitated similar schisms in the Anglican and Methodist churches resulting in the African Church Movement—a movement that promoted Christianity under African leadership and was more accommodating to African culture (Webster 1964; Ojo 1998).

Under African leadership, the Baptist faith spread to the Niger Delta area in 1893, from a partnership in mission between Rev William Hughes of the African Training Institute, Colwyn Bay, North Wales, United Kingdom, and the First Baptist Church, Lagos under the indigenous pastor, Dr Mojola Agbebi, an energetic, visionary leader, who initiated other missionary activities that expanded Baptist faith to the midwestern and southeastern Nigeria (King 1986; Atanda 1988).

The Nigerian Baptist Convention formed in March 1914 became a great unifying factor in the Baptist mission work in Nigeria (Pinnock 1917). The Convention not only brought together the Mission and Independent Baptist churches, but it also stimulated a denominational consciousness (Duval 1956).

The third period, beginning in the 1950s, marked the phasing out of European leadership and ushered in the process of Nigerianisation of the social and political structures before the country's political independence in 1960. The first indigenous leader, J. Tanimola Ayorinde, took over the leadership of the Nigerian Baptist Convention from the Southern Baptist missionaries, and a new era of partnership began. In the fourth period from the mid-1970s, religious forces, such as the upsurge of Pentecostalism, had a great impact on the Baptist faith in the country. It brought in some renewal but at the same time, altered the pattern of worship to be more participatory, emotional, exuberant, and more dynamic.

The Nigerian Baptist Convention, as a conservative evangelical denomination, is fashioned theologically and ecclesologically after the Southern Baptist Convention, USA because it was the SBC mission endeavour that produced the NBC. However, the NBC is divergent from its parent denomination in some ways. For example, the NBC has been involved strongly in ecumenical movements which the Southern Baptist Convention has shunned. Secondly, by the late 1990s, the Nigerian Baptist Convention had ordained women into the Gospel ministry, while its American parents continued to reject women's ordination on theological grounds. As conservative evangelicals, both denominations affirm the inerrancy of the Scriptures, believer's baptism, salvation in the vicarious death of Jesus Christ, the priesthood of all believers, and both practice congregational polity and the autonomy of the local church.

3. Understanding Gender and Patriarchy in Traditional Nigerian Society

It is necessary to understand the social-cultural context of the role and status of women in Nigeria, particularly in Southwestern Nigeria, the dominant region for the growth of the Baptist faith in Nigeria, to understand the journey towards women's empowerment in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Generally, women in various societies in Nigeria were considered inferior to men in ability, character, and strength. Patriarchy conditioned women as subservient and subordinate to men, lacking authority except to their children and other women.

Largely, motherhood conferred an enviable status on women. Nevertheless, patriarchy ensures that even motherhood was primarily defined within the realm of marriage, and procreation was a situation within a marital union. Aina better explains that in traditional Nigerian society, women enjoyed two statuses, that of wife and mother. As a wife, the woman is charged with the responsibilities of procreation. As a mother, she is to transmit the culture, norms, values, etc., of the society to her offspring (Aina 2003).

Moreover, women could only make decisions that were binding on the family with the approval of their husbands. In fact, polygamy created a social space that increasingly made women more submissive to men. Although the cash crop economy introduced by the British colonial administration in the late nineteenth century, because of its need for more labourers, brought in some economic power to some women, there were still limitations to the authority that a woman could wield in society. Additionally, the political space restricted access to women except when they became more elderly. Their ritual power was restricted to female cultic observances and often played secondary roles in traditional festivals.³ Sowunmi expatiates this subservient role of women much better when she argues that women are seen as a necessary evil to fulfil men's sexual needs and desires; hence, they have been exploited as sex objects. Also, they are seen as second-class citizens, inferior to men, and stereotyped into roles of dependency, submission, and passivity (Sowunmi 1998).

Indeed, the patriarchal culture has been a major factor in the subjugation and marginalisation of women. Nigerian patriarchal culture was strengthened by Traditional African Religion with various ritual restrictions on women. Traditional patriarchal culture holds the belief that men are superior to women; hence, as noted by Ndute, religious traditions fashioned from patriarchy further tend to legitimise the perpetuation of the subjugation of women to men (Ndute 1998). Also, as noted by Aina, patriarchy 'provides material advantages to males, which simultaneously places several constraints on the roles and activities of females' (Aina 2003).

It was within this context that Christianity made its inroads in the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century Christian missions were essentially male-dominated, and it was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that wives of missionaries and single women missionaries became visible to claim the same social power as their male counterparts. Literacy, which came with the Western formal school system, and which served as the catalyst for social reconstruction in African society, was initially reserved for men, as parents did not envisage any social benefits of education for women who would eventually end up as wives and mothers. The few attempts by women missionaries among Anglicans, Methodists and Baptists in Southern Nigeria in the mid-nineteenth century did not have much impact on the society and did not change the status of women.

The masculine image of God persisted in Christianity in Africa until the late twentieth century. In addition, the popular narrative of the Biblical story of salvation is that of Jesus Christ, as the Saviour who was a man, who had disciples as males, and no woman was included. This is an indication that women were not recognised in the Jewish religion and traditions.

From the above, one can draw some inferences that missionary Christianity did not treat women better than the traditional African culture. Hence, some liberal feminists have advocated that liberation theologies should number the Church among the oppressors since it is seen as an institution from which women must be liberated (Ayegeboyin 1991).

Overall, Christianity, with its strong inherited patriarchy of the Jewish tradition, only helped to strengthen the existing African culture. For example, the dominant episcopacy of the Anglicans, Methodists, and Roman Catholics further helped to dethrone women's role in the Church and society. Since members of a religion share certain collective dimensions such as social, economic, political, cultural, educational, etc., Christianity is therefore closely linked and interrelated with all the subordination and subjugation of women in Nigerian society.

Even the constitutional guarantee of the rights of women in the independent nation still had to contend with many cultural barriers and constraints. Certain taboos and as-

assumptions inherited from culture have placed constraints on women even though their potential cannot be denied. Ladan highlights some of these constraints, which militate against women from actively participating in decision-making or being assigned to any leadership role in public life. These include assumptions and generally held moral imperatives as follows:

- (a) Well-mannered and God-fearing women are chaste and discreet;
- (b) Good women do not and should not usurp men's given roles and responsibilities;
- (c) A woman's place is in the home where she supports both her husband and children;
- (d) Women are (naturally) ill-endowed with the intellectual and managerial skills required for decision-making in public life (Ladan 2003).

Generally, both traditional culture and missionary Christianity put women as subordinate to men, and women's progress could only be determined as men wanted.

4. Theoretical Framework

We find Kurt Lewin's Change Theory to be applicable to analysing how women in Baptist churches under the Nigerian Baptist Convention have achieved much social mobility and visibility within this religious body. The religious and social changes resonate with the idea of how driving forces and restraining forces influence the direction and nature of change within any organisation (Nurhasanah et al. 2024). In general, Lewin's Change Theory focuses on how people and groups of people behave and change within organisations (Cummings et al. 2016). There are several dimensions of the theory; however, for our purpose in this essay, we want to show its applicability to our discussion on the change in roles and status of women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Lewin's Group Change Theory has three distinct stages. These include the following stages: Unfreeze, Change, and Freeze models. At the Unfreeze stage, individuals or groups recognise the need for change and become open to it. With such openness to change, it implies that the existing behaviours and mindset gradually become 'Unfrozen'. The second stage is the 'Change'. It is at this phase that the actual intended or desired change occurs. In other words, new behaviours, processes, structures, and so on are introduced within the group to foster change at this level. The third stage is called the 'Freeze' stage. Once the change has been implemented in the second stage, then, in this third stage, the change becomes the new norm of the group. Thus, the group then stabilises around the new state (Cummings et al. 2016). For Kurt Lewin, individual or group behaviours occur because of the dynamic balance of forces. Driving forces are said to push people towards change while restraining forces resist it. Thus, for Lewin, effective change management in organisations involves increasing driving forces and reducing restraining forces.

Indeed, a close observation of the change in the roles and status of women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention aligns with Lewin's Change Theory. As we shall see later in the study, for over a century, women were bound to specific traditional roles fostered by patriarchy in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. However, by the late twentieth century, the 'Unfreeze' stage occurred in which women and the Convention at large recognised the need for change in women's roles and became open to such possibilities. Soon came the 'Change stage', in which the actual change occurred when women took up new roles and statuses they had never attained before. Since the desired changes have been implemented, now, these new roles appear frozen and solidified as the normative practices in the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

5. Female-Directed Education as a Catalyst for Change in the Role and Status of Women

A major factor that stimulated change in the role and status of women in Nigerian society, and among Baptists in particular, was formal education at the elementary and secondary school levels. Christian missions laid the foundation of Western education in Nigeria in the 1840s and controlled the provision of educational institutions until 1927 when the British Colonial government enacted certain Education Ordinances and began

to regulate the standard and curriculum of schools (Fabunmi 2005). Even then, Christian missions controlled more schools than the government.

In the nineteenth century, Western education was greatly used as a tool of evangelisation, and children were targeted because they were more malleable to change than adults. On the mission field and in many communities, every missionary utilised education as a tool of evangelization for the purpose of transforming individuals and society. This education began with the Sunday School, which drew the domestic staff of the missionaries as the first set of pupils. Thereafter, some forms of formal schooling were established for the children who were residing with the missionaries. The CMS in Abeokuta in fact came with a schoolmaster, Mr. Phillips, from Sierra Leone (Tucker 1854), and he soon set out to create a school system for the children.

Western missionaries perceived education as the bedrock of human progress and civilisation, and indeed it was. It soon created a new social class of educated elite who disdained traditional culture and authority and who sought equality in access to social and political power like the Westerners. Eventually, Western education supplanted Islamic education and traditional forms of education majorly because it created marketable skills for the recipients, fostered upward social mobility, and provided immediate economic benefits when compared to subsistence agriculture, which was the main occupation of people in traditional society.

However, the educational projects of Christian missions in the 19th century were segregated along social classes and gender. It was disproportionately targeted at children and young people, and it was overwhelming in favour of boys in its conception and execution until the early decades of the twentieth century.

It was in the late nineteenth century that Christian missionaries turned their attention to promoting formal education for women and it did this by creating separate schooling for them. As noted by a CMS missionary,

“Much more need to be done for the education of girls. . . . Young girls attend many of the elementary schools and prove bright scholars. But they are few as compared with the boys, and in some cases, owing to the marriage customs, they are taken away too soon. To deal effectively with the problems of the African home we must face up to an extension of all branches of education for girls”.

(Walker 1931)

Commonly, female-directed education was initially pursued so that indigenous catechists and teachers would have educated Christian girls to marry (Walker 1931), because, in some traditional societies, traditional authorities in the nineteenth century disallowed girls to marry Christians! Eventually, this domestic objective stimulated more interest in the promotion of female-directed education in many parts of southern Nigeria, and by the early twentieth century with wider perspectives. Although there was an increased awareness of the education of girls, this awareness was developed on the philosophy that female-directed education was of domestic value.

Female separatism was soon encoded into formal education, and it became a major means of attending to the educational needs of women and socialising them into the Christian culture, which was needed for the survival of every mission endeavour. Ultimately, girls' schools soon became the new agenda of Western missionaries in their attempt to transform the status of women in traditional society. In the 1880s, the philosophy of the education of girl-child was that the training was preparing them 'for the duties of life as wives to the male converts' (Walker 1931). C. E. Smith, a Baptist missionary in Nigeria in about 1900, has argued that “I think it will be a fine thing to have a girls' training institution school that the wives of our young men might be suitable helpmeets for their husbands in the work” (Roberson n.d.b). Therefore, female-directed education as conceived then was to prepare girls as prospective Christian wives for male converts, and also for the girls to take their domestic roles as good Christian mothers in the homes.

In 1872, the Church Missionary Society established a female-only institution in Lagos, while the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, after establishing the Methodist Boys' High School in Lagos in 1878 with twelve high school students, went ahead to establish the Methodist Girls' High School in Lagos in January 1879 (Oduyoye 1992). The Methodist Girls' High School did not fare well due to a shortage of qualified teachers and a deficit in infrastructural facilities (Oduyoye 1992). For the focus of this paper, the Baptists established a Girls' School at Abeokuta in 1910, which developed into a secondary and a teachers' training institution (Roberson n.d.b). A second female-only institution was the Reagan Memorial Girls' School, which was established in Lagos in 1941 and named after a former female missionary (Roberson n.d.a). One of the women missionaries expressed her wish that the school would produce women who would play leading roles in building their nation (Historical Committee 1991). This aspiration indicated how female-directed education has changed to become more functional in the mid-twentieth century. By the 1950s, female-directed education was no longer a utopian idea but became the new face of Western missions in southern Nigeria.

By the fourth decade of the twentieth century, the domestic orientation to female-directed education had been abandoned and comprehensive education began to be offered in most secondary schools operated by Christian missions. The only exception was in northern Nigeria where under the guise of Islamic culture of chastity, the Emirs, i.e., traditional Islamic rulers, opposed female-directed education on the grounds that the Islamic dichotomy between young boys and girls after puberty should never be altered. Secondly, the Islamic practice of early marriage for girls as young as twelve years became a major constraint to sending girls to schools—an engagement that took years to complete.

As more women were educated and assumed leadership responsibilities as teachers and role models in society, the traditional perspectives of the roles and status began to change. With the introduction of university education in 1948 and the admission of women to degree programmes, and many of them graduating to assume important positions in governmental affairs, it became clear that education has provided a pedestal that initiated a fundamental shift in the status and role of women in the Nigerian society. Indeed, in 1985, when Professor Grace Alele-Williams was appointed the President/Vice-Chancellor, the first woman to occupy the highest office in a public university in the country (Black Women in Mathematics 2024),⁴ it was clear that for those women who had received formal education, they could no longer be tied down by traditional norms of disparity in men and women roles and status in the society.

As change agents for a hundred years from 1842 on, Christian missions provided the direction of female-directed education in the country. Although the number of schools for women and the enrollment was small, looking back, this innovation could be considered a noble achievement. However, with the benefit of hindsight, we consider the quality of the education as deficient, 19th-century Christian missions did not originally set out to provide education for the material benefits of girls; rather, they aimed at character training and the spiritual development of converts. Nevertheless, the girls and women who attended these mission schools derived some prestige as educated women in what could be considered a hostile environment. In addition, in terms of their sexuality—the moral purity of being chaste brides and their potential as good marriage partners—rather than destabilising the existing social values about women, female-directed education reinforced traditional values, as these women became potential role models to other women. This was a complementary advertisement to the Christianized men, and really an achievement of Christian missions' social goal of having women ready to live forever in monogamous relationships.

6. Early Roles and Status of Women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention

Since the establishment of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, up until the early 1990s, women played what we may call traditional roles. Most of those who had received a Western education, apart from serving largely as teachers in elementary schools also served as Sunday School teachers for children in the churches. Laurena Bowen, the wife of the

pioneer missionary, was the first to start Sunday school classes for children in the Baptist Mission work (High 1970; Akinola 1992a). Generally, and even into the contemporary era, the teaching of children at the Sunday School remains one of the traditional roles of women in the churches. Related to this is the role of serving as children's workers, which involved taking care of children in separate worship sessions. Thus, women have been known in the traditional business of providing Christian education for children right from the inception of the Baptist Missions until date (Lateju 2023).

Women also served as deaconesses, in particular, taking care of the hospitality units of churches. They catered for the welfare of members, particularly widows. As deaconesses with their male counterparts, they assisted in leading worship, particularly related to bible reading, prayers, leading offertory sessions, and so on.

Furthermore, one major role that women have been known for traditionally in many Nigerian Baptist Convention churches is their role as choristers. Within many Baptist Church choir groups, women have been dominant. As choristers, they also took the lead as praise singers during Sunday worship services. Lastly, women functioned traditionally in the Baptist Church as ushers. It was believed that by nature they possess motherly personalities adequate for welcoming guests into the church for church services.

Thus, traditionally, until the early 1990s, women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention played notable roles as children's workers, worship set-up (ushering), members' welfare, and providing diaconate support to the substantive church pastor, largely based on assigned roles by the church through the Pastor. However, by the mid-1990s, some major shifts began to take place that eventually affected the status and roles of women in the NBC. We now give attention to these major changes in status and roles.

7. The Ordination of Women as Baptist Ministers

The first of such major changes in the status of women in the NBC was the ordination of women into the pastoral ministry. In the history of the NBC, the first person to be ordained was Moses Ladejo Stone, an indigenous assistant to a Southern Baptist missionary based in Lagos. Stone was ordained on 22 February 1880 at the First Baptist Church, Lagos, (High 1970) and that ordination set him apart for ministerial tasks. He was trained by the missionaries who recognised his calling and gifts in the gospel proclamation. Following Stone's ordination, others who had trained at two other towns, the Ijaiye and Abeokuta mission schools, soon followed. Some of these included Odegbaro Fadipe in 1897, Lajide Tubi in 1900, and so on (High 1970). After the formation of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in 1914, attempts were made by Southern Baptist missionaries to regulate the practice of ordination in the NBC. The major one was in 1930, which prohibited the ordination of anyone who approved or supported polygamy. In 1931, an Ordination Council was formed consisting of five indigenous ministers and some missionaries. Following its formation, the Council, among other things, recommended that candidates for ordination must do some theological studies prior to ordination, and this brought about the centralisation of the ordination of candidates to the gospel ministry of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (High 1970). Since then, the terms and conditions governing ordination in the NBC have witnessed important reviews to maintain a high standard in the practice of ministerial ordination.

It is not certain when discussions began in the NBC on the ordination of women; nevertheless, at different points in the 1980s, discussions on the matter of women's ordination took place at informal levels, particularly with the successive graduation of more women from the theological institutions of the NBC. One significant development in those years that also stimulated discussions on women's ordination in the NBC was the 1984 resolution by the Southern Baptist Convention, USA, the mother convention for the NBC, which discouraged women from seeking pastoral leadership positions (Grenz and Kjesbo 1995). This development generated a lot of informal debates among men and women in the NBC.

What may be described as the initial agitation for the ordination of women began at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomoso in the early 1990s. Janet Ojo, who trained at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, USA, and taught

Religious Education and Sociology at the Seminary championed these agitations. However, her agitations remained at the level of personal expressions of dissatisfaction against the non-ordination of women. Later in 1991, the issue began to attract formal discussions at the NBC Executive level. In that year, the Ministerial Training Board examined the issue and recommended a course of action to the NBC family (Nigerian Baptist Convention 1992). Members of the NBC were asked to write memoranda on their views on women's ordination in the Convention. Following submissions from the NBC family and diverse contentions against the ordination of women in the NBC, the Ministerial Board resolved in 1992 that it was not yet time for the ordination of theologically trained women in the NBC (Nigerian Baptist Convention 1993).

The resolution not to ordain women in 1992 by the Ministerial Board was not the end of the matter. Some agitations persisted, with prominent persons in the NBC lending their support for the ordination of women. Among such major voices was Aduke Akinola, the Executive Director of the Women's Missionary Union, an auxiliary organisation to NBC. In July 1992, under the umbrella of the WMU, Akinola wrote an article in the Nigerian Baptist Convention monthly magazine, *The Nigerian Baptist*, to vehemently argue for the ordination of women who have received theological training in the NBC theological institutions. She argued that in His ministry, Jesus accepted all persons and did not discriminate against men and women in ministry. Thus, she advised the Ministerial Board of the NBC to be properly guided by the Scriptures in the matter of women's ordination. She decried the imposition of culture over the Scriptures and urged churches to give appointments to women who had received theological training (Akinola 1992a). It is important to note that the agitation for women's ordination by Aduke Akinola, who was the leader of all women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention, had so much weight and made a significant impact in influencing the later decision to ordain women in the NBC.

Likewise, Osadolor Imasogie, a theologian and former President of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Clement Amadi, a former Assistant General Secretary (Ministerial) of the Convention, and others gave their support to the ordination of women. Of course, there were also prominent NBC voices who were not in favour of the ordination of women.

Following further submissions in favour and against women's ordination in the NBC, the Ministerial Board of the Convention in 1993 recommended to the Convention annual session an approval to ordain women into full-time ministry. At the annual meeting of NBC in 1994, the issue was thoroughly discussed before it was finally approved (Nigerian Baptist Convention 1994). Following the approval, ordination was initially limited to women Pastors who were engaged by the churches in one capacity or the other. However, later, at its meeting of 22 July 1999, the Ministerial Board added to the list of potential women ordinands those who served at theological institutions, denominational offices, and as missionaries (Nigerian Baptist Convention 2000).

In 1997, two women candidates were recommended for ordination from their local churches by the Lagos Baptist Conference. Their names were published alongside other successful male counterparts (Nigerian Baptist Convention 1997). Thus, on 31 May 1997, Bosun Adegboyega, a female pastor, was ordained at First Baptist Church, Aguda-Surulere, Lagos, while Olusola Ayo-Obiremi, another woman, was ordained on 21 June 1997 at New Estate Baptist Church, Surulere, Lagos. Both women had their theological training at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso (Moronfoye and Adeleke 1997).

Following the ordination of these two women in 1997, the opportunity became available for all theologically trained women serving in churches, theological institutions, Convention offices, mission fields, etc., to be ordained. In subsequent decades, more women who were in theological institutions had been ordained in NBC. By 2010, eighty-three women had been ordained into the full gospel ministry, and these women came from different regions of the country (Adeleke 2011).⁵

With this development, a few women have become substantive ministers in some Baptist churches in the NBC. Although there are no statistics of these women who served

as substantive congregational leaders or pastors in the NBC, there were a few of them recorded in Baptist churches in southwestern Nigeria. Two of such ordained women, Yemi Aderibigbe and Florence Popoola, led their congregations in Lagos for about ten years each until they retired from active service in the second decade of the twenty-first century. These women ministers served very well, and there were reports of appreciation for their ministerial leadership. There was no known or reported case of pastoral misdemeanour against any of these substantive women pastors.

Thus, with this change in status from a subordinate position, women were thrust into the limelight when as ordained ministers they began to perform the Baptist ordinances of administering the Lord's Supper like their male counterparts. This indicated a change in the status of women in the NBC. Overall, the approval of the ordination of women lifted any restrictions, whether patriarchal or theological arguments, that had previously placed women in subordinate positions to men in the Baptist ministry.

8. Appointment of Women as Directors in NBC

Another major area the Convention has yielded to the agitation for the equality of women to men has been in their appointment to leadership positions in various organs of the NBC. Beginning with the Women's Missionary Union, two American Southern Baptist missionaries served as its Executive Secretary from 1922 to 1961, and 1961 to 1984. In late 1984, the first Nigerian woman, Pastor Aduke Akinola was appointed as WMU Executive Secretary, later renamed Executive Director. She served in this position until she retired in April 2002.

Apart from being the first indigenous Executive Secretary and Director of the WMU, she was also the first black woman to serve as Secretary/Treasurer of the Baptist World Alliance Women's Department, a position she held from 1990 to 1995. She was privileged to be the only African among the over eighty contributors to the highly cherished *The Woman's Study Bible, NKJV*. She was awarded an honorary doctoral degree by the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho in June 2002 (Adeleke 2011).

Ibiyemi Ladokun, an ordained minister who had been the Director of the Convention's Lydia programme, took over from Akinola as WMU Executive Director in 2002. Prior to assuming the WMU Director's office, she served as the Vice President of the Baptist Women's Union of Africa in 1997 and later became the President of the same union in 2002. She also served as the Vice President of the Baptist World Alliance in 2005, a position she held for five years. She was highly mission-minded and led the WMU with the same vision. Amidst other achievements recorded during her tenure as Director, the WMU began to zone her annual conference to increase the coverage of the union's work in the East, North, and West (Adeleke 2011).

Rachel Lateju, another ordained minister, took over the leadership of WMU from Ladokun in 2009. She has continued to consolidate the achievements of past leaders as well as bringing innovative programmes, publications, and policies towards the growth of the union (Adeleke 2011). Overall, these leadership positions brought these women into equal positions of leadership with their male counterparts since all the women automatically served in the Executive Committee of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Three Southern Baptist Convention women missionaries were the trailblazers who served as Directors in the Media Department, Student Ministries Department, and Publications Department of the NBC in the 1980s and 1990s. Thereafter, three other Nigerian women have served as the Directors of the Sunday School Department, the largest department in the Convention, the Director of the Publication Department, and the Director of the Social Ministries Department. Besides the above, other notable women have served as substantive Directors of some other Departments of the NBC. These women possessed higher degrees in Christian Education and Theology, and a few have served as Professors in the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho, the foremost theological institution in West Africa. However, the most notable and significant was the appointment of two women as Rectors (i.e., Presidents) of two theological seminaries in 2019 and 2020.

9. Appointment of Women as Heads of Theological Institutions

Another significant change that has occurred in the status and roles of women in the NBC is the appointment of women as heads of theological institutions of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Following the completion of theological training and attainment of higher theological degrees since the 1980s, women were engaged as theological educators in many of the NBC theological institutions. Like their male counterparts, they continued to achieve promotions and rose through the ranks in their careers as theological educators. Few rose to become Senior Lecturers, Associate Professors, and Professors, and eventually, in 2021, the first woman was appointed a Professor in the NBC. Esther Ayandokun, who had earned her PhD from the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho became the first woman to rise to the rank of a Professor in the NBC (*Insights Journal* 2024).

More importantly, Helen Ishola-Esan, who earned her PhD degree in Religious Education from the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho, and had served as the Dean of the Faculty of Education of the same institution, was appointed as the President of the Baptist Theological Seminary, Eku in 2019. Likewise, Esther Ayandokun earned her PhD in Educational Administration from the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho in 2006, and completed further graduate studies at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, USA and the Dallas Baptist University in Texas, USA, was appointed as the Rector, Baptist College of Theology, Oyo in 2020 (*Insights Journal* 2024).

These, indeed, were significant leadership positions that had an impact on how women were perceived in the Nigerian Baptist Convention and the society at large. Prior to the 1990s, it was perhaps inconceivable to think that a woman could become a Professor of Theological Studies in any of the NBC theological institutions. Additionally, it was also unthinkable for a woman to be appointed as a Rector or President in any of the NBC theological institutions.

Equally important, in 2023, two women were appointed to serve as the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees (i.e., usually called Governing Council in Nigeria) of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho and Bowen University, Iwo, two major educational institutions of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.⁶

It is important to note that these appointments were not isolated cases, but they represented the changing status and role of women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. With such ascendancy, roles previously reserved for men have been taken up by women. For instance, ordained women serving as substantive Pastors had the additional roles of leading the Baptist ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Similarly, women in leadership capacities as heads of theological institutions combined the official roles of seeing to the day-to-day running of the affairs of their institutions with their traditional roles as women or mothers.

While it is true that in the Nigerian Baptist Convention, there have been changes in the restriction to the ordination of women, the case is not so with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the mother convention of the NBC. As Grenz and Kjesbo (1995) have rightly noted, the SBC 'as a denomination has never officially sanctioned the inclusion of women in pastoral positions'.

10. Factors That Precipitated the Changes

10.1. The Women's Missionary Union

The Women's Missionary Union (WMU) is an auxiliary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC). What metamorphosed into the WMU began as women's societies that had been formed in some local Baptist churches in Nigeria between 1875 and 1919. Women's church societies were formed in Araromi Baptist Church, Lagos in 1896, then in First Baptist Church, Lagos in 1915, and Ebenezer Baptist Church, Lagos. Other mission centres in Ogbomosho, Abeokuta, Shaki, Ibadan, and Sapele also had women's societies. On 14 April 1916, the Baptist Women's League was formed in Lagos by Adeotan Agbebi, the wife of the nationalist minister, Mojola Agbebi, who was then the pastor of the Araromi Baptist Church, as a forum to bring women together on a regional platform. Three years later in 1919, during the fifth

annual session of the Nigerian Baptist Convention held at Ogbomoso, the WMU was formed, with Adeotan Agbebi becoming the first President (Akinola 1992b).

Over the past one hundred years, WMU has grown as an auxiliary to NBC into a formidable entity. The objective of the group, as stated in its constitution, is 'to emulate the Spirit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and to promote Christian Missions through WMU Organizations' (Lateju 2019). The WMU organisations include subsidiary groups such as Sunbeam Band for children, the Girls Auxiliary (G.A.) for young girls below seventeen years old, the Lydia Auxiliary for young women eighteen years and above who are preparing for marriage, and the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) for married women. Through these arms of the WMU, the group continues to operate at the local churches, associations, and conferences of the NBC (Lateju 2019).

Through the WMS, which is based in local Baptist churches, married women continued to be empowered in Christian education through formal and informal discipleship programmes, leadership training, and skill acquisition training programmes. By the late twentieth century, it was organising workshops for young widows and women suffering from infertility. In all these programmes, women were exposed to Christian Education that entailed prayers, Bible and Missions Studies, Stewardship and Services, and practical evangelism. All these exposures and activities by the WMS stimulated the women into higher callings. Moreover, as an auxiliary of the NBC, the group continued to promote mission activities in various ways. WMU through its work has mainstreamed women's equality and empowerment in society. As already noted, delayed fertility has been addressed through various seminars, and early widowhood has been addressed in various teachings, widowhood rites that are discriminatory against women have been attacked, etc. Overall, women in Baptist churches have come to understand what gender equality and women empowerment mean in a patriarchal society.

10.2. Theological Training of Women

In 1898, Southern Baptist missionaries began to provide theological training through the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso (NBTS). In the early years of the Seminary, only men were afforded the opportunity for theological training. Traditional culture, as earlier noted, denied women the opportunity of Western formal education in society. Moreover, the Southern Baptist Convention that brought Baptist missions to Nigeria had some reservations towards women's leadership in pastoral ministry and theological training. Perhaps only a few or none of the foreign women missionaries had theological training.

The domestic objective was the most paramount for the missionaries. Hence, the Women Training Centre (WTC) was established in the 1950s for wives of male students to provide some orientation of support to the husbands' pastoral ministry. Indeed, the missionaries did not consider it relevant to admit women into the Seminary for theological training until the early 1960s.

However, by the 1960s, a gradual change began in the theological training of women in the NBC. Thus, in 1965, two women, S.A. Babalola and I.C. Ugunkah, bagged a certificate each in Religious Education (C.R.E) (Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary 1965). Later, in 1977, Moji A. Adepoju and Mary O. Ologunde became the first recipients of the Bachelor of Religious Education (B.R.E) degree from the NBTS (Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary 1977). Thereafter, more women were admitted into NBTS for training in Religious Education, Theology, and Christian Music. Between 1998 and 2004, four women enrolled and obtained their doctoral degrees (PhD) from the NBTS. As noted in earlier paragraphs, such training opportunities in theological studies and later their appointment to the main spheres of Baptist work enabled some women to agitate for ordination. As earlier noted, with ordination, their status and roles changed in the NBC.

10.3. *The Influence of African Pentecostalism*

The explosion of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria since the 1980s has been astounding. By the mid-1980s, the rise of this new Christianity was very visible and too important to be ignored, because the movement was reshaping the religious landscape of the country. By the beginning of the late twentieth century, the movement had become a major expression of Nigerian Christianity. The enthusiasm that accompanied the worship services, increased media attention on the movement, proliferation of Pentecostal churches and ministries, and other dynamic features all contributed to this development (Ojo 1995, 1988, 2012).

In defiance of the African traditional culture and context which subscribes to the dominance of men, Pentecostal churches emerged and gave recognition to the wives of their pastors and further sought to promote gender equality in religious worship and Christian activities. Beginning in the late 1980s, women became more visible as they performed important functions in worship and other group activities and conspicuously adorned publicity materials of their churches. Women actively served within these new churches as Bible study teachers, Sunday school teachers, children's teachers, counsellors, assisting in women's deliverance sessions and a few actually became founders and leaders of Pentecostal churches. In many Pentecostal churches, the wives of the founding pastors, who usually go by the title "Mummy G.O.", meaning literally, 'our mother', led their churches alongside their husbands. Largely, the Pentecostals offer ministry opportunities, self-expression, and actualization to women. Generally, women have been attracted to the services of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches partly because the domestication of the messages and the emphasis on spiritual equality rather than traditions have undermined patriarchy and indirectly enhanced the role and status of women. In all of these, Ojo (2006) rightly noted that the emphasis was on the Spirit rather than on tradition. Thus, the visible examples of women operating in ministry as preachers and church leaders became an impetus for other women in other Christian denominations in Nigeria, including Baptists. These women met in conferences, seminars, etc., and exchanged ideas.

Other impetus for change that could be alluded to include women in the public sector who became successful Chief Executive Officers of banks and other industries, and some who served as judges, heads of schools, heads of public universities, etc. Such examples stimulated women in the religious sphere to aspire to also have a higher status and new roles in church life.

11. Conclusions

The changing status of women, particularly from non-involvement in ministerial roles to becoming ministers and apex leaders in strategic NBC institutions, departments, and directorates, was of profound importance in the change in the status and role of women in the realm of religion. One of the impacts of the changing status and roles of women is that it provided women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention the opportunity to utilise their God-given abilities and talents in contributing to church growth. Related to this is the fact that with their new status and roles, they had the privilege of reaching the highest point in their various careers and posts.

Our study has shown that for over a century in the history of the NBC, women appeared to have been passive and bounded by restrictive socio-cultural traditions within the context of African patriarchal practises. However, by the 1990s, the situation began to change, as women began to assume new statuses and were granted new roles within NBC. Factors like agitations by the Women's Missionary Union, exposure to theological training, and Pentecostal influences, among others, all contributed to a realisation of the new status and roles of women. These drivers culminated in women's ordination into the full gospel ministry, their assumption of apex leadership positions in NBC strategic departments and theological institutions, and so on. What has changed is that competence and qualification aided the appointment of these women over men. This is a form of gradual displacement of traditional African patriarchal culture. Although patriarchy still exists, its strength has been weakened since women now have more important ecclesiastical and social roles than

they did in the nineteenth century when Christianity arrived. Indeed, women have been empowered through missions, theological education, ordination, Pentecostal spirituality, etc. The impact of this development is enormous, contributing ultimately to church growth and kingdom expansion. However, all of these have implications for the women in relation to their families, and they also have implications for NBC at the three tiers of her existence at the association, conference, and convention levels. What remains of interest as history unfolds is what further new status and roles women would attain in the future developments of NBC.

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Notes

- ¹ Among the indigenous ones are the African Baptist Church in Saki and Benin City from 1938 and 1942, the Gospel Baptist Convention from 1974, the Independent (Fundamentalist) Baptist churches from the late 1980s, and the Freewill Baptist Mission from 2006. Other Baptist groups are single congregations, and, hence, of little social significance.
- ² In 1963, out of Nigeria's 56.6 million people, 19.2 million or 34.5% of the population were Christians (*Population Census of Nigeria 1963—Combined National Figures*, vol. III, p. 10 and p. 36). According to the 1991 census, about 40 million out of the country's population of 88.51 million were Christians (*Census News 1992–1991 Population Census (Provisional Results)*, 1992, p. 8). Although the 1991 and 2006 censuses did not include religious affiliations, projections of population growth at an annual rate of 2.98% suggest a Christian population of about 48 million by the mid-1990s. The 2006 Census officially puts the country's population at 140 million.
- ³ Although in ritual observances in Traditional Religion, particularly of the Yoruba, women were the custodians of certain rituals, and they indeed have cultic functions reserved for them. Hence, women served as coteries of some traditional gods, such as priestesses, mediums, diviners, medicine women and so on. However, in general, women did not have equal status as men in African societies.
- ⁴ Grace Alele-Williams (1932–2022) served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria from 1985 to 1992, the first woman in such a position in a public University in West Africa. See http://www.math.buffalo.edu/mad/PEEPS/williams_grace_alele.html, accessed on 16 July 2024.
- ⁵ Statistics are sourced from the Nigerian Baptist Convention *Book of Reports*, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, and 2010.
- ⁶ Dr. Sarah Alade, OON and Deaconess Joan Olatoyosi Ayo, OON.

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Article

The List: Policing Women's Pastoral Titles and the Failure of Racial Reconciliation in the SBC

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Abstract: This article analyzes recent controversies around gender in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) by examining an online list of women pastors from 112 SBC churches created in 2023 by supporters of an amendment to restrict “any kind” of pastor to qualified men. Using interviews with listed women and primary sources posted to church websites in the form of statements of beliefs, staff pages, church newsletters, church council minutes, and pastors’ blogs, this study examines the identity of these women and how they and their churches responded to being publicly identified. It also analyzes the making of this list in the context of denominational history and contemporaneous crises. This study argues that while the proposed amendment largely borrowed language, recycled tactics, and reiterated themes from previous changes to the SBC Faith and Message, divergent responses to the list revealed the persistence of racial divisions in the denomination. Most striking is the absence of any direct response to the list or the proposed amendment by listed Black churches, indicating the complicated and contingent relationship between these churches and the denomination. The absence of engagement also subtly signals the underlying failure by 2024 of a racial reconciliation movement championed by SBC leaders throughout the previous three decades.

Keywords: Southern Baptist; women; gender; pastor; race; racial reconciliation; Law Amendment; American Christianity



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1. Introduction

On 6 May 2021, Saddleback Church, the largest congregation in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) ordained three women elders, and soon thereafter Kay Warren, the founding pastor's wife, preached on Mother's Day. A year later, the church named Andy and Stacie Wood to succeed Rick and Kay Warren, signaling that both husband and wife would actively preach and lead the 24,000-member congregation. These moves resulted in immediate backlash from SBC leaders who had formally limited women's ministry roles decades earlier and who were simultaneously facing sexual abuse scandals, divisions over critical race theory, and rapidly declining membership across the denomination (Wingfield 2022).

At the 2022 annual meeting, an attempt to disfellowship Saddleback failed after Rick Warren recounted the church's deep commitment to missions, evangelism, and church planting in a passionate speech from the convention floor. At the same meeting, Mike Law, a little-known pastor from Arlington Baptist Church in Virginia, made a motion to amend the denomination's constitution to explicitly exclude any church that affirmed women pastors. Both issues were shelved and referred to the Executive Committee for further review (Wingfield 2022).

Temporarily defeated, Mike Law and other supporters of the proposed amendment immediately got to work. In the months leading up to the 2022 annual meeting, Law had already begun contacting women pastors in his local Baptist association through emails and phone calls, alerting them of his plans to report their churches to the SBC Credentials Committee for being “out of step with Article 6 of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000”, which stated, “the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as

qualified by Scripture” (Bridgeforth 2024). In July, Law drafted an open letter asking the Executive Committee to support a constitutional amendment that would clearly stand against churches who “trade on the office of ‘pastor’” by applying the term to women on staff. Recycling language from previous denominational debates over inerrancy and gender, Law claimed that an amendment would bring clarity and promote unity in the convention and warned that maintaining the status quo amounted to “embracing empty doctrines” (Law 2022). The open letter was uploaded to the internet so supporters could add their signature and, before the next annual meeting, the letter garnered 2249 signatures.

The alarmist letter was not the only document Law and other supporters crafted in their appeal to the Executive Committee. They also curated a list, shared through a Google document, of SBC churches with women pastors on staff. This 219-page document, titled “Churches with Female Pastors from churches.sbc.net” listed 112 Baptist churches and used a general template for each entry, starting with the church’s name and address, a link to its website, the church’s affiliation(s), the name(s) of the woman in question, her title, and a screenshot of her face. A screenshot of the church’s sbc.net page, showing a map of its location, usually appeared on a second pdf page (Law 2023). Thus, in an attempt to provide convincing evidence for the supposed widespread presence of women pastors in SBC churches, Law’s list effectively doxed hundreds of women by making their names, work titles, photos, and addresses all easily accessible for anyone interested in tracking down a practicing woman pastor in the denomination.

At a February 2023 meeting, the SBC Executive Committee recommended the removal of Saddleback as well as four other churches with women pastors (Knox 2023). Two churches, Saddleback and Fern Creek Baptist, appealed the committee’s decision, which meant it would have to be confirmed by messengers at the annual meeting the following June. Baptist leaders on both sides of the controversy quickly began publicity campaigns. Press coverage of these ousters centered on Saddleback and its famous founder, Rick Warren, who went on a podcast tour, emphasizing the Baptist commitment to church autonomy.¹ Despite these efforts, SBC messengers upheld the church expulsions in an overwhelming vote at the 2023 annual convention and also approved a proposed amendment to restrict “any kind” of pastor to qualified men (SBC Amendment—Will the SBC Compromise God’s Word? 2023).

Per SBC governance rules, a second round of voting was set for the 2024 annual meeting to determine if the amendment would go into effect. In the interim, Mike Law created a website to argue for the amendment, various SBC leaders issued statements both affirming and opposing the amendment, and affected churches responded in a variety of ways, ranging from disassociating from the denomination to sending a full slate of messengers to the 2024 Annual Meeting.² On 12 June 2024, the “Law Amendment”, as it had by then been monikered, failed to garner the required two-thirds majority in a nail-biter 61–38% vote (Banks 2024). That evening, Law issued a statement describing the majority support as “encouraging” and “something we can build upon” (Law 2024).

Although the ouster of five churches, the list, and the proposed amendment centered around the question of women and the title “pastor”, women’s voices were largely absent in public discourse about these issues. The focus on men as primary religious actors on matters of faith and church governance is typical in the way ecclesial matters have historically been described and remembered, though, over the last twenty-five years, scholars of American religion have begun to ask questions that center the experience of women in religious spaces.³

When our focus turns to Baptist women at the heart of the controversy, the historical narrative around the Law Amendment expands beyond a simple debate about biblical interpretation and church autonomy between men in formal roles of church authority. Instead, the story becomes more complex, reflecting complications endemic to Baptist polity and women’s historic struggle to define the parameters of gracious submission and embody complementarian gender roles (Flowers 2022). A good starting point for centering women in a historical account of the Law Amendment is to seek out information

about the women and churches identified on the list Mike Law generated to demonstrate a supposed pervasive problem in the SBC. Who were these women, and how did they and their churches respond to being identified on the list? This study seeks to provide an initial answer to this question through a careful analysis of “Churches with Female Pastors from churches.sbc.net”.

Predominantly White churches that made the list were, by far, the most likely to engage in public conversation on the topic of women in ministry in response to the proposed Law Amendment. Some had long ago decided to affirm women and ministry and made action to either disassociate themselves or accept being removed from the denomination. Given the clear terms in the Baptist Faith in Message 2000 that limit women’s roles in church ministry, it is somewhat surprising that some White churches seemed to be surprised by the proposed amendment, though the creation of an online list did inject a higher level of intimidation into the theological debate.

Most listed SBC churches remained quietly resolute by keeping their women pastors on staff. A small number of multi-ethnic churches made potentially related staff and title changes in the year between votes on the Law Amendment, though almost all continued to employ and call at least one woman on their staff “pastor”. Listed Black churches gave no public indication that they engaged with the Law Amendment or any other SBC policy or statement. Rather, their websites celebrated God’s call on the lives and work of the women pastors. Just as Law’s rationale for the amendment largely borrowed language, recycled tactics, and reiterated themes from previous changes to the SBC Faith and Message, divergent responses to the list reveal the persistence of racial divisions in the denomination, rooted in both its origins and recent history. Most striking is the absence of any mention of their association with the SBC by listed Black churches, indicating the complicated and contingent relationship between these churches and the denomination. The absence of engagement also subtly signals the underlying failure by 2024 of the racial reconciliation movement that had previously been celebrated within the largest and most diverse Protestant denomination in the United States.

2. A Brief History of Race and Gender in the SBC

Debates, disagreements, and controversies in the Southern Baptist Convention have historically centered around issues of race, gender, and biblical interpretation. The SBC was founded in 1845, largely in response to the rejection of James Reeve, a slaveholder, as a missionary for the Baptist Home Missionary Society. The SBC remained an almost exclusively White denomination well into the twentieth century, and a significant faction of the laity was stunned when the SBC encouraged churches to comply with desegregation orders after the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. While it remained racially homogenous, Southern Baptist polity allowed for a degree of diversity on non-essential theological matters through the middle of the twentieth century. The 1963 Baptist Faith and Message (BFM) reflected a convention that was more pragmatic than doctrinally conformed (Leonard 1990). Moreover, churches were not required to adopt the Baptist Faith and Message in order to be associated with the SBC.

A slow but steady movement toward defining and enforcing orthodoxy in the SBC began in response to disputed interpretations of Genesis in relation to the scientific theory of evolution. In 1961, Ralph Elliot, Old Testament professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, published *The Message of Genesis*, in which he employed higher criticism in his interpretation. The book worried conservatives in the denomination that its seminaries were drifting leftward. Meanwhile, an economic boom in the post-World War II era meant that Southern Baptists were increasingly entering the middle class and their sons and daughters had more opportunities to attend institutions of higher learning, including the six SBC seminaries. The Women’s Missionary Union (WMU), long the flagship organization for SBC women, emphasized that God spoke to and called both women and men to missions and encouraged churches to sponsor women-run book clubs and missions fairs. Often inspired by a call to missions, a small but influential number of young SBC women attended

seminary, sought ordination, and moved into the pulpit in the 1970s (Flowers 2012). Against the backdrop of major cultural events like the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and the rise of feminism, these conservatives rallied around the slogan “back to the Bible”, asserting that an inerrant approach to the Bible could save the denomination from a cultural shift toward secularism.

Inerrancy and gender issues were often integrated in SBC discussions and decisions, as evidenced in the passage of Resolution No. 3 at the 1984 annual meeting. The resolution stated that women should be encouraged to serve in “all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination” (Resolution on Ordination and The Role of Women in Ministry 1984). When Carl Henry introduced the amendment on the convention floor, he justified it through a strict interpretation of 1 Timothy 2. Inerrancy and gender were also at the heart of a 1998 submission statement meant to clarify the SBC stance on the family by defining marriage as “between one man and one woman in covenant” and outlining a wife’s responsibility to “submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband”. Wording around gender roles in the church was further clarified in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, limiting “the office of pastor” to men.

Meanwhile, in the 1990s, the SBC made major efforts to address its long and lamentable racial history. At the 1995 annual meeting celebrating their sesquicentennial anniversary, Southern Baptists, for the first time, officially recognized “the role that slavery played in the formation” of the convention. In its first 150 years, convention resolutions sporadically addressed racial issues by expressing shame over the pervasiveness of lynching, supporting Black theological education, and, eventually, committing to integrate their churches. But none of these statements addressed how the SBC itself was bound to and had perpetuated systemic racism. So, it surprised many onlookers both inside and outside the convention when SBC messengers overwhelmingly passed a resolution that acknowledged the ongoing nature of racism and apologized for the convention’s part in “condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime” (Resolution On Racial Reconciliation on the 150th Anniversary of The Southern Baptist Convention 1995).

This resolution marked the Southern Baptist Convention’s first step in a concerted, decades-long effort to promote racial reconciliation among its members and, more broadly, in society. The denomination dedicated resources to plant multi-ethnic churches and recruit historically Black churches to co-affiliate and, by 2000, it had become the most racially diverse denomination in the United States. In light of a series of highly public and racialized police brutality cases throughout the 2010s, the SBC issued official statements that used explicit language to lament White supremacy and uncover its own historical complicity in it (On The Anti-Gospel of Alt-Right White Supremacy 2017; Mohler 2018).

Despite these efforts at racial reconciliation, controversies related to gender and race intensified and plagued the Southern Baptist Convention and received significant national media attention in the final years of the 2010s. Simmering racial tensions within the SBC came to a head over critical race theory (CRT), a framework developed in the 1970s by legal theorists to understand systemic racism. The SBC initially tried to take a moderate stance in the CRT debate with a 2019 resolution, “On Critical Race Theory And Intersectionality”, which stated that, given the SBC’s dual commitment to racial reconciliation and biblical inerrancy, these analytical tools could be employed to help understand how race functions in society, but only in subordination to Scripture (On Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality 2019). CRT gained more public attention after President Trump’s order for federal agencies to cease using the framework in diversity training in September 2020. Soon, in a move mimicking tactics from the inerrancy controversy, activists from the right flank of the denomination accused SBC seminary professors who discussed systemic racism of being proponents of CRT. In November 2020, the six SBC seminary presidents issued a joint statement prohibiting the use of critical race theories in their institutions. For several prominent Black pastors who had been recruited to dual affiliate with the SBC in the early

days of the racial reconciliation movement, the seminary presidents' statement was the deciding factor in their choice to disassociate from the convention (Willis 2022, pp. 223–28).

At the same time, sexual abuse scandals and ongoing debates around gender roiled the SBC. In 2019, the Houston Chronicle published a series of articles detailing a widespread pattern of sexual abuse and assault in SBC churches. Its investigation identified over 700 victims in the denomination and 380 known abusers on church staffs (Tedesco et al. 2019). In response to these reports, the denomination hired a third-party investigation that resulted in a 2022 report detailing known sexual abuse allegations, including of a former SBC president, as well as a general pattern of denominational leaders ignoring complaints, keeping a secret list of offenders, and shielding its institutions from liability (Smietana 2022). Messengers at the 2022 annual meeting passed a series of reforms to set up a "Ministry Check" website to track abusive pastors and provide training materials for churches (Smietana 2023c). Several SBC entities pledged millions of dollars toward enacting these reforms, but by the 2024 annual meeting, the Ministry Check website contained no names of abusers, and the oversight committee reported that "the process has been more difficult than we could have imagined" (Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force 2024).

Meanwhile, Beth Moore, the SBC's most famous woman Bible teacher, indirectly brought greater attention to the denomination's inconsistent application of complementarianism in 2019 when she received online backlash for preaching at her church's Mother's Day service (Hankins 2022, pp. 190–96). Within two years, Moore announced her departure from the SBC. Hers was not the only public departure from the convention in the years leading up to the Law Amendment.

These public departures came at a time of a larger decline in attendance and baptisms in the denomination. From 2006 to 2023, the SBC lost three million members, many of whom were raised in the denomination as children but did not remain as adults (Smietana 2023b). There was also instability at the top of the SBC, as it went through five Executive Committee presidents in the five years leading up to the 2024 annual meeting (Smietana 2023a). In the context of this constant state of crisis, Mike Law deemed it the right time to propose an amendment that would further restrict women's roles in churches in order to buttress denominational unity via enforced theological and practical uniformity. Perhaps unknowingly, Law's hyper-focus on the gendered use of "pastor" as a litmus test for SBC orthodoxy ironically exasperated the fragile and fraying denominational attempts to unify across racial lines.

3. Limitations and Caveats

Before diving into the evidence, I want to acknowledge important restrictions in this analysis. First, Law himself conceded that the list was not a representative sample of the Southern Baptist Convention but rather a rough-shot compilation of churches he was personally aware of or that were relayed to him through personal networks (Law 2023). This explains both the overrepresentation of Virginia churches as well as the presence of thirty-seven churches on the original list that were, in fact, not associated with the SBC and that ended up being removed from sbc.net within a year.

Second, two separate but overlapping lists of SBC churches with women pastors were circulated and published in the run-up to the 2023 annual meeting. As previously noted, the first list was compiled by Mike Law and published on the internet in March 2023 for wider distribution. A second list was compiled and published in June 2023 by "a team of all-volunteer members from various SBC churches" (Christ Over All 2023). While the second list attempts to use more scientific methods to provide an accurate sample set of SBC churches, I chose to examine the original list because it was circulated early in the campaign, and some of the churches on it responded in real time. Thus, a close look into the churches and women on the original list will shed light on who the supporters of the Law Amendment had in mind when they voiced their concern that "abiding women in the pastoral office. . .contaminates the soil of our Convention with distrust of and disobedience to the Scriptures" (Law 2022).

Third, this analysis was conducted in the year between the 2023 and 2024 annual meetings votes, and travel constraints resulted in a scope of analysis mostly limited to online observations. I corresponded directly with seven listed women or church representatives but largely depended on primary sources posted to church websites in the form of statements of beliefs, staff pages, church newsletters, church council minutes, and pastors' blogs. I determined the racial makeup of the listed congregations by observing both a church's leadership team as well as available photos of the congregation. I categorized a church as either White or Black if all or most of both the leadership and congregation were of one race. I categorized a church as multi-ethnic if there was significant racial diversity in the makeup of both its leadership and congregation, as well as a statement on its website that indicated a commitment to diversity as a central value or main priority of the church. Conversations with some church leaders about the makeup of their congregation confirmed a sample of these classifications. Importantly, though this categorization is largely limited to observations from afar, these racial categories did correlate with SBC history and its recent racial reconciliation initiatives outlined above. Historic SBC churches were predominantly White, most multi-ethnic churches had been planted in the last thirty years, and none of the Black churches clearly claimed an affiliation with the SBC, indicating that they were aligned with several associations and presumably included in the SBC through technical ties via local associations. With these limitations and caveats in mind, a thorough examination of the churches and the women on the list provides a glimpse into the complex landscape of the Southern Baptist Convention from 2023 to 2024 and offers insight into the various ways women did or did not respond to a denominational controversy of which they were, sometimes unknowingly, at the heart.

4. The List

Many of the list's 112 churches underwent changes between its 2023 publication and the SBC's June 2024 annual meeting. In that interim, three of these churches voted to disassociate, two were disfellowshipped, and a total of thirty-seven were removed from sbc.net. Of the sixty-four remaining on the sbc.net page in June 2024, seven identified the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, not the SBC, as their national association. Based on the categorization method described above, 77 of the 112 churches were predominantly White, 19 were predominantly Black, and 14 were multi-ethnic. Two churches seemed to be shut down by June 2024.

4.1. *Disfellowshipped and Disassociated Churches*

In the fifteen months between the list's publication and the 2024 annual meeting, the relationship between several listed churches and the SBC permanently changed. Surprisingly, Saddleback Church did not appear on the list of "Churches with Female Pastors" despite its central role in the national press coverage before and after the 2023 SBC annual meeting. In fact, only one of the five churches disfellowshipped by the SBC Executive Committee in February 2023 for having a woman pastor appeared on Mike Law's original list: Fern Creek Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, a majority White church led by a White woman (Knox 2023). Perhaps this was due to Law's intention that the list demonstrate women serving as pastors was not a localized situation but rather a widespread practice in the denomination. Whatever the case, leaders of the disfellowshipped churches were the first to respond to the 2023 affirmative vote on the Law Amendment.

Linda Barnes Popham, pastor of Fern Creek, appeared on CNN a week after the 2023 annual meeting to share her reaction to being targeted and disfellowshipped. First, she expressed surprise, given that she had served as pastor for thirty years. Popham called the situation sad, comparing it to getting kicked out of a family, and expressed anger at the hypocrisy in the convention's inconsistent defense of church autonomy. When pressed on the SBC's position that the office of pastor only be held by men, Popham noted that her church believed the Bible as much as those who led the campaign for its ouster,

subtly invoking decades-old denominational debates over hermeneutics and gender roles (Asmelash 2023).

Leaders at First Baptist Church Alexandria (FBCA), a majority White church with historic ties to the SBC, underwent similar scrutiny for their views on women in ministry after a turbulent year that included an internal review of the church's historic relationship with the SBC, a J-term class on "Women in Pastoral Ministry", and the creation of a website to house all the information related to their future with the SBC. A detailed timeline indicated that these actions were initiated after being reported to the Credentials Committee in 2022 for being "out of step" with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 (First Baptist Church Alexandria 2024b). In April 2024, the Credentials Committee asked the church to complete a questionnaire with questions ranging from their identification with the Baptist Faith and Message to the job descriptions of various pastoral positions in their church. In their response, FBCA noted that a senior pastor from their church attended the inaugural convention of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845 and that the church had contributed \$9.6 million to the SBC's Cooperative Program over their 179 years of "friendly partnership" with the convention. In the letter, the church affirmed that it "agrees specifically with the vast majority of beliefs articulated within" the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 but that the church did not believe the Bible limits the role of pastor exclusively to men (First Baptist Church Alexandria 2024a). A month after sending this letter, FBCA sent twelve delegates to the annual convention, but, after a messenger made a motion to unseat the church's delegates and the Credentials Committee recommended the church be expelled, an overwhelming majority of voting messengers agreed (Wingfield 2024). Despite considerable effort to salvage their relationship with the SBC, First Baptist Alexandria found itself removed from the convention they had a hand in creating.

Three other majority White churches on the list took the initiative themselves to disfellowship from the SBC. Chesterfield Baptist Church in Moseley, Virginia, voted unanimously to disassociate in July 2022 in response to the sexual abuse scandal in the denomination but did not officially communicate this decision until its inclusion on the list prompted leaders to write an open letter to the Executive Committee in March 2023. In eloquent language, church leaders, including the Kids' Pastor who was identified by name on Law's list, described the alarm they experienced at having a "qualified, gifted, and called clergy" named on a public document that could subject her to "danger and ridicule among the more radical, fringe segments of a highly polarized society". They poetically contrasted their alarm at being included on this list to their horror at the "much more grievous and heinous list" of accused sexual abusers kept secret by the SBC in the name of church autonomy. The letter closed by strongly affirming the calling of women into the ministry (Frame et al. 2023).

Ox Hill Baptist Church in Chantilly, Virginia, also voted to disassociate from the SBC soon after the list's publication. Rev. Dr. Sarah Boberg saw herself identified as a "Children's Pastor" after clicking on a link in a social media post soon after the list was published. Seeing her name and photo was "defeating", "violating", and "sad". For Boberg, appearing on the list caused her to see her job as potentially putting herself and others "at risk for ridicule, difficult decisions, or even danger". In the end, she felt affirmed by her local church even as being listed confirmed her view that the SBC was mostly interested in power and made her question its ongoing, broad base of support (Boberg 2024).

The five listed churches that disassociated from the SBC, either voluntarily or by force, spoke out publicly against the Law Amendment. They were all majority White churches, mostly well-resourced and with high profile or historical associations with the SBC. All but one was led by a male pastor. These churches represented a section of the SBC landscape with theologically conservative (but not fundamentalist) leadership, a deep commitment to church autonomy, and practical support for women in ministry. In church meetings and public statements ranging in tone from distressed to outraged, these churches lamented the growing distance between their congregations and the SBC, defended the women pastors

on their staff, affirmed the biblical grounds for women to hold pastoral roles, and expressed a profound desire to move forward in ministry.

4.2. Churches with Distant Relationships to the SBC

Another faction of churches on the list was led by women pastors who were aware of their church's distant relationship to the SBC but did not understand that relationship as contentious until they were publicly identified on the circulated online document. Carlisle Davidhizar, a White associate pastor of May Memorial Baptist Church in Powhatan, Virginia, with historic SBC ties, expressed this viewpoint in a March 2023 editorial titled "I'm One of the Female Pastors on the SBC's Hit List". Davidhizar explained that, though she was well aware of the barriers that prevented her from pastoring in most SBC churches, she felt dismayed at being considered an "active threat". Davidhizar claimed that economic injustice, racism, and sexual abuse all represented far more important issues for the SBC to address than her pastoral title. She also noted that May Memorial was "taking steps to finalize breaking all ties with the SBC" (Davidhizar 2023). By June 2024, the church was no longer listed on sbc.net.

The biographies of the women pastors in two other majority White Virginia churches offer a glimpse into the significant changes in the SBC over the past forty years. Rev. Lisa Cole Smith founded Convergence as a re-start of Fair-Park Baptist Church, a historic SBC church, in 2006. Cole Smith grew up under the spiritual tutelage of her grandmother, an ordained deacon in her rural SBC church, and enjoyed participating in AcTeens as a teenager in the late 1980s, though she noticed "an underlying current of harsh authoritarianism surrounding cultural issues." As a pastor at Convergence, she had "little to no relationship" with the SBC and was first alerted to Mike Law's campaign in 2022 when she received a "nasty email" from him that "chastised [her] for being a woman pastor." Though the email was sent anonymously, Cole Smith was able to easily track it to his church based on the sending email address. Though she could respect that he held a different position on women in ministry, she felt alarmed by the "nasty tone and anonymous 'bomb' email", and became concerned for Law's own congregation (Cole Smith 2024).

Cole Smith learned of Law's online list when she was contacted by a local reporter. She was surprised to learn about his claim that her church was affiliated with the SBC. She double-checked that it was, indeed, not affiliated and assured her church as such, though the church remained on sbc.net in June 2024 (Convergence at Fair-Park Baptist Church 2024). Cole Smith "didn't really care" about being on the list because it did not affect her status or her congregation. Reflecting on the list, she acknowledged that it did affect other women in more traditional churches and, based on their reactions, she saw it as a "great spark to set off some pretty dry wood" that would "force people, churches and associations to get off of the fence" about an issue that their churches had long settled (Cole Smith 2024).

Melissa Fallen, Senior Pastor of Glen Allen Baptist Church, also grew up in the SBC, though when the Baptist Faith and Message was amended in 2000, she understood that she would no longer be welcome to serve in the denomination. Fallen learned that her name appeared on the list after a friend sent it to her. Though she knew the online document would not threaten her job and she largely ignored it, Fallen did feel that being put on a "hit list" was an "act that lacked any semblance of kindness". Fallen lost more respect for the SBC through this experience because, to her, the list represented more than one rogue pastor but rather a denomination that not only failed to rebuke an "egregious" action but whose people "signed onto a document in support of it" (Fallen 2024).

In contrast to Cole Smith and Fallen, Rev. Danielle Bridgeforth grew up in Black Baptist churches and had no relationship with the SBC before being hired in 2017 as senior pastor of The Church at Clarendon. The church, originally called First Baptist Church of Clarendon, was founded and associated with the SBC in 1909, and, as Bridgeforth summarized, was characterized by "all the things that would go along with being a White Baptist Church at that time". However, as the neighborhood around the church diversified, the church maintained a focus on meeting the needs of their community. When the church

went about looking for a new senior pastor in 2017, they prioritized building a diverse congregation. As the first woman and first person of color to serve as senior pastor for the church, Rev. Bridgeforth sees her role as nurturing a congregation where “everybody feels like they can be valid and come in their authentic self” (Bridgeforth 2024).

Bridgeforth was surprised to receive an email from Mike Law in May 2022 that informed her that he was reporting their church to the SBC Credentials Committee because she occupied a senior pastor position. She forwarded the email to the church’s leadership team, who assured her that they would take care of clarifying their position with the SBC. They discovered that because of their involvement with their local and state Baptist association, the church was technically considered to be in the SBC, so that is why they appeared on sbc.net when Law began his campaign. Because of her church’s support, Bridgeforth chose to move on quickly from the incident as she deemed it not worth her attention or time (Bridgeforth 2024).

That feeling changed a year later when Bridgeforth discovered that she, along with hundreds of other women, had been named on a publicly circulated list. Seeing her name, photo, and other identifying information was “hurtful” and “disappointing” but mostly made her feel tired. It was difficult for her to reconcile Mike Law having time to compile such an extensive list while she went about pastoring by preparing sermons, ministering to families, consoling the dying, and all the other pressing life issues of her congregation. Moreover, she understood the list as creating a safety issue that “literally could have put our lives in danger” and revealed that Law was “not reading the room” of the increasing radicalization of some conservative circles where someone, in the name of biblical literalism, could commit a heinous act. Because of the safety issue, Bridgeforth did address the issue briefly from the pulpit but mostly remained focused on her work, inspired by a vision for her young congregants, both girls and boys, to have a “more well developed, well rounded faith and understanding of God and of the Gospel” (Bridgeforth 2024).

By the 2020s, these women and their churches had already settled the question of women’s role in ministry, were knowingly challenging assumptions of how a Baptist church in the South could function, and, in so doing, had moved to the fringes of the SBC. They also represented the key targets of Mike Law’s list and his attempt to unite the denomination by restricting their ability to pastor in its ranks. These churches were historically White, local, known to Law, and led by women who, though disappointed at being publicly targeted, were also okay with being officially declared “out” of the denomination they had, at least ideologically, long before left behind.

4.3. White Churches on the Fence

A third faction of listed churches, perhaps those that Cole Smith had in mind as being on the fence, anticipated the consequential vote on the Law Amendment as they affirmed women pastors while remaining in the SBC. All five churches were majority White—one had a woman senior pastor, and four were in Virginia. In the time period between the list’s 2023 publication and the 2024 annual meeting, these churches engaged with the topic of women in ministry through pastoral blogs, congregational meetings, newspaper articles, and podcasts.

In a March 2023 blog post titled “The List”, pastor Libby Grammer notified her congregation at First Baptist Church in Martinsville, Virginia, that their church had been included on a list compiled and circulated for the purposes of being ousted. She explained that First Baptist had long ago stopped contributing financially to the SBC or sending messengers to the annual meeting. Though she anticipated the church being ejected from the SBC, she assured congregants that neither their Baptist identity, their ministries, nor their commitment to the faith would be altered by this action (Grammer 2023). In a second blog post, published in June 2024 and titled “That List Again”, Grammer explained that the church only remained officially in cooperation with the SBC because of its “historic connections”. She described the church’s decision to “let it be”, but also detailed the various responses of other listed churches, including those who sent letters, formally withdrew

from the denomination, or who “faced a real dilemma” of being dually aligned with the more moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) as well as the SBC. She provided many resources for her congregants to read further about the issue and described her own passively defiant stance toward the Law Amendment as akin to saying, “Kick us out, fine. We aren’t in anyway” (Grammer 2024).

Bon Air Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, was one of those churches Grammer described as facing a dilemma. In October 2023, the church held a town hall meeting led by their interim pastor, Dr. John Upton, who described the situation at hand as a “sad and internal” issue in the denomination, noting that members of the Executive Committee did not endorse the Law Amendment but rather that “ultraconservative, doctrinally driven” Calvinists were its champions. Upton stressed that their church and denomination were facing a “bigger issue than just women”, and enumerated several consequences for the passage of the Law Amendment, including staff insurance, missionary support, and the church’s ongoing pastoral search (BABChurch 2023). In March and April 2024, Bon Air’s Church Council reviewed its history of employing women ministry leaders, conducted a church survey regarding the church’s relationship with the SBC, and approved twelve messengers, including six women, to send to the annual meeting (Cahill 2024a, 2024b).

Like Upton, Allen Jackson, Senior Pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church in Dunwoody, Georgia, situated the Law Amendment as the latest iteration of the church’s long and checkered history with the SBC. In 1989 and 1990, Dunwoody’s Senior Pastor, Daniel Vestal, ran as the last moderate candidate for SBC president, losing both years to a more conservative candidate. Jackson described himself as a “soft complementarian” and saw the Law Amendment as politically, not theologically, motivated and a result of “fear that a militant feminism has influenced the life of the church” (Mwaura 2024).

These listed churches operated with a deep knowledge of denominational politics and tradition, communicated clear support for their women pastors, and emphasized their commitment to the autonomy of the local church. In the run-up to the 2024 annual meeting, as they waited for the messengers to determine the fate of their relationship with the SBC, leaders of these churches characterized the Law Amendment as a politically motivated action taken by a puritanical and ultra-conservative faction of the convention and remained compelled to remain in a denomination that they knew well.

4.4. *White and Multi-Ethnic Churches Making Concessions*

A small number of listed churches made changes to staff women’s titles in 2023 and 2024 that indicate they actively grappled with and anticipated the implications of the Law Amendment. By the fall of 2023, Kathie Haywood, the Children’s Pastor at Stone Ridge Church in Yuma, Arizona, was no longer on the church’s staff, and her replacement was called the “Children’s Coordinator” (Leadership and Staff 2024). Interestingly, by June 2024, all of the church’s leadership and titles included the term “director”, though three male directors also had “pastor” in their indicated roles online (Leadership and Staff 2024). In addition to these staff changes, Stone Ridge’s website contained a downloadable pdf titled “Debatable Matters” that recognized both egalitarian and complementarian views within its church. The document asked egalitarians to accept “Elders & Lead Pastor as male roles in the church” and complementarians to “consider women free to engage in all other capacities” (Belief Statement 2023).

The majority of churches that made changes to the roles and titles of women on their staff were multi-ethnic. For example, Lake Pointe Church, with several campuses throughout the Dallas, Texas metro area, no longer listed any woman pastors but rather only named the church’s (all male) campus pastors on its website, perhaps in a clever way to avoid denominational scrutiny from afar (Rockwall Campus 2024). Lake Pointe’s “En Español” page shows several women on its teaching rotation, including thirty-one sermons by Pamala Baltazar (Mensajes 2024).

It is unclear whether any of these changes to staff titles were directly influenced by the Law Amendment because none of these churches responded to it on their website.

However, it is safe to say that these churches represent a faction of the SBC that was willing to make small concessions or strategic communications changes in order to keep in the good graces of the Southern Baptist Convention as it grappled with what to call women who ministered in its ranks.

4.5. *Quiet Defiance across Racial Categories*

In the face of the Law Amendment, a large contingent of listed SBC churches maintained quiet, indirect, and sometimes contradictory support for women in ministry. By June 2024, several listed White churches had more women with “pastor” in their title than originally appeared on Mike Law’s list, a subtle but sure indication that hiring decisions were not informed by his proposed amendment.⁴ Celebration Baptist Church in Hoschton, Georgia, had two additional women pastors listed on their ministry team, and its “What we value” website page contained a carefully worded statement affirming women in ministry (Values 2024).

Many listed churches that employed women pastors while remaining in the SBC were large, recently planted, and focused on building a diverse congregation. For example, Fielder Church in Arlington, Texas, is a bilingual church that is at once self-identified Southern Baptist, committed to cultural and generational diversity, and open to calling women “pastors”. Led by an all-male elder board, the church has eight women pastors across several campuses, though none of these women holds a senior pastor role (Fielder Church 2024). Some minor staff roles changed at Fielder between the list’s publication and the 2024 annual meeting, with one of the original nine named women no longer employed, another’s title changed to “worship leader”, and an additional worship pastor hired. Fielder’s website stated that the church “adheres to the beliefs outlined in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000” and identifies itself explicitly as a Southern Baptist Church. Showing its commitment to diversity, one of Fielder Church’s fourteen official goals to reach by 2026 is that “no one culture will make up more than 50% of our church” (14 Goals 2024). Despite (or because of) its size and influence, Fielder made no mention of the list or the Law Amendment on its website.

Other large, multi-ethnic, and metro-area churches on the list continued to have women pastors on staff while remaining discreet about their affiliation with the SBC. In fact, none of these churches had the word “Baptist” in their name. Grace Capital City Church, planted in Washington DC in 2016, communicated clear support for women in ministry on its website while making no reference to its affiliation with the SBC. Two women, a White Associate Pastor and a Black member of the church’s Leadership Council, helped to lead the church, and its website stated, “we value the God-given capacity of women to lead without limitation” (GCC Leaders 2024). At least one listed woman pastor in a large, multi-ethnic, and metro area church was unaware of both the list and the church’s relationship to the SBC. In a June 2024 email, Lindsey Lee, Community Pastor of Epic Church in San Francisco, California, wrote, “Epic Church is not in the SBC so I am not sure how we (or I) became a part of the list” (Lee 2024). Listed women pastors at large and recently planted multi-ethnic churches went about their work with little or no knowledge or public acknowledgment of the list or the Law Amendment.

In contrast to the variety of responses by their majority-White counterparts, no listed Black churches addressed either their inclusion on the list, the Baptist Faith and Message, or the Law Amendment on their website. Further, there was no online evidence of their affiliation with the SBC and little reference to affiliations of any kind. Of the thirteen Black churches named on the list, three had multiple women pastors, and six were co-led by women and men.⁵ Most of these listed churches detailed the personal call of their women pastors to ministry. New Canaan Baptist devoted a separate page on its website to its history, which chronicled the ordination of both women and men as pastors and elders without any qualification (History 2024). Likewise, the “brief history” page on Harvest Assembly’s website stated that, from its founding, senior pastor Johnnie Abram “boldly and publicly licensed women who were called by God to preach the gospel. . .when it was

very unacceptable” (Brief History 2023). There was scant online evidence that women serving as a pastor was notable in any of the listed, Black-led churches.

Significantly, five out of the nineteen listed Black churches were pastored by husband and wife teams. One such pastor, Assistant Pastor Constance Cheeks of Shiloh Baptist Church, “yielded and accepted” a call to preach in 2009 and was the first woman to be licensed in the church in 2011. Like several other listed pastors’ wives, she led women’s and girls’ ministries for the church (Pastoral Team 2023). Though each of these churches bestows the title “pastor” to both their leading husband and wife, none addresses the Law Amendment on its website or indicates that the church discussed this issue or sent messengers to the 2024 annual meeting. The absence of online commentary or even subtle messaging about their stance on women in ministry indicates that gender roles in leadership were not a pressing issue for Black churches on the list and that they paid little attention to SBC politics and polity.

5. Conclusions

Studying the responses of the women and churches listed on “Churches with Female Pastors from churches.sbc.net”. provides a glimpse into the various ways women in ministry navigated the complex landscape of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2023 and 2024 and the discrepancy of church responses along racial lines. Majority White churches were, by far, the most likely to engage in public conversations on the topic of women in ministry in response to the proposed Law Amendment. Lead women pastors with only loose or historical connections to the SBC responded to being listed by focusing on their congregations, reassuring them that their Baptist identity would remain intact irrespective of the messengers’ decision on the Law Amendment. They generally felt sad and disappointed by their inclusion on the list but remained undeterred in following their call. Five White churches with women pastors made decisions to disassociate from the SBC or were found “not in friendly cooperation” after publicly and formally engaging the issue with denominational leadership.

Another small faction of White churches with historical connections to the SBC addressed the impending Law Amendment through blog posts, town hall meetings, and podcasts. The male pastors of these churches emphasized that the amendment threatened the autonomy of the local church and, though supportive, spoke on behalf of the women pastors on their staff. The fact that some of these churches expressed defiance and surprise in the face of the amendment shows the centrality of church autonomy in Baptist commitments but also may confound anyone familiar with the sequence of denominational decisions that increasingly restricted women’s ministerial roles over the previous fifty years. Still, most listed White churches responded to the controversy by quietly defying it and keeping women pastors on their staff without publicly addressing the issue.

Multi-ethnic churches with listed women pastors did not engage in public discussions about the list or the Law Amendment. However, their websites provided clues that these churches wrestled with adhering to the denomination’s strict provisions for women in ministry, as stated in the SBC Faith and Message 2000, and their congregation’s diversity-related values and goals. Some of these multi-ethnic churches made staff and title changes in the year between votes on the Law Amendment, though almost all continued to employ and call at least one woman on their staff “pastor”. Depending on how closely their congregants and staff paid attention to denominational politics, the Law Amendment could have threatened these churches’ attempts at fostering a culture of diversity. Many of these multi-ethnic churches were planted over the past three decades as a part of the SBC’s attempt to actualize its commitment to racial reconciliation. Even as they worked to redeem the denomination’s lamentable racial history by building multicultural congregations, these multi-ethnic churches became mired in attempts to enforce increasingly reactionary stances on gender roles.

The absence of publicly stated positions on women in ministry or even of their SBC affiliation indicates that Black churches were either unaware or undaunted by the list or

potential changes to the SBC's constitution. More often, listed Black churches celebrated the call of their women pastors to the ministry by including it as a part of the church's history. Listed Black churches were also the most likely of any racial category to have women on their elder board. In July 2023, the National African American Fellowship, SBC (NAAF) sent a letter to the Executive Committee explaining that the Law Amendment would disproportionately affect their churches, which "often assign 'pastor' to women overseeing ministries within the church" (Perkins 2023). However, none of the listed Black churches made mention of this letter or their affiliation with the NAAF on their website. Whereas many prominent Black pastors broadcasted their decision to leave the SBC after the CRT controversy, the listed Black churches defied the Law Amendment by simply ignoring it.

The most striking commonality in these Black churches' websites is the absence of any mention of their association with the SBC. This complete silence signals a contingent relationship between these churches and the SBC and also hints at a broader failure of the racial reconciliation movement within the denomination. When asked if appearing on Mike Law's list changed her view of the SBC, one Black woman pastor responded, "No. This is who they have been for hundreds of years" (Bridgeforth 2024). This short phrase communicates the resignation and suspicion many Black church leaders maintained as they disengaged from the SBC's chaotic climate in the early 2020s.

By June 2024, most of the churches that appeared on Mike Law's list, including all of the Black churches that ignored it, remained in the SBC while defying the tightening restrictions placed on women pastors. While some listed churches maintained ambiguous positions on women in ministry, the vast majority stood behind their women pastors. An analysis of the list that centers these churches' responses reveals an unexpected view into the complicated racial dynamics inside this large and unwieldy denomination. By 2024, even as the Law Amendment drew national news coverage and caused permanent changes to several White churches, many Black churches seemingly remained uninterested and unbothered by the uproar. Instead, these churches maintained a resolute focus on their local mission and community. Ironically, the Law Amendment, which was intended to unite the denomination via doctrinal uniformity, actually exposed the failure of previous attempts to unite the denomination through racial reconciliation.

Just hours after his namesake amendment failed to gain the required two-thirds vote at the 2024 annual meeting, Mike Law released a statement that urged disappointed supporters to "lean in, lead, and labor for Biblical faithfulness" (Law 2024). By no means did the amendment's failure indicate an openness in the convention to a wider role for women in ministry. Rather, many opponents to the amendment simply believed that it was unnecessary and redundant, pointing to the successful ouster of Saddleback, Fern Creek, and First Baptist Alexandria as evidence that sufficient mechanisms were in place to guard against egalitarian practices (Camp 2024). It is worth noting that within two weeks of the Law Amendment vote, two other prominent conservative denominations also voted on ecclesial matters impacting women's role in ministry (Turpin 2024). Given the divided national politics around women's rights more broadly and the fact that Southern Baptists continue to comprise the largest Protestant group in the United States, it is safe to assume that internal efforts to police women pastors both reflect and fuel wider debates around women's roles and rights beyond church walls.

As the SBC continues to grapple with compounding denominational crises, it remains unclear if or how the denomination might formally determine if women pastors "of any kind" contradict its stated complementarian beliefs. What is clear is that women pastors in the SBC across all racial categories will continue to minister in their churches and shape this debate as they simultaneously embody both female and pastoral roles.

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Notes

- ¹ See, for example, (Graham 2023) Ruth Graham, “Southern Baptists Expel Saddleback Church Over Female Pastor”, *The New York Times*, 22 February 2023, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/21/us/southern-baptists-saddleback-church-women.html>. and (Moore and Warren 2023) Russell Moore and Rick Warren, “Rick Warren Reflects on His Legacy”, The Russell Moore Show on Apple Podcasts, accessed 12 November 2023, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-russell-moore-show/id1074011166>.
- ² See, for example, (Gulledge 2024) Griffin Gulledge, “An Appeal for Realism in Reform: A Response to Ben Lacey”, *The Baptist Review* (blog), 17 April 2024, <https://www.thebaptistreview.com/editorial/an-appeal-for-realism-in-reform>; (Iorg 2024) Jeff Iorg, “A Perspective on the Proposed SBC Amendment Regarding Women in Pastoral Ministry”, *Baptist Press*, 22 May 2024, sec. FIRST-PERSON, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/first-person-a-perspective-on-the-proposed-sbc-amendment-regarding-women-in-pastoral-ministry/>.
- ³ (Braude 1997) In her landmark essay, Braude suggested that, given the fact that women have historically made up the majority of religious practitioners in the United States, the best “theme for the story of American religion may be found in the presence of women”. She contended that when historians of religion center the experiences of women within religious institutions, narratives not only expand.
- ⁴ See (FBC Kaufman n.d.) “Staff”, FBC Kaufman, accessed 11 November 2023, <https://www.fbckaufman.com/staff>; (First Baptist of Gainesville n.d.) “Staff”, First Baptist of Gainesville, accessed 11 November 2023, <https://www.fbcgainesville.org/about/staff/>; (Staff | First Baptist Church Waco n.d.) “Staff | First Baptist Church Waco”, First Baptist Church Waco, accessed 11 November 2023, <http://fbcwaco.org/about-us/our-staff/>; (History | Sugar Land Baptist Church-Sugar Land n.d.) “History | Sugar Land Baptist Church-Sugar Land, Texas”, Sugar Land Baptist Church, accessed 11 November 2023, <https://sugarlandbaptist.org/history/>.
- ⁵ See (Amazing Church—Leadership n.d.) “Amazing Church—Leadership”, Amazing Church, accessed 12 November 2023, <https://amazingchurch.com/leadership>; (Home n.d.) “Home”, Cornerstone Peaceful Bible Baptist Church, accessed 12 November 2023, <https://www.cornerpeace.org/>; (Mt. Pleasant Baptist—Leadership n.d.) “Mt. Pleasant Baptist—Leadership”, Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, accessed 12 November 2023, <https://www.mtpleasantbaptist.org/leadership>.

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Article

Southern Baptist Slaveholding Women and Mythologizers

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Abstract: Christian slaveholding should not be forgotten or minimized, nor should its mythologies go unchallenged or uncritiqued. This article surveys some of the leading Southern Baptist women slaveholders and mythologizers before and after the U.S. Civil War. It examines sources of SBC hagiography about the Convention foremothers and their persistent apologia for slaveholding. In particular, it discusses how female mythologizers in the antebellum and postbellum eras linked slaveholding, evangelism, and mission identity. It demonstrates how postbellum Southern Baptist women chose to view women slaveholders as moral exemplars for their current missions. It concludes that understanding the myth-making by and about women slaveholders in Southern Baptist patriarchal society is instructive for understanding this group of American Evangelical Protestants in Christian history.

Keywords: southern; Baptist; slaveholders; women; missions; mythos; Christianity; American; evangelical; Lost Cause; white supremacy; Bible Belt

1. Introduction

...the southern white woman is the molder, shaper, and changer of attitudes, sentiment and actions of the whites of that entire section. She holds the key to the solution of the race problem in Dixie. . . She holds the destiny of more souls in her hands for weal or for woe than does any group of women anywhere in the world.

National Baptist Nannie Helen Burroughs to Southern Baptist women, 1950¹

Growing up in the late twentieth century, Sally Waits' descendant Mary Tribble was taught by institutional and family lore that Sally had been married to "a Baptist minister constantly scraping to make ends meet" and they "would not have owned enslaved workers". When she began researching the Wake Forest founders in the twenty-first century, Tribble "imagined learning about the grandmotherly ancestor and pious helpmate that Sally envisioned herself to be". That was the hagiography Southern Baptists had taught and Tribble had received, as they all had "wanted to believe in a certain exceptionalism" that portrayed their founders as heroic. But the woman "I met in the archives", Tribble wrote, had gone from early anti-slavery leanings to being a slaveholder who applied her intellectual and spiritual energy to trying to justify her behavior. Tribble discovered that generations of Southern Baptists' narratives about the slaveholding of their denomination's heroes and heroines was simply "wrong" (Tribble 2020).

This article examines some of the sources of hagiography about Southern Baptist Convention foremothers that affected perceptions of later generations like Tribble. It introduces multiple examples of slaveholding women and female mythologizers who linked their slaveholding, evangelism, and mission identity in both the antebellum and postbellum eras.²

In little more than a century, the Southern Baptist Convention went from establishing themselves as a slaveholders' denomination in the emerging "Bible Belt" in 1845³ to being the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S., their global influence deeply tethered to their origins in the U.S. South (approaches to the "Bible Belt": (Douglass 1845; Gaustad 1962;



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Heatwole 1978; Clarke 1990; Farnsley 1994; Heyrman 1997; Mathews 2002; Brown 2004; Foster 2005; Wilson 2005; Najar 2008; Locke 2017; Maxwell and Shields 2019; Hazard 2020; Jemison 2020)). Religious historians considered the SBC, a significant footnote in global Christianity's history, one of the most "intact" religious subcultures in American history. Indeed, "no major Protestant denomination retained so much of its nineteenth-century identity as the SBC" (Marty 1978, p. 40; George 1999; Leonard 1990, p. 8).

As this article argues, a major factor in this continuity was an entrenched antebellum "mythos" about themselves and their persistent slaveholding apologia. Some of their best mythologists were women. They illustrated historians Elizabeth Flowers' and Karen Seat's observation: "an overwhelmingly white denomination, the SBC provides a case study of the construction of whiteness in relationship to gender and the ways in which individuals negotiate multiple identity markers within overlapping structures of power" (Flowers and Seat 2020, p. xv; Hale 1998; Collins 2019; Patil 2013). The public and private writing and actions discussed here offer a record for further research and consideration of women, slaveholding, and the perdurance of the "afterlives of proslavery Christianity" in the Southern Baptist Convention.⁴

Multiple micro-histories of influential SBC women in the 19th and early 20th centuries demonstrate they were not anomalies. Rather, they formed a web of intersecting lived assumptions of racial and denominational superiority that vibrated across generations, impossible to disentangle from each other. Following their stories can be like opening nesting dolls. We do well, then, when studying SBC women, to seek "the crux of the meaning of hagiographic literature [that] exists in the overlaps or joins between its various chronological layers: the time of the event, the time of the writing-down of the event, and the time of the hearing of the writing-down of the event" (Cornwall 2008).

After introducing a leading author of SBC "mythopoeia" and her 1913 SBC classic, which frames the essay, Part I surveys various antebellum slaveholding women in the Convention. It underscores themes of the SBC antebellum "mythos" about themselves in general and women in particular. These include donors, doyens, evangelists, missionaries, and especially "mistresses" of households and society. Significantly, these stories did not end with the U.S. Civil War but continued for decades. Part II discusses their persistent development of slaveholding apologia and "mythopoeia" regarding their missions and evangelism (Jacob and Menon 2023, pp. 147–64).

In this essay, "mythos" refers to stories people tell themselves and others about who they are.⁵ These "deep stories" have "been told and retold so many times and across so many generations that they feel natural and true: even and perhaps especially when they are at odds with history".⁶ The most powerful and pervasive SBC mythos—that "no one does missions like Southern Baptists"—cyclically effected other deep stories, especially about race, which reified their 1845 origin story as an unambiguous good.

A particular form of mythos, hagiography, celebrates a culture's heroes as moral exemplars or "saints". While Southern Baptists condemned others' veneration of ancestors or exemplars with such zeal, they created their own hagiographical memorials and monuments, including literary ones. Homage to these Convention "heroines" proved unifying amid internal conflicts, as did the use of nostalgia for an imagined shared past, as we shall see.

Nostalgia, significantly, is a "wedge between experience, what people knew to be true about the world around them, and expectation, what they anticipated the world becoming". While nineteenth-century European Romantics portrayed nostalgia as a virtue—"valorizing the past as a source of hope" and "romanticizing" the "heroic"—such imaginative acts could be used for "self-deception, a false sense of an idealized place that never was", as SBC authors in this essay demonstrated.⁷ Their nostalgia for, and hagiography about, women slaveholders as supposed moral exemplars remained largely uncritiqued and unchallenged by the SBC for a century and a half, as later Southern Baptists hesitated to criticize women who were devoted to the Convention and its "missions".

In Royal Service (1913)

Few Southern Baptist women did more to valorize slaveholding women as moral exemplars and reify the continuity between antebellum and postbellum worldviews than Fannie Exile Scudder Heck. In 1913, as the Southern Baptist Convention approached their seventh decade of existence, Heck published *In Royal Service*. It celebrated both the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Woman's Missionary Union, which she helped to found in 1888 and led as president on-and-off for fifteen years, and its antecedent the "sisterhood of our Southern Zion". Venerating leaders of the antebellum and postbellum "sisterhood", Heck promulgated Southern Baptist antebellum and Lost Cause mythology for the new century. Using the term "rich heritage" in more ways than one (Heck 1913, p. 227), Heck presented it as a unifying heritage of moral exemplars for all Southern Baptist women. *IRS* became an SBC classic.

Heck represented the generation of postbellum SBC women leaders. The unmarried daughter of unapologetic Confederates, Heck was born in 1862 in "Old Virginia", which loomed large in SBC missionary hagiography. The Hecks were part of the SBC leadership strata who recovered wealth quickly after the war. Fannie grew up in a mansion staffed by "servants" in one of Raleigh's wealthiest neighborhoods. She watched her mother, a prominent member of First Baptist, Raleigh, lead the Southern Baptist "sisterhood of our Southern Zion" in North Carolina in the 1870s.⁸ This group and others steeped Fannie in their Lost Cause narratives about slaveholding.

Fannie was surrounded by females from similar families with similar mythos at Hollins Institute in Virginia. She later helped found Meredith College in Raleigh and the WMU Training School for females in Louisville. She was twenty-three when elected chair of the Woman's Central Committee of [Southern Baptist] Missions in North Carolina in 1886. Two years later, she helped unite various state Central Committees into the National Woman's Missionary Union in Richmond. She was WMU President by 1892.

Like other WMU leaders, Heck paid travel expenses with "family money" less than one generation removed from the Confederacy. With it, she represented SBC women at religious and secular gatherings in the North and South. In 1907, she led a joint meeting of Northern and Southern Baptist women, white and black, at the Jamestown Exposition in Virginia, the expo. that demonstrated white conservative backlash to earlier optimism about interracial co-operation and partnerships (Scales and Maxwell 2019, pp. 4, 14; Cardon 2018). Heck's leadership so invigorated SBC women's sense of exceptionalism and triumphalism that, as a founder of the most influential women's organization in the SBC until the late twentieth century, she became part of their hagiography herself (Blume 2019; Hunt 2019). Her lyrics for "Come Women, Wide to Proclaim" ("The Woman's Hymn") became a WMU anthem.⁹

Southern Baptist women frequently waged vitriolic power struggles with each other inside their patriarchal Convention. One of Heck's key tactics to unite them was cultivating shared mythos and nostalgia for their denominational origins. Her 1913 book *In Royal Service* created a canon of SBC heroines Heck treated as moral exemplars.¹⁰ These featured slaveholding mothers, grandmothers, donors, evangelizers, missionaries, and organizers. Heck venerated them for their devotion to the Southern Baptist Convention's "missions" and the Confederacy's Lost Cause, which she treated as one and the same.

The SBC reissued *IRS* in 1914–1915, during commemorations of the 100th anniversary of the Triennial Baptist Convention from which the SBC had seceded, to portray the SBC as a mainstream Baptist denomination (Heck 1913). The SBC republished it again in 1928 and in 1948. The tribute to the "sisterhood of our Southern Zion" before and after the Civil War became an institutional staple of SBC libraries and programs (Heck 1913, p. 102) [N.B.: Heck's memorial sketch of missionary Lottie Moon, who died the previous year, was part of the beginning of the Convention's deep "mythopoeia" about Moon].

Southern Baptists identified *IRS*, like other Convention material, as about their "missions". It was, however, a major Lost Cause text.

Heck repeated Southern Baptists' Lost Cause mythology, which repeated their antebellum founders' mythos, about their slaveholding and missions. She portrayed slavery

as having “no solutions” and argued there was “no relief for the situation” (Heck 1913, p. 72). She called the “fraternal war” a “sad disagreement” with people “noble on both sides” (Heck 1913, pp. 77, 79). She pedestaled Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson as Christian exemplars, and lauded missionaries who remained loyal to the SBC during the war (Heck 1913, p. 79). Heck cast the Civil War as a “baptism of fire” used by God to purify “the women of the Confederacy”, not because they had done anything wrong, but so they would be prepared to fulfill their divinely appointed duties in the world. “How they did their part” for the Confederacy, Heck enthused, “how their gentle dignity held together the social order and protected them when left alone upon the wide plantations” (Heck 1913, pp. 89–90).

She sought sympathy for wealthy slaveholding women “[l]eft to care for home, children, and slaves; to educate, to protect, to feed and clothe them” (Heck 1913, p. 88). She opined on how they “wove and fashioned their rough clothing when all else was gone” and “lived on the barest morsel” (Heck 1913, p. 89). She claimed these slaveholding heroines “never through it all wavered in upholding “the standard of truth and honor”, emphasizing the idea of Southern Baptist exceptionalism (Heck 1913, pp. 89–90).

Southern Baptist women in 1913, Heck exhorted, had only to claim their “inheritance” from these slaveholders in “shaping the religious future of our own and other lands” (Heck 1913, pp. 354–55). She was confident they already held “God’s point of view for the salvation of the world” (Heck 1913, pp. 359–60).

2. Part I: 1845 Mythos

2.1. *Christian Mistresses*

Heck foregrounded SBC missions in 1913 with women’s recollections about their heritage: “the life of long ago”, which they and Heck romanticized and idealized (Heck 1913, pp. 68–69, 89). Notably, Heck wrote about antebellum SBC life as if every reader was from a wealthy slaveholding family. “To be a girl was to have the best of everything; to be the pet whose beauty was admired, whose accomplishments were extolled, whose favor was sought”, Heck declared (Heck 1913, p. 8). Such girls were expected to become the model “mistress of a large household, rising early, directing every detail of a family of many members and many servants [slaves]” (Heck 1913, p. 8). Southern Baptist leaders established and sent their daughters to schools that trained them for the role of overseeing others.

Slaveholders’ colleges taught a version of Greco-Roman Christianity (“Western civilization”) that trained students in hermeneutics of hierarchies, co-option of Jewish scriptures, and imitation of first-century Greco-Roman households. SBC founders portrayed themselves as the new Hebrews, and indigenous and “colored people” as the new “Gentiles”.¹¹ “WHAT GOD SANCTIONED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, AND PERMITTED IN THE NEW, CANNOT BE A SIN”, they repeated. They insisted that abolitionists failed to point to Bible verses explicitly stating slaveholding was a sin “in all circumstances”, and they taught students catechisms and apologetics to defend it.¹² They emphasized in particular New Testament passages of household codes interpreted to justify contemporary patriarchy and race-based slavery as God’s will.¹³

Anglo-Saxon Baptist women had a particular role to play in this vision of the new “Canaan’s” households and culture. The terms “housewife”, “housekeeper”, and “mistress” were used interchangeably (Randolph and Hess 1991; Bryan 1839; Rutledge [1847] 1851; Hill 1872; 1898 “Hints to Housekeepers” 395, 129; Tyree 1879; Dixie Cookbook 1883, p. 499). “Housekeeper” did not mean “maid” or “servant” but the wife and mother who oversaw “servants”, which Southern Baptists used as a euphemism for slaves (*Duties of Masters to Servants* 1851; Hill 1872). Stephanie Jones-Rogers notes the term “mistress-ship” was used “to describe women’s control of subordinates” (Jones-Rogers 2019, p. xv) both in households and broader society. They had “dominion, rule, or power” equivalent to that of a “master”. Lawmakers in states like South Carolina declared “every master, mistress or overseer, shall and may have liberty to whip any strange negro or other slave coming to his or their plantation” (Jones-Rogers 2019, p. xv).

Southern Baptists' ideal woman was a Christian mistress who presided over a household pyramid of children and "servants" [slaves] as the consort to the patriarch, or father, who ruled over them all, like a Greco-Roman household. They referred to this hierarchal household as a "family". Invoking familial language with patriarchs analogous to God the Father giving "gifts" to his "children" assigned and infantilized all the other adults as part of the slaveholding mythos (McCurry 1995). Some women, like missionary Martha Foster Crawford, preferred the role patriarchs got, but still spent their time as male slaveholding evangelists did: reading, writing, visiting, leading Bible study and prayers, while "servants" did the manual labor.¹⁴

Southern Baptists intended Christian mistresses to act as consorts over their "civilization" as well as individual households. Their "Classical Christian" education for future slaveholding mistresses included Latin, French, rhetoric, botany, astronomy, "political economy", "Biblical literature", "moral science", and "evidences of Christianity" that taught them to reinforce slaveholders' hermeneutics of hierarchies. Projects of "ornamental" arts relied on slave labor.¹⁵ The schools, overseen by male presidents and trustees, infantilized slaveholding women on pedestals of paradoxical duties to "oversee" households of servants while remaining "helpless" without enslaved laborers. SBC scion Louise Manly described her mother and aunts from these schools as "polished as the pillows of the temple."¹⁶ This image of the mistress's simultaneous authority and helplessness without a maid or "mammy" continued through and after Heck's romanticization of it in 1913. A good number of SBC missionaries came from this stratum or emulated it, as their households with servants demonstrated.¹⁷

2.2. Donors and Doyens

One of Heck's exemplars of slaveholding "missions" and patronage was Antionette Lea Bledsoe Power ("Annette" in Heck 1913, p. 76, "Antoinette" in Seale 1970; Seale 1952). Antoinette embodied evangelical slaveholders' "settler missions".¹⁸ Heck's ode presented Antoinette as an ideal evangelist, accidental wealth-builder, and generous philanthropist who "made history for the Baptist cause" in "this little town [Nacogdoches, Texas] (Heck 1913, p. 76) where "only a few colonies of white people had settled" among the "heathen" (including Catholics) prior to 1830 (Heck 1913, pp. 75–77).

According to Heck, Antoinette's "mission" to Texas was outfitted by Baptists in Alabama with "tracts and testaments" for "those ignorant Mexican women, the first women's mission in the state" (Heck 1913, p. 76). What Heck did not point out was that, while Antionette distributed Bibles, she was also on a mission to "possess the land",¹⁹ wealth, and people. She was part of the founding SBC generation who helped develop the "Bible Belt" with brutal, lucrative sugar and cotton plantations that made them "fabulously rich" and politically powerful (Woodard 2011, p. 225; Luck 2022; Ferrer 2021). As she established plantations and churches together, Antoinette became enormously wealthy like her mother, Nancy Moffette Lea, another Baptist church planter ("Annette" in Heck 1913, p. 76, "Antoinette" in Seale 1970; Seale 1952).

Nancy Lea inherited and traded people after coming of age at First Baptist, Charleston, "the mother church of the Southern Baptist Convention" (Fuller 2021, p. 41). Charleston slaveholding was a "near carbon-copy of the West Indian slave state", the "most horrifying society in the English-speaking world". It was notorious for inhumanity and enormous profits for slaveholders (Woodard 2011, pp. 82, 85; Wilson 2021). Like Sarah Rudolph Manly, Nancy spread the "Charleston Tradition" of Baptists and slavery capitalism as joint "missions" across the Lower South. Other slaveholders joined them in setting up new churches, schools, and associations with slaveholders' values.

Nancy built slave plantations with her husband, Temple, on some of the first land taken from indigenous groups by U.S. and State governments in Georgia and Alabama (Seale 1970, p. 7). She was a founder of the town of Marion, where the SBC would place their Domestic Board aimed at enslaved populations. There she co-founded Siloam Baptist Church, the Alabama Baptist State Convention, and Judson College (Manly 1913; Flynt

1998, p. 55). She lived extravagantly and gave large sums of money to anti-abolitionist Baptist institutions, as did her friend Julia Tarrant Barron, the co-owner of the *Alabama Baptist* (Taylor 2011; Flynt 1998, p. 58). She also taught her daughters to do the same across the Gulf states.

Capitalizing on land seizures gained by those already possessing wealth (Potter and Schamel 1997; Woodard 2011, pp. 208–10), Antoinette Lea Bledsoe joined the evangelizing slaveholders and missionary “pioneers” “gone to Texas” in 1835, the year the Alabama Baptist Convention declared “abolitionists . . . are properly called in this country, fanatics” (Foster 1934, p. 24). Antoinette and her husband set up a large sugar cane plantation at Grand Cane, in ironically named Liberty County, where she forced more people into brutal labor. She was one of the founders of Concord Baptist Church (Tomich et al. 2021; Galloway 1989; Roberts 1984, p. 111; Flanagan 1973, p. 79; Jasinski 2005).

A few years later, in the slave port of Mobile, Antoinette hosted a lavish garden party to celebrate mother Nancy’s lucrative sale of Cane Brake plantation and people, which dispersed them to face new horrors. Nancy still retained ownership of a retinue of people as her personal household slaves. Antoinette’s strawberry festival party displayed them and their skills to other “property” investors (Seale 1970, p. 10). One attendee was Antoinette’s younger sister Margaret, who was receiving the Classical education for Christian mistresses at the girls’ school Nancy set up in Marion. Antoinette introduced Margaret to the scandal-ridden guest of honor, Texas President Sam Houston (Cantrell 1993).

When Margaret Lea married Sam at Siloam Baptist Church, she already owned four people “willed” to her by her late father. She used Eliza and Joshua as her personal slaves and moved them with her to Texas. There the Lea-Bledsoe-Houston clan bought more people and Margaret became a Southern Baptist heroine like her sister (Hesler 1952). Margaret’s children later told self-aggrandizing narratives about “Aunt Eliza” and their paternalism and patronage after 1865 (Roberts 1984, p. 358).

Antoinette zealously evangelized “Mexicans and Indians” around the ironically named Independence, Texas, helping to Christianize an obedient “servant” class (Heck 1913, p. 77; Barrera 2016, pp. 20–41; Gratton and Merchant 2015). She made the Baptist colony in Washington County a hub of pious slaveholders where property coffers, political influence, and mission donations reified each other (Augustin and Pitts 2019; Baylor University 2021). She and other slaveholding Baptists helped ensure the Republic of Texas made slavery easy to practice and difficult to oppose prior to 1845. They were instrumental in Texas joining the Union as a slavery state the same year Southern Baptists declared their pro-slavery Convention (Kohn 2013).

Slaveholders in Antoinette’s orbit—James and Rhoda Carver Huckins, and William and Louisa J. Higgins Tryon, American Baptist missionaries in Texas—were the cause célèbre of the SBC’s formation in 1845 (Randolph B. “Mike” Campbell 1952/2022; Summerlin 2019; Baylor University 2021). After 1845 SBC leaders thrilled to similar “missions” expansion in California and South America on the Charleston/Texas model of interactive slave-wealth capitalism and mission-reinforcement. They hoped the annexation of “Cuba would be next”, a mission goal they clutched for decades (SBC Annual 1845–2023: Basil Manly Jr. “Foreign Mission Board Report”, 49–51; 1890: “Home Mission Board Report”, 16–17; Ferrer 2021, p. 111; Karp 2016; Scott 2005; Walvin 2022; Williams 2018, p. 123). Southern Baptists in the 1930s were still exhilarated talking about building “in the Southwest one of the greatest Baptist empires in the world” (Foster 1934, p. 46).

Widowed in 1845, Antoinette married wealthy English merchant Charles Power and became mistress of a Matagorda Bay sugar plantation. There, enslaved people generated profits that Antoinette spent on diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, expensive modistes in New Orleans and London, and SBC schools and missions (Seale 1970, pp. 111, 126). Heck’s 1913 tribute to her, however, praised Antoinette as a simple, “unselfish” funder of SBC institutions, a woman of “power and influence” who, as an evangelist, “aroused such enthusiasm that . . . women shouted and children cried” (Heck 1913, p. 78).

Countless other Southern Baptist women were slaveholders in their homes, churches, schools, and businesses. Many became enormously wealthy buying and selling people to work plantations and mills. Then they donated what Baptist abolitionists called “blood-money” to slaveholders’ churches, schools, and mission boards (Duncan 1961; Foss and Mathews 1850, p. 313). These included Julia Tarrant Barron, Sarah Rudolph Manly, Nancy Lea and her daughters Antoinette Lea Bledsoe and Margaret Lea Houston, Margaret Foreman Hartwell, Nannie Boyce Tupper, Annabella Dawson Hill, and Adeline Smyly Catts. Church ledgers brimmed with accounts of members selling people for money and tithing profits to SBC churches and missions. A widow in 1855 sold two teen-aged boys, each for USD 950 (about USD 46,000 currently) and then paid the preacher (Bentley 2017; Foss and Mathews 1850). Others sold people to fund their own “mission” travel.²⁰

Records of their human trafficking, which they called Christian housekeeping, remained in full view and in euphemisms understood by cultural in-groups. Slaveholding families like the Broaduses and Manlys (for whom Southern Baptists named their 20th-century “Broad-Man” Press) normalized intrafamily “bequeathing” people, “leasing” people, and “gifting” people as wedding and childbirth presents.²¹ Martha Carolina Tharp Porter, mother of fundamentalist pastor John William Porter, was given six of the 400 people her Christian parents enslaved in Fayette County, Tennessee, as a “bridal present” when she graduated from her college training for mistress-ship. She and her husband continued building slave-based wealth and fought the Civil War to preserve it (Connelly and Coulter 1922, pp. 101–2).

Baylor’s first lady, Georgia Jenkins Burleson, attempted to buy a woman named Harriet from Georgia’s cousin Belle in 1864. Belle responded that the odds of “letting you have Harriet” and “your chances of getting Harriet” were low because “Ma has her at home this year spinning—she spins five cuts every day and milks and attends to making butter. She spins a beautiful thread. I do not think they could be induced to sell her. She was given to Ma when an infant . . . and cannot sell her for any price” (Duncan 1961; Georgia Jenkins Burleson Collection n.d.).

Tabitha Curry, daughter of Rebecca and Jabez Curry, a Southern Baptist Congressman, was educated to emulate her mother on a Black Belt plantation that, in 1857, consisted of 550 acres worked by 25 enslaved people. The Currys enslaved up to 40 people in 1863 (Bailey 2007/2015; Curry School of Education and Human Development, University of Virginia n.d.). Tabitha married another wealthy Baptist slaveholder, Richard Henry Lee, and became mistress of another Black Belt plantation and a townhouse in Mobile where Richard was a “merchant”. Her father wrote to Tabitha in 1857: “You mention that you have a servant on trial at \$1450, you need a girl—it is hard-nay, impossible to get them perfectly to suit you in every respect—a negro will be a negro. Burwell traded Gabe off to a trader going to N. Orleans for a girl that was born & raised in Savannah. She is yellow-hardly a perfect mulatto—serves very well—much better than Billy’s girl—irons better than any woman on the place, except venus—washes very well—about 18 or 20 years old—the right size and very brisk—She has the same manner of taking [sic] that Cindy had—the low country pronunciation . . . Should you not get pleased with a servant in Mobile perhaps this girl might suit you—We yet do not know enough about her to recommend her—I had rather have her than Mary, Billy’s girl. This girl I think was raised and owned by French people. . . . Your Affectionate Father”.²²

While many Southern Baptist women were legal owners of people, one did not have to be a legal “owner” to practice slaveholding. Many SBC families, schools, and associations had “arrangements” with neighbors and relatives to pass enslaved people among themselves, as the Currys did. Robert and Josephine Norvell Ryland enslaved a woman named Mary and a man named Coffee “leant” to them by Robert’s father and passed around other SBC families who reminded each other to give Coffee “passes” of permission to travel between them (Driskill and Lee 2021, p. 22). Basil and Sarah Manly “leased” the family of Mary Jinco, her husband Ben, and children Margaret and Harriet, to Basil’s and Sarah’s son and daughter-in-law as a “wedding present” (Manley 1999, p. 95).

Slaveholders in “hospitality” businesses in Appalachia often bought one or two people at a time. In North Carolina, there was a “a remarkably high proportion of single-slave owners whose only slave was a child” as slave traders rode through the mountains selling children to local residents. By 1859 “many old and new slave owners” were buying a child to be a slave (Inscoc 1989, p. 83; see also King 2011).

A favorite story that Heck and other WMU leaders told about their antebellum missionary celebrity, J. Lewis Shuck, was instructive. They emphasized that “his clothing was made of Virginia cloth by Virginia women” (Bourne 1940, p. 20). Heck similarly described a party for Mary Eugenia Canfield Reid in antebellum Georgia, where “the busy fingers of the women of the congregation flew fast as they gathered in the afternoons to prepare her trousseau”.²³ Variations of similar stories appeared in accounts of SBC missionaries’ preparation “fetes” in Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Maryland. Many slaveholding women sewed if they chose, especially ornamentally. Harriet Baker was almost obsessive about her sewing in China, to the point of annoying other missionaries. But the majority of the women who planted, picked, spun, and sewed the clothes in these stories in the Bible Belt, even if members of the churches, were not there voluntarily. Some were mentioned in passing by first names only, if at all, in records of SBC families and churches: *Celia, Eliza, Rachel, Frank, Tom, Mary, Harriet, Margaret, Caesar, Chaina, Violet, Levina, Solomon*. . . . Countless more became what Julia Laite termed “archivally unknown” as white women put their own names (or their husbands’) on other people’s knowledge and labor (Miles 2021, pp. 29, 311, n8; Finley 2020).

Slaveholders used possessive pronouns to refer to “my cook”, “her maid”, when “loaning” and “swapping” children and adults as “favors” and “gifts”.²⁴ These speech habits and the mentalities of ownership and possession continued in slavery’s afterlives well into the twentieth century, as Southern Baptist women demonstrated. They were often used analogously with a sense of ownership of the Bible and its interpretations.

Using plantation language in 1913, Abby Manly Gwathmey wrote, “My mother had four young colored girls” who were learning to sew. In a common trope repeated by former slaveholders, Abby asserted that Sarah Manly had given the girls Bibles and taught them to read them (Heck 1913, p. 69). While according to formerly enslaved people this sometimes happened, former slaveholders also exaggerated these stories memetically as examples of their “benevolence” and what they argued were the “good” things about slavery, justifying it as evangelism. Eliza Sterry said in the 1840s that when she urged other Baptist women to teach enslaved people to read, slaveholding women answered, “Why! if we should teach them to read, they would cut our throats” (Foss and Mathews 1850, p. 359).

Abby described herself as a child who “gather[ed] the small house negroes around me” and instructed them in “catechism”.²⁵ The example was intended to remind the descendants of slaveholders of their “duty” to act as overseers of others’ religion. Abby had assumed this position and psyche, even as a child. In addition, instructing others in oral catechism was not the same as teaching literacy. Several SBC pastors published catechisms instructing slaves how to be “obedient” Christians. The SBC author of the 1848 “Scripture Catechism for the Instruction of Children and Servants [Slaves]” (Ryland 1848; Eighmy 1972, p. 29; Driskill and Lee 2021, p. 22; Ayers 2013; Billingsley 2003), preached that “God has given this country to the white people. They are the law-makers—the masters—the superiors. The people of color are the subjects—the servants—and even when not in bondage, the inferiors”. Slaves had a “duty” to submit to white people’s oversight (Ryland 1848 “Substance of a Sermon”, University of Richmond 2023; Driskill and Lee 2021, p. 151). The author’s wife, Bettie Ryland, would be, like her friend Abby, integral in Southern Baptist women’s postwar continuity of their antebellum mythologies. Their “sisterhood of our Southern Zion” and subsequent Woman’s Missionary Union would publish the Rylands’ unchanged ideology as “authorities” on their SBC “missions” to “colored people” in the 1890s.²⁶

Abby Manly Gwathmey was the daughter of SBC founder and “chaplain to the Confederacy” Basil Manly Sr. and slaveholder Sarah Rudolph Manly. She was educated at

Richmond Female Institute to be mistress of a large household with “servants” and mistress of the culture Southern Baptists established. She married a Southern Baptist physician who was also a lay missions leader and President of the Richmond and York River Railroad. Like other leading SBC families, the Gwathmeys would retain and increase their wealth and influence after the Civil War (Fuller 2000, pp. 243–45; J. Manley 1999, p. 4; Holcomb 2020, pp. 28, 235; L. Manly 1930, pp. 309–12). Abby would become an influential leader in SBC women’s postbellum mission organizations, WMU president 1894–1903, matriarch of her own large family, and a model of Woman Missionary Union’s pride in their genealogical associations and Lost Cause; (Devault 1958, p. 2257).

Heck later considered Abby Manly Gwathmey one of the “dear old ladies” at the turn of the century who considered their slaveholding to have been evangelism. *IRS* included Abby’s tribute to her mother, Sarah Rudolph Manly, as an ideal Christian plantation mistress (J. Manley 1999, p. 4). Like Nancy Moffette Lea, Sarah Manly was born into a Baptist slaveholding family at Edgefield, South Carolina, and took the “Charleston Tradition” with her to new plantations in Alabama (Fuller 2000, pp. 41, 51, 54). Her father gave Sarah’s husband part of her “inheritance” that included five people listed as “servants, young and old—viz—Jack 51 years old, Molly 49, Lydia 21, Ben 13, and Hetty, child of Lydia [2]”. In 1844–1855 alone, the Manlys increased the number of people they enslaved by birth, inheritance, or purchase, from eighteen to thirty-four. Enslaved people’s labor put the large Manly family in the state’s highest socio-economic tier (Fuller 2000, pp. 240–41).

Sarah’s husband was a pastor of such churches, as well as President of the University of Alabama and a leading instigator of Baptist slaveholders forming their own Convention in 1844–1845. He preached frequently about Biblical households as justification for slaveholding. In one sermon he declared that the story of Moses breastfed by his biological mother, a slave in the Pharaoh’s house, meant that Christian slaveholders not only could but should use enslaved women’s bodies as nurses to breastfeed slaveholders’ children. This, he stated, would bring blessings to the slaveholders’ children who would be like Moses in their new Promised Land [even though Moses did not make it into the Promised Land]. Basil argued that enslaved women forced to breastfeed other women’s children were blessed because they would receive shelter, clothes, their slaveholders’ gratitude, and a reward in heaven one day if they did it cheerfully.²⁷

Sarah’s granddaughter Louise, a significant Lost Cause textbook author, would repeat these arguments in the 1890s, asserting: “in the Old Testament Hebrew and the New Testament Greek, ‘the manservant and maidservant’ of the fourth and tenth commandments, and the ‘servants’ so often mentioned in the gospels and epistles, were slaves *in the absolute power* of their masters”, and “nowhere in the Scriptures was there any direct condemnation” of it (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 315, emphasis added). Louise lauded the “simplicity” of slaveocracy’s “patriarchal” society in which white “wives and mothers, exempt from drudgery, and almost from care, gave to their sons . . . something of their own grace and gentleness.” And in return, the “reverence paid to [white] womanhood” was to be an “inviolable respect” (L. Manly 1895 citing Henry Grady, pp. 416–19).

In Montgomery, where Basil led the prayer at Jefferson Davis’s inauguration as President of the Confederacy, Sarah socialized with Mary Chestnut, who wrote in her diary about these Biblical allusions in the Christian slaveocracy. According to Chestnut, “like the patriarchs of old our men live all in one house with their wives & their concubines, & the Mulattoes one sees in every family exactly resemble the white children. . . . & all the time they seem to think themselves patterns—models of husbands & fathers”. Regarding “the thing we can’t name”, Chestnut observed, “[e]very lady tells you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody’s household, but those in her own she seems to think dropped from the clouds or so pretends to think” (Woodward 1981, p. 29; Woodward and Muhlenfeld 1984, pp. 42–43). This was the reality of sexual assault and rape of enslaved women and girls, as well as possibilities of interracial relationships and arrangements tantamount to polygamy in slaveholding households (Finley 2020; Green 2015; Bardaglio 1998).

Diaries and letters of Southern Baptist slaveholders demonstrated various psychological maneuvers to continue defending slaveholding, even when they acknowledged its “horror”, as Martha Foster Crawford, a Manly protégée, did.²⁸ Tactics included denial, compartmentalization, willful ignorance, projection, disassociation, rationalization, resignation (“God’s will”), silence, and self-medication. They often blamed abolitionists and enslaved people themselves. As part of one’s religious faith, slaveholding could prime individuals psychologically and spiritually for other forms of dysfunction, hypocrisy, and abuse.²⁹ Women enmeshed in the psyches and practices of slaveholding constructed elaborate apologetics that their daughters and successive generations repeated as they celebrated them for their “mission-mindedness”. Left unaddressed, such psychological throughlines continued cycling through the Convention’s mythos.³⁰

2.3. Missionaries

Antebellum SBC missionaries took abroad the mental habits of those they represented, often scouting and reporting on prospects for cotton and other business expansion opportunities. They expected to transplant their household structures from the Bible Belt as models to converts (Crawford 1852–1881). Heck described many of their missionaries as coming from “the ranks of Southern Baptist women many of the noblest home and foreign missionaries have gone” (Heck 1913, p. 227). Many, if not most, of those Heck labelled “Southern Baptist Missionary Heroines” were from slaveholding families. They were trained to be “mistresses” or “housekeepers”, overseeing households of “servants”, and this was what many of them did in other countries.³¹ Heck praised them for transplanting SBC values and expanding SBC influence.³²

The frontispiece of Heck’s hagiography featured images of six of the numerous SBC missionaries around a larger one of Henrietta Hall Shuck. Henrietta, from a slaveholding Baptist minister’s family in “Old Virginia”, became the SBC’s first female missionary icon, although she died the year before the SBC formed (Heck 1913, pp. 227–36; Goetz 2012). Her letters were edited and published posthumously by SBC founder Jeremiah Jeter. They contained messages to “all the *family* at Indian Creek, old and young, black and white”, Jeter wrote (Jeter 1846, p. 170, emphasis added). “How are my poor old Chaina, Violet, Levina, Solomon, and the others?”, Henrietta inquired more than once from Macau. She directed people her family enslaved not to become “tired” of slavery (or revolt). They should, according to Henrietta, think of “Canaan” as the afterlife, rather than hope for something better in this one (Jeter 1846, pp. 193, 194, 203).

Lurana Davis Bowen followed Shuck’s model. From a large slaveholding plantation family in Georgia, Lurana detailed in her diary her attitude of white supremacy towards “servants” while building SBC mission plantations in West Africa. A product of the “classical Christian” education for slaveholders’ daughters (Lewis 2000), Lurana shared her husband’s 1857 views that (1) Anglo-Saxons in North America were “more powerful in the control of mankind in general than any nation that . . . ever can exist” and (2) they brought “the barbarious negro race” to North America so that “from this country he is leading them back, civilized and Christianized to Africa” (Bowen 1857, p. 66; Nash 2005, pp. 141–42, n12).

Lurana’s letters from Yoruba often addressed people enslaved by her family in the Bible Belt, a minimum of thirty-three people near Greensboro (Lewis 2000, p. 473). “My Dear Friends”, Lurana wrote, “You all know I am in the black man’s country, among your own kin’s people, but perhaps you don’t know that you are much happier, and far better off than they are”. Bowen declared people enslaved by devout Southern Baptists were lucky to “have the Word of God preached to you Sunday after Sunday”. She asserted, “how much blessed you are above these poor people, who sin in ignorance”.³³

Lurana’s mission relied on at least five people to cook, wash, and perform other manual labor, as on a Georgia plantation and as in SBC missions in Asia (see “coolies” in Crawford 1852–1881; Elizabeth Jewett Hartwell Correspondence, Hartwell Family Papers (RG4) n.d.; Silvervale 1873, pp. 297–301; Lew-Williams 2018, p. 31; Jung 2006; Yun 2009;

López 2013). Some “were slaves whose owners gave them to missionaries”, and the Bowens accepted them as “gifts”, intending “to convert them and then free them”. Using slavery for evangelism was familiar to Lurana, although conversion did not guarantee freedom in the Bible Belt (Lewis 2000, pp. 485–86). When she took “our cook, house girl, horseman, and an old man who came of his own accord with us” to a Ogbomoso, the white woman was carried in a hammock “suspended from the heads of two powerful Negroes who had to be relieved every few miles”.

Thirty additional people carried the Bowens’ household to build a missionary plantation at Ijaye in the early 1850s: a three-room house with wooden floors, doors, windows, and two piazzas for the missionaries, and a plain eight-room house for “servants” (Lewis 2000, pp. 493–95). A few years later, Lurana was living in a house with a parlor, dining room, four bedrooms, new piazzas, wells, a storehouse, a workshop, a stable, a chapel, several privies, and a guest house with a parlor and three bedrooms for indigenous religious assistants who were distinguished from the “servants”.

But Lurana complained that West Africans would not “work at a reasonable price”. She referred to laborers, who included children, as “provokingly lazy” who “carry on the work too slowly to please a white person.” She disliked “their manner”.³⁴ Like most male SBC missionaries, Lurana’s husband had a gun, and the threat of bullets induced compliance as much as the promise of money.³⁵

Her husband’s alcoholism and possible remorse led to marital separation and his death in an asylum after the Civil War. Praised by postbellum Southern Baptists for her fundraising and loyalty to the Convention and Confederacy, Lurana left little public indication at her death in 1907 of moral quandary or conflict of conscience about racial hierarchies and slaveholding.

2.4. Alternatives

Adeline Elizabeth Lawton Robert and her husband, a Baptist minister, were also products of slaveholding families. At her in-laws’ Robertville plantation in South Carolina, they met and were influenced by a cousin, William Henry Brisbane, who freed people he inherited and became an abolition activist. Adeline and her husband followed Brisbane’s example, moved to Ohio, and became anti-slavery Baptists (Chamberlain [2016] 2022). Their son Henry M. Robert, a progressive Christian and graduate of West Point, served in the Union army during the Civil War. He produced *Robert’s Rules of Order* in 1876 based on his activities in American Baptist churches’ governance.³⁶

Eliza Sterry chose differently. She and her husband moved from the South to Utica, New York, where they remained unsympathetic to slaveholders, unlike some Northern Baptists who were intent on not breaking fellowship with slaveholders (and their funds). In *Facts for Baptist Churches*, produced by the American Baptist Free Mission Society,³⁷ the Sterrys testified to the realities of slaveholding among Baptists. They described witnessing a Southern Baptist in Georgia who enslaved a woman named Esther and sold her eighteen-year-old son, Harry, to a Southern Baptist minister in Alabama. Eliza wrote that, despite Esther’s wails of lament, “the minister *seemed unmoved!*”

The Sterrys reported “Similar parting scenes . . . frequently . . . at sales” and that “professors of religion, as well as others, were in the practice of making these sales and purchases, and thought nothing of it.” The Sterrys added, “During the cotton picking seasons, almost nightly, were heard the sound of the lash, and the screams of those whose baskets did not contain the required amount. If a word was said in behalf of a poor sufferer, it gave great offence, and those who did so, were accused of joining with the slaves, and upholding them in their *wickedness*”. According to the Sterrys, Southern Baptists told them that when it came to handling slaves, “The only way is, to *bear them right down*” (Foss and Mathews 1850, pp. 358–59. Original italics). The Sterrys agreed with other Baptist abolitionists who called Southern Baptists and their Northern allies “dumb as Balaam’s ass” for remaining silent and complicit in the brutal system (Foss and Mathews 1850, p. 361).

3. Part II: Mothers in Israel and The Sisterhood of “Our Southern Zion”

Many slaveholding women lived for decades after the Civil War and Emancipation. Many of them made few adjustments to their views of themselves as wealthy slaveholders.³⁸ In the two decades immediately following the CSA’s defeat, leading SBC women fortified the Convention financially and mythopoetically. They preserved their families’ generational wealth and used what they called “family money” to “save” and regird the Convention—its churches, schools, associations, state conventions, newspapers, and mission boards—financially. Generations of Southern Baptists venerated them for it (Allen 1987b). Fannie Heck called them “mother[s] in Israel” that modern women should emulate.³⁹

They framed everything they did as “missions”, contributed to Lost Cause mythology, and formed a single women’s organization that dovetailed with the rise of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the resurgence of antebellum slaveholding families to control the Bible Belt politics, economy, and culture as so-called “Redeemers”.

As before the war, leading Southern Baptist women were not mere objects of their time or culture. They influenced the “cultural establishment” with a “particular white southern strain of religiosity” throughout the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ They produced literary memorials, cultural shrines, and education materials defending their antebellum slaveocracy and continued white supremacy.

After the Confederacy’s military defeat, Southern Baptists adeptly reinforced their “regional, mythological, and theological beliefs” in seemingly reconfigured ways that merely preserved their 1845 Convention (Leonard 1990, pp. 10–15). They contributed significantly to the Lost Cause mythopoetic that fused their own denominational identity with the “politics of memory” and “a culture built on [emancipation] denial” (Blight 2001; Moore 2019, p. 78). They reassured themselves and asserted to others that their slaveholding hermeneutics and behavior had not been violations of God, and they still had a “royal” status and destiny to fulfill.⁴¹

As they continued to romanticize their antebellum culture, Southern Baptist women helped shape “white Southern memory” (Moore 2019, pp. 74–78, 2–5) in general, which was “filled” with the same “racist ideology” as before the Civil War across the Bible Belt (Nash 2005, p. 141). They insisted that “slavery had not been the cause of the war; slaves had been happy, faithful, and well-treated; secession was legal and justifiable; abolitionists were troublemakers.” It pretended that the slaveholders’ cause “had been noble and correct” and it argued that “southern civilization” should be “remembered and revered” because it remained superior to everyone else’s (Nolan 2000, pp. 15–19; Sinha 2016; Parker 2020, p. 78). It therefore assumed a strong “defensive identity” of “southern whiteness” as part of their Gospel and missions (“victimhood” and “resentment”, Maxwell and Shields 2019, p. 329).

Southern Baptists like Louise Manly continued to perpetuate what religious historian Richard T. Hughes identified as the “Great American Myths” that sustained intersections of white supremacy and patriarchy: the “Chosen People”, “Chosen Nation”, “Christian Nation”, “Manifest Destiny”, and “Innocent Nation” (Hughes 2015, 2018). Southern Baptists’ sectarianism further insisted on their superiority within these hierarchies. “To be American and Southern and Baptist”, observed Baptist scholar Bill Lenoard, “was to regard oneself quite literally as the elect of the elect of the elect, a unique convergence of American, Southern, and Baptist understandings of divine destiny in one single denomination”.⁴²

3.1. Lost Cause Poverty and Wealth

SBC leaders co-opted a myth of poverty for themselves from the experiences of newly emancipated people and poor whites. They conflated a lack of forced laborers, reduced opulence, required self-reliance, and lack of political control with poverty. Those poor before the war were still poor, but the wealthiest before the war experienced “the continued concentration of southern wealth”. Former slaveholders retained “ownership of most of

the Deep South's remaining capital", giving them the ability to travel and "adapt to the new economic structure of the region by earning primary income as landholders" (Merritt 2017, pp. 327–28). This was true of the SBC elite. There continued "a denominational hierarchy in operation" in which leaders "came from an elite class" starkly different from churches consisting of "poor, white, rural, Southerners with little education" (Scales and Maxwell 2019, p. 14).

Louise Manly praised the networks of those with access to gold during and immediately after the war, who made gifts and loans to each other to recoup or relocate (Manly 1895, pp. 338–39). "Confederados" who refused to surrender to Union troops went South, West, North, and across the Atlantic, often declaring their Confederate enclaves new "missions" for which they recruited more funding and volunteers.⁴³ Former missionary Harriet Baker temporarily joined one in Mexico.⁴⁴ Tabitha Curry Lee's relatives, Wayne Emmet Lee and Sue Billingslea Lee, became "planter[s] in South America", where Southern Baptists established new missions in Brazil (McAdory and Owen 1921; Dawsey and Dawsey 1995; Parsons and Chaves 2023; Anderson 2005, pp. 88–89, 134). In Canada, Cuba, and Italy, SBC leaders framed Confederate networking and grand tours as evangelistic adventures and mission scouting as they transplanted slaveholders' apologia, nostalgia, and white supremacist assumptions (Heck 1913, pp. 279–82; Wright 1902, pp. 186, 213). In 1870, Southern Seminary sent John Broadus on "a year abroad, all expenses paid" trip through the British Isles, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, Palestine, Greece, and Egypt while his wife Charlotte and their children enjoyed spas and shopping in Virginia (Reeder 2021, pp. 239–81).

Three years after the end of the war, in 1868, Southern Baptist "women of influence", as Heck called them, traveled "from all parts of the South" to Baltimore where the Convention was meeting that year, although women were not voting messengers (Heck 1913, p. 95). The 1988 hagiography, *A Century to Celebrate*, referred to them as "the aristocracy of the white South" (Allen 1987a *A Century to Celebrate*, p. 68). They traveled to Baltimore while maintaining they were too poor to pay restitution to people they had enslaved. Maryland had not seceded during the war, and Southern Baptist slaveholders and their sympathizers in the State had been able to circulate currency, especially among global contacts abroad.⁴⁵ The women who met for the "first general meeting of Southern Baptist Women for Missions" (Heck, *In Royal Service*, 95) were buoyed by Baltimore women with wealth who chose to continue giving it to the SBC.⁴⁶

Four years later, in 1872 Reconstruction Atlanta, Henry Allen Tupper, the male Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board reinvoked their antebellum mythos of themselves as the new Hebrews, or Chosen People, of North America. He called upon the "sisterhood of our Southern Zion"⁴⁷ for finance to "save" their un-Reconstructed Convention and its missions. Henry Allen Tupper had been a slaveholding pastor to slaveholders in Georgia, where Southern Baptists proportionally enslaved people more than any other denomination (Bush 2022). His wife, Nannie Johnstone Boyce Tupper, was the daughter of one of the wealthiest slaveholders in South Carolina and an ally of John C. Calhoun. Nannie, a slaveholder like her brother James P. Boyce, a founder of the first SBC seminary, grew up in the SBC taproot of Charleston's First Baptist Church. Nannie was a financial backer of the Confederacy with her husband, one of the numerous SBC chaplains in the Confederate army. They bought a hotel for Confederate soldiers that was later given to the SBC Seminary in Greenville (James B. Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Ministers*, 25–26, in Estep 1995, pp. 114–33; Downey 2016).

After the war, the Tupperts moved to Richmond, the Confederacy's defeated capital, to assume leadership at the Convention's Foreign Mission Board. There they joined other leading SBC families intent on resisting federal Reconstruction, polishing the dint of their thrall to "Old Virginia", and preserving their antebellum denomination. Nannie maintained connections with the vast number of recent slaveholding women like herself who formed the SBC elite and led their postwar women's organizations.

Addressing these women, H. A. Tupper appealed to their continuing grand mythos that their Convention existed "only" for "missions". It was understood among them

that their missions reflected their antebellum ethos establishing a hierarchal Christianity overseen by Anglo-Saxons. At the behest of other wealthy white women in the late 1860s, SBC women were joining, and striving to outdo, other Protestant women in “Woman’s Work for Woman” while keeping their identity *Southern Baptist*. To defeat what he called “the degrading and destroying thralldom of Paganism”, H. A. Tupper employed common SBC parlance regarding their “Southern Zion” (Heck 1913, pp. 102, 94–96, 99; Estep 1995, p. 120).

Missionaries in this era often paid their own travel expenses. Those going to China in 1871–1872 traveled by train and steamer in the upper-class sections (Heck 1913, p. 255). Barely eighteen-year-old Edmonia Moon used “family money” to fund her way from Virginia to Shandong in 1872, paying to have her organ shipped to Penglai (Allen 1980, pp. 258–61). Her sister Lottie, who considered herself an unrepentant Confederate, also possessed “some discretionary income through most of her life” from her inheritance from the slave plantation. The sisters were pleased to find a Chinese artist’s portrait of Jefferson Davis hanging in the “parlor” of SBC missionary Martha Foster Crawford when they arrived in Shandong.⁴⁸

The SBC mission the Moon sisters joined had rejoiced to hear “Dixie” played on melodeons in Shanghai. They dressed their children in Confederate uniforms, prayed for “the blessing of God” on the Confederacy, and celebrated when they thought the Union Army was “thwarted” and “whipped”.⁴⁹ In Shanghai, Crawford journaled about “my country!” and “our cause”, how “the enemy presses *us* hard, [with] more suffering still for our poor brave people”.⁵⁰ Three of her brothers and three brothers-in-law fought for the Confederate Army, and Crawford was “willing to see them . . . even die in its sacred course.” She blamed the Union for “rapine”, “horrors”, and “extermination” of fellow Christians. Crawford’s reaction to Lincoln’s assassination was that “tyrants should always tremble”, and she looked to 1866 as a new “threshold” of history when Jesus’ millennial reign would commence on earth after what she considered the two great tribulations of the war and military defeat.⁵¹ One of the founders of Woman’s Work for Woman in China and an advocate for more humanitarian relief missions and women missionary doctors in the 1870s, Crawford became an icon of the postbellum “sisterhood”.

By 1879, Southern Baptists’ Foreign Mission Board’s income was rapidly approaching the proportions reached in 1860 (USD 41,195.07). Former slaveholding women played a major role.⁵² The FMB “continued taking small loans” from women like “Eddie” Moon, a woman with few if any jobs, for decades (Sullivan 2011, p. 196, n40; Allen 1980, pp. 258–61, 281, n53). Justa Buck Greer, an enormously wealthy widow in Shuqualak (“sugar lock”), Mississippi, after the war, loaned the FMB USD 1500 in 1885 and funded travel for herself and her husband, Willie David, an outspoken racist, to Lagos where he ran “the mission as his own private estate” (Lindsay 2017, p. 201).

As they continued passing generational wealth and political power through white endogamous networks, Southern Baptist women like Adeline Smyly Catts modeled what Fannie Heck called “the mothers of Israel”. Catts had grown up on 5000 acres of land seized from indigenous people in Alabama’s Black Belt and attended the same college as Louise Manly’s mother. She had presided as slaveholding mistress over people in town houses and on plantations with names such as “Pleasant Hill”. She named her children after Confederate generals, retained and increased her wealth during Reconstruction, and became one of the wealthiest women in her region again after the war. She willed the plantation to her son Sydney Johnston Catts, an SBC minister, rather than the people who worked it. Catts’ grandchildren enjoyed private tennis courts and horse stables, while “black tenants did most of the yard work and house chores” for the SBC pastor’s family. According to family lore, while living in a pastorium in Tuskegee, Adeline’s daughter-in-law Alice once called out from her porch-sitting to a black man walking by to see if he would do yard work for her. It was Booker T. Washington (Flynt 1977, pp. 3–12, 23; Flynt 1970). Adeline’s son Sydney became Governor of Florida in 1917.

Former missionary Edmonia Moon, who remained unmarried and unemployed after she returned to the U.S., retained enough income from the “family” inheritance to purchase property in Starke, Florida, make multiple loans to the Foreign Mission Board, and leave “a small inheritance” to family members, continuing to pass wealth among slaveholders’ descendants long after the Civil War (Sullivan 2011, p. 196, n40; Allen 1980, pp. 258–61, 281, n53).

Julia Daughdrill, who had enjoyed slaveholders’ luxurious living near the Black Belt’s Demopolis, used money she and her husband George still had at war’s end to relocate across the state with their four children. Bessie, who was born in 1867, recited to later generations her family’s complaints that they had taken with them “only some” French furniture, “a small number of books”, a piano, and a harp. But they had enough money to move, buy new land, set up a new household and coal mining business, and pay laborers to do it. The Daughdrills bought what historians called “valuable mining property” and founded “Coal City” near developing railroad lines (Tapper 2018).

Bessie Daughdrill Moore married a son of the county’s elite in 1885, and the families formed Broken Arrow Baptist Church on property donated by Bessie’s father in 1890. A long-time Sunday School teacher, Bessie D. Moore shaped views of younger generations of Southern Baptists. These included her passionate argument that white women needed the vote in order to offset black men’s votes. Bessie made this case in her 1914 address “Woman and Changing Conditions” at the Alabama Equal Suffrage Association. AESA’s membership consisted of “350 white, upper-class men and women” who networked with white supremacist organizations in other Southern states to make women’s suffrage a states’ rights issue rather than a federal one, as other suffragists argued (sometimes spelled “Daughdrille”. Tapper 2018; Harper 1922; Burns 2007/2022; Wheeler 1993).⁵³

Bessie Moore’s views were not uncommon among SBC suffragists (or anti-suffragists). Mary Kavanaugh Oldham Eagle, founding President of Southern Baptist Woman’s Central Committee on Missions in Arkansas in 1883, was married to the governor of Arkansas and three-time president of the Southern Baptist Convention, a Confederate officer who became one of the wealthiest men in the State after the war (C. F. Williams 2017). Church and State politics were entwined in Little Rock, as they were all across the Bible Belt. Mary, an expert in parliamentary procedure, was supremely confident in her “overseer” skills.⁵⁴ She applied these with her continuing household mistress persona to a variety of organizations (C. F. Williams 2017). These included the Executive and Historical Committees of the Board of Lady Managers for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago (Massey 1913, pp. 33–41, 47–55; Rogers 1948, pp. 222–24; Hinson 1979, pp. 156–61; Williams et al. 1998, pp. 133–78; Barber 2015)⁵⁵ and Southern Baptists’ Woman’s Missionary Union in Arkansas between 1888 and 1902.

Louise Manly lauded their “marvellous” wealth “accumulated” by endogamous Southern Baptist networks as one of the “good things” about chattel slavery because it fueled the Southern Baptist Convention’s missions. In the “Wonderful Recuperation of the South” and “Progress since 1850”, Manly praised slaveholders’ efforts to thwart Reconstruction, which she vilified as “fortitude and patience”. Manly applauded Confederate families like hers for their “capacity . . . for restoring their shattered fortunes”. She celebrated how after the Compromise of 1876 ended Reconstruction—they “took possession of the State Governments” with “ease” across the Bible Belt. Manly claimed in 1895 that “the South, has moved steadily forward” in commerce with the North and England because it was “under the guidance and control of her own [white] sons” who “once more filled the stations” for which they were “fitted”, Manly wrote in 1895.⁵⁶

As before the war, Southern Baptists’ Domestic and Foreign Mission Boards targeted populations where SBC leaders sought to make money. While criticizing Emancipation, Manly said that being “[r]id of the burden of caring for and supporting the negroes incapable of work during childhood, sickness and old age” meant that “southern whites were at liberty to devote the proceeds of their efforts to the building up of their fortunes”

again (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 579). Such “building” often meant SBC leaders’ simultaneous evangelism and exploitation of laborers, as before the war.

One of many examples was the Domestic Mission Board leader, the “fighting chaplain of the Confederacy”, Isaac Tichenor. Southern Baptists considered him a hero for keeping the Convention *Southern* during and after Reconstruction (Williams 2018, pp. 17, 15). Tichenor had declared before the war “I entertain no doubt that slavery is right” (Williams 2018, p. 43), and he continued asserting after the war that black Americans were naturally inferior to white Americans (Williams 2018, p. 43). Leaders of the “sisterhood”, which included his wealthy daughters, praised Tichenor for rejecting other Baptists’ “ideas of negro suffrage, of social equality, of miscegenation, of agrarianism, and every mischievous outgrowth of the fanaticism of the clime, prolific in such baneful fruits” (Harvey 1997, p. 39).

The Tichenors and many other SBC leaders personally profited from exploiting the labor of African Americans, immigrants, and poor whites in the “New South” as they had as slaveholders in the Old South. As before the war, they targeted these groups for missions of conversion and disciplining to effect a Christianized labor force that was more docile and co-operative, if not obedient, in fields, mines, mills, and white women’s homes. Tichenor’s daughter, Mary Tichenor Barnes, was a member of the politically powerful Second Baptist Church in Atlanta where the Home Mission Board relocated after the war. Several members of the HMB, including Elizabeth Grisham Brown’s husband, amassed more wealth using the racialized convict-lease system, known as “neo-slavery” (Harper 2004, p. 325; Weaver 2004, 2005; Blackmon 2009).

Leaders of the SBC Home Missions at the end of the nineteenth century argued for increased “domestic” missions in “city missions, mountain schools, Negro missions, and work with Indians and foreigners” (Baker 1958, p. 79). They claimed African Americans and Native Americans were susceptible to influence by the “foreign element”, the “heathens, who pollute by mere contact of association” (SBC Annual 1845–2023, p. 17; Williams 2018, pp. 122–23). Kate Tichenor Dill’s husband, an SBC minister like her father, advocated more home missions against “Russian nihilism”, “German beer”, and “French, Irish, and Italian Catholicism” (SBC Annual 1845–2023, pp. 16–17; Williams 2018, pp. 122–23; Moore 2019, p. 2; Harper 1996, pp. 23–24). Louise Manly declared in her textbooks that recent immigrants sought “to do away entirely with law and order” and were negatively altering “the habits and customs of the people” established by White Anglo-Saxon Protestant elites (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 314). The SBC’s Committee on Missions to Foreign Populations in 1890 vowed that “modern Judaism, Buddhism [sic] and every form of spiritual error, must be stamped out.” They declared a denominational crusade to keep “the divinely opened fountain” of “our Southland” “pure with the turgid streams of corruption pouring into it from Europe and Asia” (SBC Annual 1845–2023, p. 17; Williams 2018, pp. 122–23).

3.2. WMU-DAR-UDC

SBC committees of the denomination’s most powerful men were aided tremendously by their network of wives, sisters, and daughters. Wealthy women like the Tichenor sisters and Louise Manly represented the ideal trifecta of the “sisterhood of our Southern Zion” at the turn of the century: membership in the Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU), the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC).⁵⁷

Led by women like Fannie Heck, the SBC “sisterhood” formally organized denomination-wide as WMU in 1888. The WMU would remain the denomination’s most influential women’s organization until the end of twentieth century. Like the pre-1888 “sisterhood”, the WMU did not exist in a vacuum. Leaders continued their denominational mythos of the previous three decades. They influenced, and were influenced by, the contemporaneous development of the DAR in 1890 and the UDC in 1894 (Cox 2003; Gilmore 1996; Janney 2008; Janney 2013; Dombay 2020; Richardson 2020).

All three organizations “perpetuated narratives of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ heroism” and told “a highly selective interpretation of the Civil War”, reimagining it as a “noble struggle”. They emphasized “shared lineage and imagined racial unity between white northerners and white southerners, perpetuating a vision of America as an extended ‘Anglo-Saxon’ family”. They “tapp[ed] into shared traditional understandings of the family and gender roles” and “venerated the supportive female steward and the male patriarch as central to the stability and strength of the nation”. They concomitantly “reconfigure[ed] historical memory” as the DAR embraced the Lost Cause script that “overlooked the issue of slavery whilst redefining Confederates as American heroes”. Together, they promoted the mythology of “heroic white men and dutiful white women”, “loyal slaves”, and “kindly relations . . . between the master and the slave”.⁵⁸

While any female member of an SBC church could be a member of the WMU by contributing small amounts of money, the leaders of the WMU “differed from the Southern Baptist women they represented” in wealth and social status (Scales and Maxwell 2019, p. 14). This difference was marked by memberships in white women’s genealogical associations. The practice of genealogy and knowledge of their endogamous networks was as important to WMU leaders as fundraising. Louise Manly repeated the claim in 1895 that an elite white caste was “homogeneous by necessity” because it “bred a hospitality that was as kinsmen to kinsmen” (Manly 1895, pp. 417–18), if not psychosis around sex, race, bloodlines, and marriage laws. Heck cultivated the three groups’ common mythos of wealthy slaveholders’ postwar poverty overcome by racial solidarity as white women. She wrote that, although they “met in desolation and poverty” and tearful “penury” during “these dark times” of Reconstruction, these women used their prayer meetings to build “their Memorial Associations” as quickly as possible (Heck 1913, pp. 92–93).

The cult of “Old Virginia” loomed large in DAR, UDC, and the WMU’s mission hagiography. This was the “cult of ‘founders chic’” that celebrated slaveholding ancestors and presidents as the “original” Americans.⁵⁹ WMU hagiographers emphasized Virginia as the birthplace of the Foreign Mission Board and the capitol of the Confederacy. They included missionary heroines’ genealogical connections to it whenever possible. Their first SBC icon, Henrietta Hall Shuck, was from “Old Virginia”, as was their first single female missionary Harriet Baker. The iconic mythology they would develop in the twentieth century around missionary Lottie Moon featured the genealogical cult of “Old Virginia”.

Baker titled her quasi-memoir *An Orphan of Old Dominion*, not because her “heroine” was an orphan—she was not—but to romanticize the nostalgia of Confederate “exiles”. Born and educated in Virginia, Fannie Heck’s middle name was “Exile”. She used florid language of magnolias and hooped skirts to rhapsodize the Virginian lineage of missionary Susan Spotswood Braxton Taylor who, with her husband, led the SBC’s postbellum mission to Rome, Italy, which became a stop on SBC elites’ grand tours. Heck emphasized Taylor’s ancestral connections to John Smith, her birth in the house of “the future government of Virginia”, her great-grandfather signing the Declaration of Independence, her youth as a slave plantation “belle”, and her family’s wealth after the war (Heck 1913, pp. 270–72; Baker 1958, p. 78).

Ella Broadus Robertson, Charlotte and John Broadus’s daughter, emphasized in a 1901 tribute to her parents how “[p]ride of prestige ran in the Virginia blood”. She cast Anglo colonists as “a noble class of settlers” and opined wistfully on antebellum Virginia’s “richness not to be repeated in American experience”. She described the “civilization” of 1830s Virginia as the “standard for all the South” in “power and glory”.⁶⁰ (It was the decade when Baptist preacher Nathanael Turner led a slave uprising and was executed).

Judith Page Helm Jones was another WMU-DAR-UDC member who strengthened Lost Cause mythopoeia connections with SBC missions. Judith spent much of her life in Richmond, where the SBC Foreign Missions Board’s address was on Confederate Monument Avenue. She concluded her life in Atlanta where the Home Missions Board resided in the shadow of Stone Mountain, a UDC campaign for a mammoth Confederate monument

and site of Klan resurgence as self-appointed enforcers of “American ideals” and “the tenets of the Christian religion” (Baker 2011, p. 37; Higginbotham 1993, p. 224).

Judith’s personal history was a familiar narrative among WMU leaders. She grew up at the “Oakley” slave plantation in Virginia. Her parents contributed “blood-money” to Southern Baptist missions. Her wedding to minister William Jones the day South Carolina seceded from the Union brought together members of the SBC elite and their connections with the rest of the Virginia aristocracy. Judith’s 1924 obituary in the *Atlanta Constitution* noted she was “a direct descendent of Carter Braxton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence”, a woman in whose “veins flowed the blood of some of the most distinguished families of the Old Dominion”. It celebrated her as the widow of “General Lee’s chaplain” and an author of “beautiful Christian characters” and “Confederate theme[d]” poetry.⁶¹ Four of Judith’s sons were Southern Baptist ministers. The names of “the Jones Boys”—Ashby, Edloe Pendleton, Howard Lee, and Carter Helm Jones—were shrines to “Old Virginia”. Carter and Ashby pastored Atlanta’s influential Second Baptist and Ponce de Leon Avenue Baptist churches, respectively, before they merged later (*Atlanta Constitution* (1/2/1925) 18; Weaver 2004; Moore 2019, pp. 2, 16).

Before the war, Judith had agreed to go with her husband to China as SBC missionaries. After Lincoln’s election, the Foreign Mission Board resolved not to fund new missionaries so donors could channel money to fight what the Board called “the war recently forced on these Southern States.” Like other volunteers from wealthy slaveholding families, the Joneses offered to “self-fund” their mission with “family money” from slaveholding (SBC Annual 1845–2023, pp. 59–60; Moore 2019, pp. 15–17; Parsons 2019, pp. 33–34; Foss and Mathews 1850, p. 313). The Joneses remained in Virginia, however, where William became a Confederate chaplain with other SBC men, with whom he maintained close friendships in a fraternity of John Broadus’ protégé.⁶² Judith “furnish[ed] . . . daily meals” to Confederate soldiers, the way slaveholding women claimed they furnished food cooked, clothes sewn, and items delivered by people they enslaved.⁶³

Judith’s obituary reinforced the myth of SBC elites’ “poverty” after the Civil War, repeating the falsehood that “it was years before an impoverished south could take up again its mission work” (*Atlanta Constitution* (1/2/1925) 18). The Joneses retained wealth after the war, and in the early 1870s they employed Edith Jones, in her fifties, and Ida Jones, in her early teens, who likely had been enslaved by William and Judith earlier, as live-in domestic servants (Moore 2019, p. 76).

Meanwhile, William and Judith zealously helped create Confederates’ Lost Cause mythology. They shared a “devotion to the Lost Cause [as] a means of promoting the {Southern} Baptist cause” (Moore 2019, pp. 88–89, 40), as Manly did. In the long-standing “two-for-one” SBC ministry model, defined as a male minister plus a wife whose contributions to sermons and publications were unattributed, Judith contributed to William becoming “the single most important link between Southern religion and the Lost Cause.” He described Judith as “an invaluable auxiliary” to the prolific output with his name on it (Moore 2019, p. 16). Such “auxiliary” status was how William and most of his counterparts throughout SBC leadership also viewed the Woman’s Missionary Union.

These activities in which Judith was “auxiliary” included editing the *Southern Historical Society Papers* (Starnes 1996, pp. 177–94), writing *The Davis Memorial Volume*, and producing the family-approved biography of Robert E. Lee. Judith also contributed Confederate-themed poems to the *Southern Historical Society Papers*. Together, they succeeded in “apotheosiz[ing]” Lee, Jefferson Davis, and Stonewall Jackson as a Confederate trinity of “Southern virtue” (Moore 2019, pp. 2, 8–10). One of William’s prayers invoked the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God of Israel, God of the centuries, God of our fathers, God of Jefferson Davis, Robert Edward Lee, and Stonewall Jackson, Lord of hosts and King of kings” (Wilson 1980, pp. 119–38). The SBC mission magazine *Our Home and Field* published William’s tribute to Jefferson Davis’s Christian character (Moore 2019, pp. 177, 183). The UDC endorsed the Jones 1896 *School History of the United States* (Moore 2019, pp. 155, 169).

While William led various Confederate veterans and memorial associations, at the same time he worked with Southern Baptist Seminary, the SBC Home Mission Board, and the SBC Sunday School Board (Wilson 1980, pp. 119–38; Moore 2019, pp. 40, 181, 8). Judith used the labor of Edith and Ida Jones to host key gatherings of Confederates and the Southern Historical Society at their Richmond home (Moore 2019, p. 179; Faust 1990). Judith’s family bragged that the postbellum house was “the rendezvous of distinguished Confederate soldiers and statesmen” and that Judith “was an intimate friend of the Jefferson Davis family, visiting often in their home” (The Atlanta Constitution 1925, p. 18). SBC scions like Louise Manly attended some of these soirées and promoted the *Davis Memorial Volume* in their own books, which continued to refer to Davis as “our president” throughout the century. William’s cousin, Susan Pendleton Lee, published with Manly the Lost Cause myth devised in Judith’s home to turn Lee’s General James Longstreet into a “traitor” and “Judas” for co-operating with Republicans after the war. The myth identified Lee with “Jesus”, not defeated but betrayed (Moore 2019, pp. 155, 169). Manly and Fannie Heck each cited William’s 1887 *Christ in the Camps* or *Religion in Lee’s Army* as evidence of the righteousness of Christian slaveholders’ cause (proceeds of the book went to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) (Moore 2019, pp. 77–78, 169).

These mythologies were carried abroad and reflected back. SBC missionary Rosalee Mills Appleby, a graduate of the WMU’s Training School founded by Heck, repeated the Jones mythology in her denominational publications. In *Rainbow Gleams* published by the SBC Sunday School Board in 1929, Appleby, “the most influential Baptist woman missionary” in Brazil (Appleby 1933; Chaves 2019, p. 84; Weaver 2019, p. 262), likened Robert E. Lee to Moses and David. Appleby argued that, unlike the Biblical characters who sinned, “Lee, however, realized an unusual triumph, an unblemished success in life.” She praised Lee’s “manhood” and “shining character”, an example to “our modern knighthood”, gesturing to contemporary “knights” and new generations of the Klan, promising to purify culture. Appleby asserted that neither Lee nor the Confederacy should be considered a “failure”, and those imitating Lee would attain “unsullied triumph.” In 1941, the denomination’s Broadman Press published Appleby’s *Orchids and Edelweiss* in which she declared Lee a “matchless citizen and Christian” who wrote “a noble page in American history—the whiteness of wings” (Chaves 2019, p. 84; Weaver 2019, p. 263).

Writing to young women in 1933 about the “unstained”, “unsullied”, and “clean life” of a mistress, now more commonly called a “queen” who was “never tarnished”, Appleby echoed the HMB’s “clean fountain” imagery for the South “to bless the world”. The Robert E. Lee devotee reiterated an obsession with “purity”, “whiteness”, and “white victory” as associative images of the “noble life”. She wove anecdotes, analogies, and aphorisms about clean hearts, clean hands, and clean consciences compared to white flowers that “refused to be contaminated” or “defiled” by “soiled surroundings” (Appleby 1933, pp. 128–30). *Royal Service* was now the title of WMU’s magazine. Southern Baptist women used it to claim what Fannie Heck had called their “inheritance” of “The King’s Business”, which she said was “shaping the religious future of our own and other lands” (Heck 1913, pp. 354–60). WMU’s Girls Auxiliary developed “forward steps” towards “coronations” as Southern Baptist “mission queens” (Hoyle 2022). According to Appleby, this “queenly quest”, like antebellum consorts, was to be “white as these white lilies” and “pure and sweet within” (Appleby 1933, p. 127). They could “never run the royal race” to which they were “destined” if “impure” (Appleby 1933, pp. 128, 127). Appleby advised would-be queens to “guard” the “jewel of womanhood” (Appleby 1933, p. 158), like the Southland, which “saves the finer strain in manhood and awakens his nobleness”, akin to Robert E. Lee’s (Appleby 1933, p. 129). The most pious “queen” would “bring him a soul as white as the veil that bespeaks your virgin loveliness” (Appleby 1933, p. 131). Her “trusting-place within” had to be “conquered at the center” (Appleby 1933, p. 131). This, in Appleby’s view, was the “great conquest” of Baptist girls, to “make your kingdom an everlasting kingdom” that would bless the world in ways reminiscent of Lost Cause versions of the antebellum mistress (Appleby 1933, p. 160).

3.3. Defending Connections to Slaveholding

Influential women authors often disingenuously claimed they were not defending slaveholding while proceeding to do just that. They took various tacks, frequently illustrating shrewd forms of passive-aggression and deniability. SBC scion, Louise Manly, exemplified these patterns in *Southern Literature* (1895) and *Lee's Advanced School History of the United States* (1895/99).⁶⁴ The English teacher was the daughter of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary founder Basil Manly Jr. and Charlotte Whitfield Manly, the granddaughter of Basil and Sarah Rudolph Manly, the niece of WMU leader Abby Gwathmey, and a family friend of the Joneses and Broaduses (the SBC would name their powerful twentieth-century press Broadman). Born in 1857, Louise was cared for by Mary Jinco, who was "leased" to Louise's parents by Louise's grandparents.⁶⁵ Charlotte raised her children to believe "Miss Mary" had volunteered to care for them because the children were so lovable, a common myth among children of slaveholders. Ella Broadus Robertson called it a "pang" of growing up when she came to realize that people enslaved by their families were less fond of them than they had thought as children (Robertson 1901, p. 22). Louise's writing did not demonstrate even this realization.

Demonstrating the sentiments of the DAR and the UDC, Manly perpetuated the myth-making proclivities of her family and the WMU sisterhood for students born well after the war. She disingenuously asserted she was "not apologizing for slavery nor defending it", just "telling you how the noble-minded, patriotic, religious people of the South looked on it in 1861" and proceeded to assume the sympathetic perspective of slaveholders.

Manly's various publications contributed to the "Great American Myths" that sustained intersections of white supremacy and patriarchy ("Chosen People", "Chosen Nation", "Christian Nation", "Manifest Destiny", "Innocent Nation") (Hughes 2018; Hughes 2015) and she used the Southern Baptist Convention as her textbook case. With expensive photographs and illustrations of Confederate heroes and Southern plantations, Manly purported to offer general history of the U.S., but really sought to legitimize the Confederacy as the quintessential "American" culture. She reiterated themes of "Old Virginia" slaveholders as America's greatest heroes and heroines, and cast these slaveholders and their families as the "rightful" heirs of Western Classical Christian culture students should learn. This included Biblical support for modern slaveholding, slaveholding as evangelism, various racist arguments for white supremacy, castigation of abolitionists and Reconstruction, defense of the Ku Klux Klan, and veneration of the "Christian character" of Confederate leaders.

In "Our Right to Those Countries", Manly emphasized slaveholders' birthright to ownership of North America and U.S. history, and repeated mythology about "Pocahontas" the "Ingen" (Manly 1895, p. 265), "Three Different Races", "The Barbarous Indians", and "The Half-civilized Indians" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, pp. 16–20). She presented as "great literature" writing by Alexander Meek, Sam Houston, Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, Albert Pike, Sydney Lanier, Augusta Evans, Jabez Curry, Henry Grady, and Joel Chandler Harris. She called Confederate general Albert Pike's poem "To the Mocking-Bird" a "classic" on par with "Keats' Odes on the Nightingale" (L. Manly 1895, pp. 365–67). She praised other white women like herself who were writing hagiographical memorials that "made biography more charming and more instructive than romance".⁶⁶

Amplifying the Joneses' mythology, Manly highlighted the "Irish Knight" poem by Winnie Davis ("the child of the Confederacy, as she is lovingly called") as a Classical encomium to Davis's father: "Freedom like some deity of ancient Greece, loved him too well. ... He is enshrined in the hearts of thousands" (L. Manly 1895, pp. 270–71). She wove these themes with "Old Virginia" and Christianity, captioning an autographed photo of Robert E. Lee: "He stands with Washington as a model for young men, and many monuments in marble and bronze attest the love and devotion of the South to her great Chief" (Manly 1895, p. 265). Providing material for young people like Rosalee Mills Appleby, Manly urged students to "realize your responsibility towards the whole country" but "especially to that section of it to which you more immediately belong", that of "Captain

John Smith . . . at Jamestown in 1607" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 583). She steered students to Alexander Stephens's *War between the States*, Edward Pollard's *Lost Cause*, Davis's *Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, and the Jones' *Davis Memorial Volume* and hagiography of Lee. Future missionaries like Appleby learned these lessons well.

Manly repeatedly pressed together several disingenuous, contradictory myths that later generations used. She insisted the war was "not to preserve slavery" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, pp. 358, 367, 360), titling an entire chapter "War Not to Preserve Slavery" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 314). She wrote another chapter titled "The Struggle for Southern Independence Necessary" to defend slaveholders.⁶⁷ She devoted large sections to "Slavery Recognized by the Constitution" and portrayed slaveholders as the truest defenders of the U.S. Constitution, arguing that was why they formed the Confederate Constitution that preserved slaveholding (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, pp. 358–59). She demonstrated the Lost Cause's contradictory tropes that, on one hand, the Civil War was not caused by slavery, and on the other hand abolitionists, not slaveholders, caused it. She demanded any blame for slaveholders' wrongdoing and "evil" be met by equal amounts of condemnation of abolitionists' "unjust" and "overbearing conduct" towards slaveholders (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 315). She criticized those who "asserted from the pulpits that slavery was contrary to the Word of God and not possible for Christian people" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, pp. 314–15), and she lamented that Northern Baptists had "succumbed" to what she called this "manufactured" influence of abolitionists (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 314).

On one hand, Manly claimed "the Southern States most probably would have taken steps to rid themselves of slavery", although she oddly blamed "interference" by the federal government for slaveholders continuing to do it, belying her earlier claim.⁶⁸ On the other hand, Manly emphasized that Southern slaveholders felt entitled to half the federal government's seizures from indigenous tribes because they had "warred against the Indians and driven them out . . . and had furnished two-thirds of the soldiers who had conquered Mexico". Manly made clear that slaveholders intended to extend their slaveholding and spread across the continent after all. This was especially true of Southern Baptists who framed their expansion as missions. Like others in her family and denomination, Manly argued that slaveholders "had the right to go into the new territories and carry their slave property without danger of molestation".

Contrary to her earlier assertion that slavery would have died out on its own, Manly cited slaveholders' resolution to claim their "constitutional right to continue and extend their domestic institutions in the southern part and at least half of all the new territory".⁶⁹ Her inclusion of Octavia Walton Le Vert's 1855 essay "From Cadiz to Havana" dovetailed with Southern Baptists' expansionist aspirations for "missions" wealth in Cuba, which Manly's father and the Foreign and Domestic Mission Boards demonstrated throughout the nineteenth century.⁷⁰

Manly also declared it a "hostile injustice" that "the slaves who escaped to the North were sheltered and abetted instead of being at once returned to their owners" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 318). Like Judith and William Jones, Manly taught young people that the 1857 *Dred Scott* ruling, denying black citizenship and rights, was "manifestly just" because it favored slaveholders (Moore 2019, p. 170). She echoed her SBC family and mentors who had demanded someone "pay for the negroes" emancipated (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 319). Was it fair to slaveholders, Manly posited, for "masters [to] impoverish themselves to set [slaves] free?" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 315).

Manly used the Southern Baptist Convention as her textbook example for arguing why slaveholding was not wrong if done by Christians. She emphasized that slaveholding was an integral part of their "missions" and evangelism. She repeated SBC founders' hermeneutics and mission euphemisms she learned growing up, that "nowhere in the Scriptures was there any direct condemnation of what was now declared to be so wicked" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 315; Fuller 1845, p. 170; Johnson in Baker 1966, p. 120). She encouraged students to rehearse the phrase that slaveholding "was not contrary to the law

of God". Manly parroted antebellum SBC arguments that "their 'peculiar institution' was not directly condemned by in Holy Writ" but was "considered . . . a positive good" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 315). *Their* slaveholding was justified because under "its influence they saw hundreds of thousands of African savages civilized and Christianized" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 359). Southern Baptists' 1845 mythos that they had "established their own agency" merely "for the prosecution of their missionary and other co-operative work" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 314) would be celebrated in 1895 and beyond.

As Manly said in 1895, Southern Baptists "thought it [slaveholding] the greatest missionary agent the world had ever known" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 359). Fannie Heck similarly linked the "early days" of "this work" of slaveholding evangelism to their 1913 SBC missions, reinforcing the WMU's Lost Cause ideology of their antebellum heritage (Heck 1913, pp. 68–69). This frame of slaveholding as "missions", especially by women, remained one of the most potent and often used rhetorical devices of generations of Southern Baptists' discussions of slavery: the "but". They invoked the "but" in nonsensical sentences that initially seemed to disavow slaveholding before then minimizing it. "It was slavery, but . . ." "It was indefensible, but . . ." "It had horrors, but . . ." "I would not want to switch places, but . . .". Manly, for example, insisted, "Like all human institutions, it had evils connected with it, *but* they believed them less than those of any other system of labor" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 359), emphasis added). She repeated the non-sensical statement: "Slavery as an institution cannot be defended; *but* its administration was so nearly perfect among our forefathers as to challenge and hold our loving respect".⁷¹ Besides, they "thought it the greatest missionary agent the world had ever known" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 359). This mythopoeia became so elaborate, ubiquitous, and ingrained, the denomination would struggle for the rest of their existence to flip the "buts".⁷²

3.4. Happy Slaveholders' Nostalgia

SBC women's mythology of slaveholding evangelism and "happy" slaves was persistent to try to prove how "good" slaveholders had been. It mainly revealed how happy *slaveholders* had been.

Re-emphasizing the antebellum mythos of slaveholding as evangelism and their missions' heritage, postbellum women repeatedly expressed nostalgia for slaveholding, even when they claimed they were not defending it. Their confidence and hubris about their "royal" destiny to rule civilization mixed with anxiety about "white" status declension reflected their resistance to Reconstruction and resentment of black citizens' independence from white oversight. They claimed that people of color "retrogressed in the absence of close contact with white society" and argued that interracial "contact" was needed, meaning in deference to white leaders, as in slaveholding days (Lile 2020, p. 58). This nostalgia for the "old days", when things were "simpler" for slaveholders, permeated postbellum mission materials advocating "duties" of white exemplars to oversee paternalistic racial "uplift".

The Home Board's 1891 *Work among Negroes of the South* called black citizens "the negro problem" (Moore 2019, p. 167). The HMB urged Southern Baptists to be more involved in supervising black Baptists' religious training so that "the old-time sympathy and fellowship between the races may be restored" to the pre-war order (Moore 2019, p. 167; SBC Annual 1845–2023; Lile 2020, p. 57). *The Foreign Mission Journal's* 1897 article "The Colored People of the South" praised SBC slaveholders' antebellum missions because: "The savage needed severe training. . . to teach him to be law-abiding and docile, and to instill into his careless mind habits of hard and persistent labor" (The Colored People of the South 1897, pp. 24, 47; Nash 2005, p. 144).

In 1902, the WMU leader Mary Emily Wright's *Missionary Work of the Southern Baptist Convention* similarly framed Southern Baptists' slaveholding positively, and explicitly connected it to current SBC missions to black people in the Jim Crow South.⁷³ While trying to assert that Southern and Northern Baptists were "essentially the same" before the war and in 1902 to downplay slaveholding (Wright 1902, pp. 2, 8), Wright also argued that Southern Baptists' slaveholding was what made them exceptional in positive ways.

Their main difference from Northern Baptists, Wright claimed euphemistically, was that “Southern Baptists had always felt a peculiar interest in the spiritual welfare of the Negro race” (Wright 1902, p. 149).

Wright was an influential “Women’s Missionary Editress” of the *Christian Index* and editor of Georgia WMU’s *Mission Messenger*, whose masthead read “Speak unto the Children of Israel that they Go Forward” (*Mission Messenger* 1902). A wealthy member of First Baptist, Augusta, the birthplace of the Convention, she led a women’s fundraiser for the SBC’s first foreign missions hospital in Shandong, China, which they named for Georgia pastor Ebenezer Warren, the unrepentant slavery apologist (C. Jones 2021; Warren 1864; Gourley 2011a; 2011b, *Diverging Loyalties* 209; Hill 1872, pp. 5–10; Flynt and Berkley 1997, pp. 183, 187, 382 n92).

Wright modeled the mistress’s noblesse oblige, teaching Sunday School classes for Chinese immigrants in Augusta and hosting a “gingerbread cookie mission” for African American children in her wealthy home’s basement on Sunday afternoons, where children received a gingerbread cookie for listening to Bible stories (C. Jones 2021). She framed Southern Baptists’ current home missions to black people and immigrants in the South in the Jim Crow era as taking a positive turn, back to the dynamics of the days of slavery. She assured readers that while evangelizing enslaved people had been “a delicate and difficult” mission, Southern Baptists had done it right (Wright 1902, pp. 312–14). This was therefore the model they should follow now.⁷⁴

Wright boasted how the current Home Mission Board gave money to black Baptists’ missions and ministerial aid with strings attached. She applauded how “colored churches here and there solicited white ministers to take charge of their interests and preach regularly on the Sabbath” (Wright 1902, p. 318). Appointing white SBC preachers “to minister to . . . the Negroes” was a nostalgic throwback to before the war when enslaved people, Wright said, “welcomed their visits and listened to them with pleasure and interest.” According to Wright, this system had produced a “happy effect” (Wright 1902, pp. 312–14) also described by Manly and Heck.

Manly’s books quoted extensively the *Atlanta Constitution* editor Henry Grady, the “spokesman of the New South”, who helped get SBC Home Mission Board member Joseph Brown elected governor in Georgia (Grem 2004; Weaver 2004, 2005). Manly cited Grady’s 1889 *Lost Cause* book as great literature, and declared that the “splendor” and “exquisite culture” of the “civilization of the old slave régime in the South has not been surpassed, and perhaps will not be equaled, among men” (L. Manly 1895, pp. 413–19). Despite recording that her mother had been victimized by her lecherous guardian uncle in this civilization, Manly rhapsodized about his Gaineswood slave plantation.⁷⁵ To effect more nostalgia for their slaveholding days, Manly quoted Du Bose’s hyperbolic . . . *Origin of the Confederate States*: “In all America, no people sat down daily to more bounteous dinners, served by better servants, no richer mahogany; no people wore more fashionable clothes, rode better groomed horses of purer blood, wrote a purer vernacular” (Du Bose 1892, p. 87; Manly 1898, p. 4).

Manly mythologized the Christianity of “good” SBC slaveholders as “men so noble and chivalrous and women so pure and gentle and true”. She insisted they were Christians who “held straight and simple faith” (L. Manly 1895, pp. 417–18), rather than people who refused to practice the Golden Rule and stop being slaveholders (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 315). Ignoring the fact that slaveholders did not volunteer to switch places with those they enslaved, Manly reinforced their antebellum mythos that the “kindest and most affectionate relations existed between the slaves and their owners”. Despite much evidence to the contrary, she insisted there had been “no toleration” for “the cruel master” among them (L. Manly 1895, pp. 417–18). She claimed that a “cruel or neglectful master or mistress was rarely found” (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 359). If people ever were “ill-used or over-worked” it must have been by “an overseer on a distant plantation” without an ideal patriarch and “family or parental relationship” (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 359, emphasis added). Wright similarly mythologized in her 1902 *Mission Work of the*

Southern Baptist Convention how “the Negro . . . was never afraid of his old master, nor of men whom he had known from the days of his boyhood” (Wright 1902, p. 317).

This was the key to Fannie Heck’s 1913 influential *In Royal Service* that reinforced the antebellum mythos of women slaveholders as evangelists and explicitly connected them as moral exemplars to contemporary SBC missions. Heck urged women in 1913 to connect Old South nostalgia with Bible verses exalting women, to imagine themselves as the mother of Jesus, and to identify with the women who still considered their antebellum “way of life most desirable”.⁷⁶ She wrote sentimentally about the antebellum days when “negroes . . . filled the north gallery to overflowing” (Heck 1913, p. 66). She argued that seeing “Ceasar and Juno, Servants of Mrs. Beck” noted in church records, in which black church members sometimes outnumbered whites, was evidence of slaveholders’ Christian virtue and God’s will for slavery. Like Wright and Manly, Heck praised the antebellum Domestic Mission Board’s Sunday School mission to slaves, which were “presided over by a *white superintendent and teachers*” and “found all over the South” (Heck 1913, pp. 66–68, italics added).

Heck, who never married, advocated paternalistic racial “uplift” in general and in “household missions” in particular. She reiterated the antebellum dynamics of white mistresses supervising black or brown “servants”, whether in male- or female-headed households (Mitchell 1988; Holcomb 2020, pp. 1–10, 118–20; Maxwell 2014; Scales and Maxwell 2019, pp. 14–15). She told WMU members, “the servant who so tried and vexes you is one of the great multitude for whom Christ died”, “God is no respecter of persons”, and “Christ died for souls, not Chinese, Mexicans, or dwellers in Brazil” (Holcomb 2020, pp. 93–94).

As Lile notes, “for Southern Baptist women, uplift did not mean equality” (SBC Annual 1845–2023; Lile 2020, p. 57). The WMU’s Executive Committee, of which Heck was a member, maintained in 1898 their old slaveocracy’s social pyramid, stating that SBC women should offer “spiritual help” rather than social equality to “the colored women in and about our homes” (1898 WMU *Annual*, Armstrong 2015, pp. 102, n45, 46, 107. See Bell 2024; Tew 2012; Maxwell 2014). Their mission of racial uplift, “they insisted, did not threaten white supremacy” (Lile 2020, p. 66). Consequently, “[n]o articles in WMU magazines openly endorsed racial or social equality” in the first two decades of the twentieth century (Holcomb 2020, p. 94).

Heck cast slaveholding women in “the most active part” of “the religious instruction of the negroes” to emphasize current racial “uplift” missions (Heck 1913, pp. 66–68). She extolled the image crafted by Louise Manly’s aunt, Abby Manly Gwathmey, of the slaveholding mistress as a “mother to her own large flock” and “priestess to the slaves on the plantation or around the big city home” (Heck 1913, p. 8). Heck portrayed slaveholding women as “gentle Priscillas instructing their black dependents.” She perpetuated their mythology that this “mother in Israel” who “*superintended* the manufacturing and making of clothing” and food, rather than doing the work for which she took credit, was more burdened than those she enslaved. The “mistress was the slave to the demands of the plantation”, Heck repeated (Heck 1913, pp. 68, 70–72, emphasis added; Deetz 2017).

Heck lauded the former slaveholding woman who said of herself, “I shall have some black stars in my crown” because of “the Christian teaching” she gave “her black dependents” whom she held captive. Heck stated she admired “hundreds of old ladies” who engaged in this self-congratulation with their own “lips” for all they believed they had done for enslaved people. “Imagination faints before the thought”, Heck declared, of what might have happened without Christian slaveholding women. “To thousands like these, and to the Christian masters whom they aided, we owe it that these millions of black people came to the day of their freedom a Christianized people”, Heck concluded (Heck 1913, p. 68).

Heck wrote of her affection for another “dear old lady” from Mississippi and her stories about “our plantation”. “My family owned hundreds of slaves”, the woman said, “all of which we housed and clothed in a comfortable manner.” She did not mention if all the

people were as comfortable as herself. Ideas about what “well cared for” meant depended on one’s status as a slaveholder or slave (Heck 1913, pp. 69–70). The “dear old lady” boasted that “we always called in the house servants” when the minister came by. “Not only did we have services for our negroes on the plantation, many of them went with us to our churches and were members, and were served with sacrament”, she added, believing these were gestures of generosity (Heck 1913, pp. 69–70). Other memoirists similarly praised themselves for “allowing” slaves to attend worship services in the afternoon after “the kitchen and house work were done” because they “were not allowed . . . to hold night meetings” (Heck 1913, p. 66).

Louise Manly romanticized the antebellum Classical Christian education of these women, like her mother and aunts trained to be mistresses of their civilization. Manly considered it the ideal postbellum model for the higher education of women.⁷⁷ She and other Southern Baptists like Heck and Ida Poteet carried it forward.⁷⁸ This included studying “Woman’s Duty” by slaveholder Louisa Susannah Cheves McCord and other works that argued for women’s education and influence in same-sex spheres that co-operated with, but did not threaten, white patriarchs’ authority (L. Manly 1895, pp. 365–67). In her 1898 tribute to her mother, Manly created an ironic malaprop describing these “wives and daughters” educated at such colleges as “polished” as “pillows of the temple”, rather than “pillars of the temple”.⁷⁹

In that year, 1898, the WMU promoted Robert Ryland’s white supremacist pamphlet *The Colored Population* as a missions tract, its content little changed from the antebellum years. The pamphlet reiterated the ideal of slaveholders’ patriarchal households: “the well-ordered family must be held as the basis of all true civilization in every land, and the godly elders and matrons of the age” should teach children, “servants”, and converts the “order” of “a pure home”. Southern Baptists should remember, “*Man* may enact and enforce laws . . ., but *women* guided by the true light must defend the purity of the home” (Ryland 1898, pp. 9–11, original italics).

This was why women like Annie Armstrong of Baltimore, for whom WMU later named their Home Missions offering, were adamant that the women of “our Southern Baptist Zion” were the best “missionaries” to “instruct colored women and children” in the ways of “Patriotism and religion.” Framing slaveholding as one of the “wonderful manifestations of God’s power” to Christianize Africans (Armstrong 2015; Harper 2004, pp. 166–69; Camp 2021 citing C. Holcomb), WMU leaders argued it made Southern Baptist women the best people “[t]o reach the negro women of the South and *uplift* them morally, socially, and religiously” (Lile 2020, pp. 60–61, emphasis added).

In 1893 Lottie Moon, who was born on a slaveholding plantation in 1840, wrote “The Colored People” for WMU’s “study guide”. She called Southern Baptists “debtors” to black people for all that former slaves had done for white families. She and other WMU leaders also believed African Americans were “indebted” to slaveholders and that black people born after Emancipation had lost “the civilizing effects of slavery” (Lile 2020, p. 58). Moon argued, “Some point of contact is needed between the races”, and that contact should be found “in the religion that is common to both races”. A student of nineteenth-century ethnological theories that ranked ethnicities in hierarchies, Moon maintained paternalistic views of white Christian supremacy and assumed white women should be religious *supervisors* of people of color they “uplifted” (*Foreign Mission Journal* (October 1892) in Sullivan 2011, pp. 133–134, 209, n52). A decade later she called on “white people” to accept their “duty” to go into “miserable homes in our towns & cities to try to uplift their inmates”.⁸⁰

This was consistent with postbellum repetitions of their 1845 mythos that the “portion of North America occupied by the United States appears to be the divinely appointed center from which evangelizing influences will radiate in every direction, all over the earth—the command point from which the true *Crusaders* of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will march forth to redeem. . . and conquer the world for Christ”. The Home Mission Board reasserted in the 1890s that Southern Baptists were “the conservator not only of Baptist

beliefs but also the standard bearer of orthodox Christianity in the United States". They were more confident than ever in their exceptionalism and triumphalism. They believed Southern Baptists "hold the true doctrines of the Bible in their greatest purity, [and] the South, with its large majority of Baptists is the center of that center". The way to save American Christianity and the world was to infuse "the poisonous filth to the bottom" with "the foreign mission work of the Home Mission Board!" (SBC Annual 1845–2023, p. 17; Williams 2018, pp. 122–23, original emphasis).

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the Home Mission Board's renewed "call of the South" claimed "God has equipped us for building in our own section a great Christian civilization" (Masters 1918). After SBC women were "allowed" to be Convention messengers in 1918, they joined in resolving that "America is in fact God's new Israel. . . divinely chosen, preserved with providential purpose, prospered with world power, and pledged to a divine mission." Their president proclaimed in Atlanta in 1919: "The [Southern] Baptist hour of all the centuries has sounded". They had "arrived at that moment in our history for which our forefathers toiled and sacrificed and prayed; for which they suffered and bled and died" (Wilson 2006, p. 17). If the world was to be converted to the "great" "Anglo-Saxon" faith, it would be through Southern Baptists' steadfastness in their nineteenth-century heritage and legacy (Wilson 2006, p. 1; Eighmy 1972, pp. 77–78).

3.5. Reconstruction Denial

A major part of the Southern Baptist Lost Cause mythology, and denial of root causes of white racial violence that continued unabated, was their vilification of Reconstruction as thwarting their mission. Blaming Reconstruction and white opponents of slavery, rather than slaveholders, for racial "prejudice", Wright continued the antebellum practice of blaming Baptist abolitionists for marring "the general harmony" she claimed existed prior to 1840 (Wright 1902, p. 2). Like Manly and Heck, she parroted the SBC founders' claim that if "the subject of slavery be rightly understood by both parties" people would stop condemning slavery (Wright 1902, p. 4).

In *The Missionary Work of the Southern Baptist Convention*, Wright portrayed Reconstruction as Manly had. She called it a time when "missionary work among them [Negroes] became more difficult" because "the sense of freedom and independence took deeper hold upon the Negroes" who "became in a measure alienated from the white people" and "were reluctant to have white preachers come among them." Like other Lost Causers, Wright derided "other influences" she said manipulated free black citizens who could not think for themselves (Wright 1902, pp. 316–17). Opining on inadequate housing, Wright lamented Emancipation's dismantling of slavery, wondering where money was supposed to come from to build houses for freed people whose "scanty means . . . were almost always inadequate" (Wright 1902, p. 317. For alternative narratives of Reconstruction, see Berry 2006). She argued that the SBC was determined to persist and exist so that "an influence for good might be exerted on the Negro churches" (Wright 1902, p. 149, emphasis added).

Manly's schoolbooks attacked the Emancipation Proclamation at length. Among the list of arguments denigrating or minimizing it, Manly referred to Emancipation as the "wholesale robbery" of slaveholders' wealth. She argued it was a mere PR stunt by Lincoln trying "to make the people of Europe believe that the South was fighting to maintain slavery" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, pp. 435–36; see W. Jones in Moore 2019, p. 170). She amplified the Jones mythology that "Southern leaders were better generals, and the Confederate armies, though so much smaller and badly equipped, better soldiers than the hosts they so often defeated", and that was why Lincoln acted. Manly described the Emancipation as merely "to stir up the slaves". She insisted they had been "hitherto very peaceable and docile". Lost Cause conspiracy theorists' Negrophobia insisted Emancipation was intended to "turn" people "against their masters" and thereby weaken CSA armies by compelling white men to remain at home to protect their families from outrage and violence by black people.⁸¹ People like Manly and her SBC network believed the Emancipation of people from human trafficking was nothing more than "some mode . . . for striking

[Confederates] more effective than in the field" of battle" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, pp. 334–35).

Reflecting her family's recorded views, Manly lamented what they called "Difficulty Freeing Slaves". They considered "knowing what to do with the negroes" a "great difficulty",⁸² the precursor to mission tracts about "the negro problem".⁸³ Manly's father, for example, received permission from federal forces to keep two double-barreled guns and a revolver in 1866, but he revealed to his parents that he also kept a Spencer Rifle—"a Gettysburg trophy by the way"—that he did not report. He was prepared to use any and all of them to "shoot, without delay" to protect "my place", the plantation where he enslaved around twenty adults and children.⁸⁴ After he recorded "negroes are all up in arms about" a white man stabbing a black man, Manly's father noted a few days later, "the negroes have become quiet . . . partly from the strong patrol, which has guarded the town nightly" (Manley 1999, pp. 198–99).

Louise Manly attempted to justify white vigilante groups' postwar racial terrorism in several ways. In "Secret Societies for Protection" and "Ku Klux Klan", she set out defenses of "The Invisible Empire", "Knights of the White Camellia", "The Pale Faces", and other "fantastic epithets" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 551). She first argued that slaveholding families "had" to form such "secret societies" for their own "protection" once their slaveholding was outlawed, and they feared others would do to them what they had been doing (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 551). She portrayed Radical Reconstruction as "the long reign of terror and proscription" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, pp. 553–54, 565). In "Oppression of the Reconstructed Governments", "Offices Filled by Carpet-baggers and Negroes", "Evils Increased by Freedman's Bureau", and "Oppression and Tyranny", Manly decried what she called "mongrel legislatures", "misrule and dishonesty everywhere", and a "whole system of proscription and robbery" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, pp. 551, 548–53).

Manly portrayed slaveholders' outrage at having "to refrain from a resort to arms", to which they were accustomed, sympathetically. "Southern whites", she claimed, "had to devise some other means to lighten *the yoke* which became daily more galling" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 551, emphasis added). Slaveholders were galled. They concocted myths that it "was impossible for a high-spirited, courageous people to submit patiently to such a course of outrages and indignities from the negroes, whom they knew to be wholly unfit for governing". They also viewed "white men" who aided emancipated people as "often below the negroes in a moral point of view" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, pp. 551–52).

Manly minimized how "local" groups harassed and tormented newly free people and their allies. She described how Klan members "wrought upon the fears and superstitions of the negroes, by appearing suddenly at night, with masked faces and flowing white robes, and sometimes giving, in sepulchral tones, startling accounts of themselves as ghosts and evil spirits, and threatening terrible penalties upon all who resisted their will" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 551). She admitted, however, "Sometimes severe whippings were administered to negroes and to Northern whites".

Manly insisted the violence was "intended only for self-protection against the barn-burnings and worse outrages which were perpetrated by the negroes" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 551). She asserted the "Ku Klux" merely "paid back" these "outrages and indignities", such as voting and holding office, "perpetrated by negroes under the influence of the [Loyalty] Leagues". She repeated stories that the Leagues "encouraged others to deeds of violence against the already harassed and exasperated Southerners" (Lee and Manly ([1895] 1899, pp. 551–52). She acknowledged the white vigilante groups' threats and violence "proved so efficacious" that white men used them "to keep the negroes from voting". She blamed it all, however, on the federal government and the "enormous negro majorities in the Southern States", which were created by slaveholders because free black men could be a "potent weapon" politically.

White terrorist groups became so "powerful and influential", Manly said, because "the best men of the South seem to have taken part" (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 551). She maintained that their "methods resorted to" were justified by "protecting white women

and defenceless families” from retribution they assumed would be coming, given what they knew, although they denied it, about the realities of their slaveholding (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 551). In a different tack, Manly blamed the Klan’s brutality on men “other” than their own family or church members who were members (Lee and Manly [1895] 1899, p. 551). This mythology came directly from slaveholders’ insistence that anything wrong about slaveholding happened among “other” families.

Another defender of the Klan whose family helped create Lost Cause mythology was Amanda Elvira McAfee Dixon. The daughter of large slaveholders in York County, South Carolina, Amanda married a Southern Baptist minister in Shelby County, North Carolina, and raised her family on hatred of Thaddeus Stevens and resentments of Reconstruction. Her husband, an SBC minister, was an early Klan member, and her brother was the “Grand Titan of the Invisible Empire Ku Klux Klan.” When Klansmen lynched a black man in the town square, Amanda’s children watched. She praised the brutality, claiming it was necessary to resist Radical Republicans by any and all means because they were trying “to make the South Negroid territory”.

Amanda’s three sons—Amzi Clarence (A. C.), Frank, and Thomas—all became ordained Baptist ministers. A.C. co-authored *The Fundamentals*, aided by his wife Mary (Mollie) Fraison Dixon. Mollie wrote in the WMU’s 1917 *Royal Service* magazine about African Americans: “His present mode of life is such to render it well nigh impossible for him to be moral, and his present immorality makes him an inefficient laborer, an expensive criminal, a distributor of infectious diseases, and a moral plague”.⁸⁵ Thomas Dixon, aided by his wife Harriet Bussey, a Southern Baptist minister’s daughter from New Orleans who required a “Negro nurse” to live with them to care for her children, authored numerous racist, misogynoir, sexually prurient and violent Lost Cause novels, including *The Clansman* 1905, which D. W. Griffith turned into the film *Birth of a Nation* (Dixon n.d.; Slide 2004, pp. 15–28).

3.6. White Women’s “Happy Slaves” Mythology

Another window into how recently slaveholding women viewed mistresses, servants, and Reconstruction was the best-selling *Mrs. Hill’s New Cook Book: A Practical System For Private Families, In Town And Country With Carving And Arranging The Table For Dinners, Parties, etc.* by Southern Baptist Annabella Dawson Hill. Lottie Moon and other missionaries took it abroad with them (Rhea 1969). Hill was a wealthy Southern Baptist slaveholder of multiple properties in Georgia and Alabama. She shared some slaveholding with her brother, an SBC minister and Mercer trustee. Hill retained wealth after the war and became a popular “hostess” in Atlanta. Her household guide, first published in the late 1860s as the postwar “sisterhood” was organizing, contained recipes with Confederate names and gave directions for “Management of Servants”. Rooted in slaveholders’ households, Hill’s directions reinforced the recent slaveholders’ view of themselves as “housekeepers” who supervised the labor of “servants” or “domestics”, terms used interchangeably in new labor contracts and patronage relationships.⁸⁶

Hill’s book exemplified how wealthy white women continued to put their own names (or their husbands’ names) on other people’s knowledge and work. Publishers in New York and London touted *Mrs. Hill’s New Cook Book* through multiple best-selling editions as “The Great Southern Cook-book!” marketed with ads for “Old South” Lost Cause novels.⁸⁷ The author of the introduction was SBC pastor Ebenezer Warren. He declared Hill’s household guide a necessity for “these degenerate days” of Reconstruction and predicted “our Southern [white] ladies” would help “reverse the present order of things” (Warren 1864; Gourley 2011a, 2011b, *Diverging Loyalties* 209; Gourley 2015; Hill 1872, “Introduction” 5–10). A vocal defender of slavery-in-perpetuity, Warren wrote essays and novels with cartoonish, dehumanizing passages about African Americans as “happy slaves”. He was so popular among the postwar “sisterhood” and WMU in Georgia, led by Mary Emily Wright, that they named the denomination’s first foreign mission hospital in Shandong, China, the Warren Memorial Hospital.⁸⁸

The plethora of postbellum “Old South” household guides credited content to white women and depicted caricatures of enslaved women and men as “fantasy servants”.⁸⁹ Georgia’s “first lady”, Elizabeth Grisham Brown, a member of Atlanta’s Second Avenue Baptist with Mary Tichenor Barnes, endorsed the 1883 *Dixie Cook-Book*. Brown’s husband, in addition to being governor, was a member of the Home Mission Board who amassed more wealth using the racialized convict-lease labor system (Blackmon 2009; Brown’s gubernatorial election was aided by Henry Grady. Weaver (2004, 2005)). Like Hill’s book, *The Dixie Cook-Book* stated, “Since the surrender, the great problem with the Southern matron has been the servant question”. Editors claimed the reason “colored cooks and laundresses of the South” were “noted for their skill” and “‘a genius’ for their work” was the “permanent training” of enslaved servants “in her [mistress’s] hands” (*Dixie CookBook* 1883, p. 499). They lamented so few “girls” seemed interested in “making themselves a necessity to the family, and sharing its joys and sorrows” as enslaved people had been forced to do (*Dixie CookBook* 1883, p. 499). With more opportunities for freed women and their descendants to “henceforth become the mistress”, editors urged local white “ladies” to agree among themselves to fix wages (*Dixie CookBook* 1883, p. 499).

Marion Cabell Tyree’s 1879 *Housekeeping in Old Virginia* cited white women like “Mrs. General Robert E. Lee” as “contributors” of recipes and added “Mozis Addums”, a fictional slave concocted by George William Bagby (Tyree 1879; Bagby 1862, 1874). Bagby’s racist “satire” *What I Did with My Fifty Millions* was published by Lippincott, the same Northern publisher of Southern Baptists’ postwar hagiography of Sam Houston, and SBC missionary Harriet Baker Suddoth’s quasi-memoir.⁹⁰ Baker Suddoth, the SBC’s first single female foreign missionary, wrote “slave dialect” in 1873 to valorize her slaveholding family in Virginia: “‘Humph why, yes, sir. My massa, mistess, young massas and young misses, da is all good people, from old Virginny; da is mighty-rich gentlefolks, and sure enough quality’” (Silvervale 1873, pp. 28–29).

To continue idealizing themselves, their mothers, and grandmothers who were slaveholders as “good” slaveholders, Southern Baptists needed this myth of “happy slaves” and “loyal servants” (Levin 2019). Louise Manly’s *Southern Literature* curriculum featured the lyrics of “Dixie” in purported slave dialect for school children to memorize (L. Manly 1895, 1930). Manly’s family proudly touted how her grandfather had led the prayer for Jefferson Davis’s Confederate presidential inauguration in Montgomery where bandleaders made “Dixie” the “de facto battle hymn of the Confederacy”.⁹¹ Manly’s (1895) “Dixie” version was part of the recrudescence of slaveholders’ mythology at the end of the century. It portrayed black people as nostalgically pining for a time as much as a place: “I wish I wuz in de land ob cotton,/Ole times dar am not forgotten. . . . I wish I were in Dixie, hooray! hooray!” (L. Manly 1895, p. 444). Manly insisted the world had never seen “a peasantry so happy and so well-to-do as the negro slaves in America.” She reified the pretense that an enslaved person was “contented in the kindly dependence that had been a habit of his blood.” She maintained that an unfree person had “never lift[ed] his eyes beyond the narrow horizon that shut him in with his neighbors and friends” (L. Manly 1895, pp. 413–19).

The Dixie Cook-Book with Elizabeth Brown’s endorsement similarly claimed that, with slavery, “if the mistress were kind and generous, she readily succeeded in attaching her colored dependents to herself and her interests, and had some *faithful* as well as efficient servants” (*Dixie CookBook* 1883, p. 499). This memetic mythology about enslaved and formerly enslaved people’s gratitude, contentment, and loyalty due to slaveholders’ goodness was found across SBC postbellum culture. Margaret Lea Houston’s family’s self-aggrandizing stories about their relationship with the woman they called “Aunt Eliza” reflected and reinforced images of wealthy, politically connected slaveholding women as virtuous examples for subsequent generations of Southern Baptist women to emulate (Roberts 1984, p. 358).

Many SBC missionaries took the “faithful slave” trope with them abroad. Some were unable to function without a woman or girl performing the labor of “mammy”, “nurse”,

and “cook”. This was not confined to the Harriet Bakers (China) and Lurana Davis Bowens (Yoruba) of the antebellum era. “SBC missionary literature is full of examples that illuminate the shape of missionary whiteness” in the postbellum era and the twentieth century. João Chaves has shown how SBC missionaries in South America “revealed their white supremacist tendencies broadly and reflected the general feeling of the American South” (Chaves 2019, p. 82; Chaves 2022). Sophie Lanneau, a grown woman and professional SBC teacher in China in the first half of the twentieth century, said she “needed” an *amah* to serve and care for her like a “mammy” (Li 1999; Crawford 1852–1881).

Ella Broadus Robertson was the youngest daughter of SBC “royalty” Charlotte and John Broadus. She was born during Reconstruction in the year the Tupper called forth the “sisterhood of our Southern Zion” and they sent Lottie Moon from among them to save the “heathen”. A young wife and mother when family friend Louise Manly published her Lost Cause books in the 1890s, Ella had married her father’s protégé and successor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Ella went on to become a prolific author of inspirational books and essays for SBC women and a popular speaker at WMU events. More modern than her “conservative” mother, Ella still repeated and repackaged some of her parents’ “Old Virginia” nostalgia for new generations of Southern Baptists in the early twentieth century.

On the one hand, Ella emphasized progress since 1865: “Sixty years ago it was considered a crime in some states to teach a Negro slave to read” (Robertson 1921, p. 74). In *The Ministry of Women*, she argued, “We need . . . a larger and fairer mind towards the constant public injustice to the Negro”, noting, “[t]hey pay the same railroad fare that we do, but they get very inferior accommodations” (Robertson 1921, p. 74). She encouraged Southern Baptist women, presumably all “white” in the Bible Belt, to “inform ourselves about the actual achievements of the Negro.” She urged that “we go a step further and co-operate with *them* in bettering their lives”. She considered this “not an easy thing but a big thing for our country and for Christ” (Robertson 1921, p. 75, emphasis added).

Ella echoed earlier exhortations to white women by Heck and Wright to be involved in “a settlement or mission Sunday-school for colored people” due to “how responsive the children are”.⁹² She advocated day nurseries for “children whose mothers work out” in white women’s homes and for WMU to “help also on the Negro housing problem, if for no other reason than that their homes and ours are connected in many ways” (Robertson 1921, p. 74). She gave her 1921 readers Daily Bible Reading recommendations and asked them to consider, “What is the difference between working for the Negroes and working with them?” Should “we do Inter-racial work individually or by organization?” Interchanging the terms “Negro” and “poor”, Ella asked readers to think further about ways “we harm the poor by our methods” or even by “our spirit” (Robertson 1921, p. 80).

Accepting Nannie Helen Burroughs’ charge to Southern Baptist women to help stop white supremacists’ violence, Ella was an “early member of the Kentucky Council of the Association of Southern Women to Prevent Lynching.”⁹³ She praised those who served “undauntedly on inter-racial committees” by adding that they “try to enlighten an ignorant washerwoman” (Robertson 1921, p. 74). She appealed to white women’s patronage and current culture wars for the “purity” found in missionary Rosalee Appleby’s books. “The negroes . . . want our help” in “giving their children a chance”, Ella wrote. They say, “Help us save our girls . . . and we will help you save your boys” (Robertson 1921, p. 74).

As for “lynching, for whatever cause”, Ella declared that white women “can educate the public conscience by the stand they take themselves”. She added, “We do not realize that we are training our own children in race-prejudice, or in fair-mindedness and kindness, merely *by the way we talk*” (Robertson 1921, pp. 74–75, emphasis added), a prescient phrase in Ella’s case. WMU leaders were woefully unsuccessful in gaining “extensive church-wide support” for anti-lynching efforts in the SBC.⁹⁴ One factor was the conservatism of those like Ella Broadus Robertson who considered themselves moderately progressive but maintained allegiance to the antebellum mythos of the slaveholding Convention.

Ella wanted her children to acknowledge that slavery was wrong, but she did not want her children to think ill of their slaveholding grandparents and great-grandparents. Ella celebrated how her more “conservative” mother taught the grandchildren Bible verses along with her version of stories about “the old days” (Robertson 1921). Ella therefore used the passive voice when talking about slavery: *things were done . . . decisions were made. . .* by nameless people in the homes and churches her children now frequented (Robertson 1901, p. 11). She echoed Heck’s assertion that slaveholding had been “[f]astened upon her ancestors, almost without will of their own” (Heck 1913, p. 72).

Like other WMU and SBC leaders, Ella also used Southern Baptists’ nostalgia for slaveholding power as models for current missiology. In *The Fine Art of Motherhood* (1930), Ella assumed and promoted old ideals of white women as “mistresses” of households with black “servants”, mistresses also of the culture around them. She romanticized “long ago” days of white women promenading along boulevards with children and “the nurse” in tow to call on other white women to collect twenty-five cents for the SBC *Foreign Mission Journal* (Robertson 1930, pp. 95–96.) “Some people sneer at mothers who “leave their children to hirelings”, Ella wrote, “but most women who have nurses do so in order to be better mothers, to save their strength and freshen their minds for the duties that no one else can do” (Robertson 1930, p. 95). The antebellum idea that certain white women had “duties that no one else can do”, and its justification for maintaining a class system of “servants” with it, not only continued in SBC elite—it was a mentality their missionaries took with them abroad.

“We in the South have been fortunate in having coloured servants”, Ella wrote in 1930. “They like to cook because they have a relish for food; they are good nurses because they are fond of children and find them interesting” (Robertson 1930, p. 95). Advocating WMU’s emphasis on their domestic missions as racial “uplift”, Ella claimed that black women were “very imitative” in their “being”. She said this was good because “being very imitative, they acquire much real refinement of feeling” by being around white women as their employers or patrons (Robertson 1930, p. 95).

Ella repeated stories with “fantasy servant” and “faithful servant” tropes to reinforce SBC ideals of white mistress exemplars so virtuous that people were “happy” to be their “servants”. These were now mimetic in WMU and Home Missions Board materials, in SBC families’ oral histories, and in popular fiction novels by such SBC authors as Isla May Mullins. One of Ella’s anecdotes, likely about the Broadus-Robertson household, involved a “[black] nurse who took care of a family of [white] children for fifteen years, with never a cross word nor an untrue one”. In Ella’s narrative, the woman “came back long afterwards to nurse the visiting grandchildren and later to cook” and “gave and received an affection as strong as in antebellum days” (Robertson 1930, p. 95). Ella and her readers presumed that the relationships between white and black people in the South were most affectionate during slavery.

Ella’s anecdote was similar to a fantasy plot in novels by Isla May Mullins, another faculty wife at Southern Baptist Seminary whose husband became its President. Two years younger than Louise Manly, Mullins was born into a slaveholding family in Alabama’s Black Belt and educated at Judson College like Manly’s mother (Alabama Authors n.d.). Mullins’s racist young adult *Blossom Shop* series was published in the early twentieth century by the same Boston publisher of Lucy Maud Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* books (Lile 2020, pp. 51–74). They featured a black character named Cahaba, described by Mullins as a “cornfield darky” who received industrial education financed by a wealthy white woman. When the white family protagonists experienced economic hardship, Cahaba, out of affection for them, quit her middle-class job and donned a mammy’s kerchief “in the old-time negro way” to become their domestic servant. Mullins depicted the white family heroines as so virtuous they deserved this sacrifice by a black woman. She wrote Cahaba’s words in slave dialect deriding “uppity” educated black women. As the young white heroine married and set up a new household, she carried on the tradition of being a mistress over an older black woman as her maid (Lile 2020, pp. 58–59, 63–66).

Mullins' fantasy fiction demonstrated many white women's longing and presumptions to be like their slaveholding mothers and grandmothers: household supervisors of "colored servants" while calling themselves "domestic missionaries". Many WMU leaders lamented that stories like these of actual slaveholding mistresses and "servants" found in Ella's Broadus family memoirs and Heck's *IRS* were "fast fading from memory" (Lile 2020, p. 58; Flowers 2011, p. 22).

In this vein, Ella argued that it was good for white children to be in households with "servants" so they could be taught "very young to speak courteously to servants". She invoked Chesterfield's dictum about being a gentleman⁹⁵ and the spirit of white noblesse oblige being imparted in SBC missions' education. "Royal Ambassadors" (boys) and "Girls' Auxiliary", for example, were being taught by SBC women they "had an obligation to help African Americans, who presumably could not take care of themselves" (Reynolds 2017, pp. 23, 111–12, 123, 193).

Ella recalled fondly how her parents had bought a first edition of Joel Chandler Harris's "Uncle Remus" stories. Manly's *Southern Literature* called these slave caricatures "great literature", a "faithful reproduction of the popular tales of the old negroes of South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama" (L. Manly 1895, p. 403). John Broadus "read it to his children with an almost trembling anxiety to see if they would enjoy the stories as he had when a child." He felt "intense satisfaction" that "they did" (Robertson 1901, p. 22). When Ella wrote passages about "Uncle Griffin" and "Aunt Suky", who were enslaved by the Broaduses, she described the older man as "just like Uncle Remus". He was the "oracle of the place [plantation]" who "would take the little boy [John] on his knee" and "tell him the matchless stories of Bre'r Rabbit and Bre'r Wolf almost word for word as Joel Chandler Harris afterwards printed them" (Robertson 1901, p. 22).

Ella acknowledged that a black man taking a slaveholder's child on his knee and telling him an African story about cleverness outsmarting foolish people was a significant act of resistance to slavery (Wagner 2017; Flusche 1975). But her white supremacist explanation for why "[t]he darkies never told any of their folk stories in the presence of grown white people" was that it would have exposed them as absurd: "the triumph of a weaker race by cunning over one naturally stronger and more intelligent" (Robertson 1901, p. 22).

Ella went on to entertain white audiences by using mocking "black voice" of slaves.⁹⁶ She recalled learning this from Southern Baptist Seminary students in the Broadus family home. They especially enjoyed performing "amusing" stories, such as "A Gullah's Tale of Woe", in exaggerated mimicry of Lowcountry Blacks' dialect.⁹⁷ At a 1936 WMU luncheon, likely served by black employees, Ella's included a supposed "tribute" to Martha Walker, "an excellent typical old Mammy". To the white women's delight, Ella mimicked Walker trying to manipulate the Broadus children into slowing down: "Lida, is you tired? Annie, is you tired?" Ella emphasized that Walker later in life had sent a letter to Eliza Broadus addressed "My dear darling child". Ella interpreted it as Walker missing the days of slavery (Robertson 1936).

Demonstrating Ella's own observation that SBC women were "training our own children in race-prejudice . . . merely by the way we talk" (Robertson 1921, pp. 74–75), they continued promoting the antebellum mistress ideal. In the 1920s–30s, the Alabama WMU shared proceeds from the Alabama United Daughters of the Confederacy's cookbook to benefit "the education of worthy boys and girls" in a UDC-approved curriculum. The editor, a Southern Baptist doyen and chair of the UDC's education department, began the cookbook with a Howard Weeden poem in "slave dialect". Titled a "Mammy Who Represented The Black Mammy of the Old South", the supposed "tribute" to Martha Dismukes praised her for "faithful service of thirty-five years" to the Burford-Bashinsky family. The editor then dedicated the book to her own daughter whose name she put on multiple recipes rather than that of Martha Dismukes. Numerous SBC church cookbooks in the twentieth century followed this tradition from Annabella Dawson Hill's Reconstruction household guide, which continued their antebellum practices of using unnamed black

people's recipes either with white women's names or references to "fantasy servants" (Bashinsky 1937 "Preface").

Despite or because of leading SBC women's mythopoeic views of their own households "as near sanctuaries", female workers in them remained vulnerable there (Lile 2020, pp. 64, 57; McGuire 2010). When SBC missionaries brought young Antônia Teixeira from Brazil to the Baylor household of Georgia Jenkins Burleson, Teixeira was promised education in exchange for working as a cleaning maid for Burleson. She had been acting as nanny to the missionaries' children, the grand-nieces and nephews of Martha Foster Crawford in China.

Burleson's parents had migrated to Texas in 1836 with Antionette Lea Bledsoe's "settler missions" and plantation evangelism. They settled at Washington-on-the-Brazos and sent Georgia back to Judson Institute in Marion to be educated as a mistress of Western civilization.⁹⁸ Georgia and her husband, an SBC pastor and president of Baylor, were slaveholders in Independence, Texas, and Confederate devotees. One of the many SBC chaplains in the CSA, Rufus, urged Southern Baptists to fight what he called "Abolition despotism" (Baylor University 2021). Georgia and Rufus promoted SBC missions and Lost Cause mythology after the war (Baylor University 2021). A founder of Columbus Avenue Baptist Church in Waco, Georgia, advocated "strict, conservative notions of female piety and behavior" and remained accustomed to overseeing a household of black "servants".⁹⁹

Georgia put Antônia in a bedroom with Georgia's mother to be caregiver to "Mother Jenkins", also a former slaveholder, in addition to other cleaning chores. When Antônia became pregnant, she tried to tell Georgia that she had been sexually assaulted and raped, more than once, by the brother of Georgia's son-in-law, an SBC pastor who lived nearby with Georgia's daughter Hallie (Walker and Lumpkin 1897, pp. 372–73). Georgia and her husband responded by accusing Antônia of ingratitude, causing them "trouble and annoyance" and exhibiting "the three besetting sins of Brazilians" articulated by an SBC missionary: "lust, a want of veracity and honesty". Georgia's testimony at the public trial of Hallie's brother-in-law did nothing to aid Antônia, who tragically disappeared amid the scandal. Georgia Burleson, however, spent her remaining years like many other consorts of denominational leaders: memorializing and mythologizing her own husband and family in white-washed systems of moral hypocrisy (Parsons and Chaves 2023, pp. 109–10).

4. Conclusions

Throughout the twentieth century WMU realized Heck's dream of "training of the children of the church" so "that Christianity, missions and membership" in the SBC "Sunday-school, the mission band and the organizations" were "as inseparable in their minds as in the mind of Christ" (Heck 1913, p. 356). As women struggled for equality within the patriarchal denomination, Southern Baptists built and institutionalized financial superstructures that continued to valorize their nineteenth-century denominational foremothers as their heroines.¹⁰⁰ As the denomination struggled to shed white supremacy, generations of Southern Baptists recycled the hagiographies of slaveholding women and the white-washed pylons of their Convention. During internecine conflicts, members invoked shared nostalgia for female founders and icons, minimizing slaveholding by using slaveholders' own mythologies (Allen 1969, pp. 16–17, 56; Sullivan 2011, p. 214, n. 54; Flowers 2011; Parsons 2019, "Excursis"). As the Southern Baptist Convention (n.d.) surged in mainstream status as the largest Protestant denomination at the end of the twentieth century, a tenet of denominational identity involved repeating their 1845 and 1913 mythos. Critiquing their mythos' female icons remained taboo, tantamount to Convention disloyalty, and Convention disloyalty felt like disloyalty to Christ, as Heck envisioned. In Heck's words, the Southern Baptist "mission view is the world view" (Heck 1913, p. 357).

One SBC pastor's daughter, Jane Stembridge, recalled the effects of continued psyches and practices of white mistresses in SBC families and pastoriums in the 1940s–1960s. She had survived the dysfunction that warped the culture of the "Bible Belt" and she searched for ways to be part of remedying the injustices her families and denomination perpetrated

and perpetuated. Some of her family's weddings in South Carolina, for example, still featured photographs in local newspapers of young white brides and grooms bringing older black maids in different uniforms to their marriages. The "pastor's kid" who came to reject the white supremacy and racial apartheid of her denomination often struggled to articulate her experiences. Many like her struggled mentally and spiritually with the pervasively unchallenged Lost Cause mythology about the SBC slaveocracy and their connections to current churches and families. When asked to describe being "in so many ways raised by black women, particularly one" whom she loved, in the "intimate economies" of SBC women's households, the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee member demurred (Finley 2020). "It's a hard story to tell without sounding so patronizing", she said (Daniel 1996).

As Ella Broadus Robertson's great-granddaughter, Betsy Reeder, learned more about "the lunacy of assumed racial and gender superiority" defended by her ancestors, she thought about her own mother's silence but frequent reflexive utterance "I'm sorry". Like Tribble and other white women who reached adulthood before facing "our direct line of descent from slaveowners", Reeder wrote to her late mother in 2021: "I'm sorry Christianity and gentleness of spirit didn't prevent their role in a hideous affront to human dignity, welfare, and freedom. . . . *I'm sorry we never talked about it*" (Reeder 2021, pp. ii, 437–38, emphasis added).

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Notes

- 1 Nannie Helen Burroughs, "The Dawn of a New Day in Dixie" (1950) in Graves (2019, pp. 164–69); see also M. S. Jones (2020, pp. 209–10).
- 2 The author recognizes with deep appreciation the contributions to this article by editors and reviewers of this journal issue.
- 3 See SBC SBC Annual (1845–2023): William B. Johnson "Address", 17–20, for SBC founders' rhetoric slaveholding.
- 4 Jemison (2020), "Introduction: Afterlives of Proslavery Christianity", 1–16.
- 5 *Mythos* (Greek), stories groups tell themselves and others about who they are and what they believe, are shared, persistent, and malleable grand narratives about their *raison d'être*. Shared origin stories and "heritage narratives" inculcate "a sense of affinity" with others, "motivate certain actions", "legitimize" institutions, and normalize certain beliefs and behaviors "as natural, eternal, and necessary". Forsell (2020, pp. 269–87). See "mythistory", McNeill (1986).
- 6 Stricklin (1999, p. 13). Arlie Russell Hochschild's 2016 *Strangers in a Strange Land* in Gorski and Perry (2022, pp. 3–4).
- 7 The seventeenth-century medical term *nostalgia* described practices that obscure a "critical frame of analysis for looking at the world". Swislocki (2009, p. 3).
- 8 "Mattie Callendine Heck" in Mitchell (1988) and "Anna Callendine Heck" in "Fannie Exile Scudder Heck", (Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives n.d.).
- 9 "Woman's Hymn" (214) in *Broadman Hymnal* (1940), which also contained "Faith of Our Mothers" (203) and "My Mother's Bible" (380) see (McKinney and Hill 1940).
- 10 She dedicated *IRS* to the WMU members in the U. S. and "the Woman's Missionary Unions in Foreign Lands" who were under "the fostering care" of SBC missionaries. Heck (1913), frontispiece.
- 11 SBC Annual (1845–2023): Johnson "Address" 17–20; SBC Annual (1845–2023): Jeter, "possess the land", May 10; *Duties of Masters to Servants* (1851); Foss and Mathews (1850, pp. 107–13); Fuller (2000): Basil Manly Sr., "Sermons on Duty" with slavery in "the family" of Christian patriarchal households as "a kind of Patriarchal Government" with "the characters of Paternity", 213–14; Cottrill (2021); Winterer (2007).
- 12 Fuller (1845) 170, original capitalization; SBC president Johnson argued slavery opponents "failed to prove—that slavery is, in all circumstances sinful," Baker (1966) 120.
- 13 Ephesians 6:1–9; Colossians 3:18–22; 1 Timothy 2:11–15; 1 Timothy 6:1–2; Titus 2:3–5, 9–10; 1 Pet. 2:18.
- 14 See (Alabama Baptist 1846); Crawford 5 March 1846.
- 15 Lewis (2000); "Judson Female Institute", *South Western Baptist* 22 July 1858.

- 16 Manly's malaprop of "pillows" instead of "pillars" in her quote of Du Bose's 1892 *Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey* . . . especially as to the origin of the Confederate States was likely unintentional but ironically intriguing as an analogy. Manly, *Early Life* (1898) p 4. Du Bose described slaveholders' "wives and daughters" as "polished as *pillars* of the temple." Du Bose (1892, p. 87).
- 17 See for example Isabella Hall Tobey, Sallie Little Holmes, Olivia Elizabeth Barkley Lacy, Clara E. Warner Priest, Sarah Robinson Rohrer, Mary Eugenia Canfield Reid, Lurana Davis Bown, Eliza Jewett Hartwell, Susan Broadus Stone, Anna Bennett Burton, and Susan Sexton Taylor. Eliza Sexton Shuck taught at one of these institutions, Judson, before going to China. Judith Helm Jones volunteered but remained in Virginia due to the war. Several were teachers or governesses like Eliza Moring Yates and Martha Foster Crawford. Crawford was a member of the slaveholding elite but on a lower rung than some of her cousins, at odds with her father over the point of educating women. Sarah Robinson Rohrer's mother paid to ship her piano and bass to Japan for her. Aware of such strata among slaveholding classes, Harriet Baker perpetually attempted social ladder climbing within the wealthy slaveholding class of the SBC and other denominations in China and the U. S.
- 18 "Missions as Settler Colonies" in Conroy-Krutz (2015, pp. 102–29); Levens (2021).
- 19 SBC Annual (1845–2023): Jeter, May 10.
- 20 Virginia Southern Baptists' *Religious Herald* contained ads, such as one with oversized bold lettering: "Who Wants \$35,000 in Property?" It was Scervant Jones's notice that "I am desirous to spend the balance of my life as a Missionary, if the Lord permit, and, therefore, offer for sale, my farm, THE VINEYARD, adjacent to Williamsburg, and containing about 600 acres—well watered, well wooded, and abounding in marl—together with all the crops and stock, and utensils thereon. Also, my house and lot in Town, fitted up as a boarding establishment. . . . Also about forty servants, mostly young and likely, and rapidly increasing in number and value. To a kind master, I would put the whole property at the reduced price of thirty-five thousand dollars, and arrange the payment entirely to suit the purchaser, provided, the interest be annually paid." *Religious Herald* quoted in *Western Christian* 24 October 1849, quoted in Foss and Mathews (1850, pp. 359–60).
- 21 Jones-Rogers (2019); Maria Carter Harrison Broadus letters at "Jefferson's University, the Early Life", http://juel.iath.virginia.edu/context_person?keyword1=&person=48379&key=P48379&eventchoice=Event+type&ms=all (accessed on 12 April 2023); Fuller (2000).
- 22 Curry (1859). Jabez Curry the ardent defender of slavery and secessionist served in the Confederate Congress and Confederate army. He was elected president of the Alabama Baptist Convention in 1865 and continued holding "numerous high posts in the Southern Baptist Convention" and at Richmond College. Curry opposed Reconstruction, resented Southern states re-joining the Union, and opposed expansion of the franchise. His advocacy for education of African Americans in the 1880s was "motivated by white Southern interests and not with the presumption of racial equality". The year he died, 1903, Alabama's white political leaders chose Curry as their first "hero" to be recognized in the National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol; a white marble statue of the Southern Baptist was completed and erected in 1906. The University of Virginia named the Curry School of Education for him. Bailey (2007/2015); Alabama Men's Hall of Fame. Samford University (n.d.).
- 23 Heck (1913, p. 269). Mary Eugenia's pastor at First Baptist in Washington, Georgia, was planter-pastor Henry Allen Tupper.
- 24 "my negro woman, named Candis" ad in Tuscaloosa newspaper hunting a woman "about twenty-eight years old, five feet three or four inches high, and stout built, of dark brown complexion. She has on her right wrist a small rising similar to a wen. A liberal reward will be given for her apprehension and safe confinement so that I may be enabled to get her". Tuscaloosa Independent Monitor (1840).
- 25 Heck (1913, p. 69). This example was likely the Sunday School Union's catechism.
- 26 Ryland boasted he pastored thousands of black people because he counted the number of people enslaved by white church members. He told the Triennial Convention that Virginia Baptists would gladly grant freedom to a black minister to go Africa as a missionary if the Convention paid them \$200 first. Ryland took a man to Philadelphia and paraded him to the Convention, saying, "Now here is a chance for you who are so anxious for the slave, to try your liberality", turning the Triennial Convention into a slave market. M. D. Miller, *Vermont Observer*, 1845, quoted in Foss and Mathews (1850, pp. 96–97).
- 27 Basil Manly, Sr., "Procuring a Nurse" in Fuller (2000) 240; Jones-Rogers (2019), "'Wet Nurse for Sale or Hire" 101–22.
- 28 MCFD 1848–1865, note 4 March 1854.
- 29 Generations of writers would explore some of the psychological issues among children of slaveholders that resulted from forming bonds with nurses they were later told were inappropriate; observing injustices and abuses; perhaps perpetrating abuses; feeling guilt, shame, remorse, or self-loathing; deciding to accept or reject their culture's obsession with bloodlines (sex and race). Coincidentally or not, mental illness plagued Sarah's son Basil Jr., who recorded passages contending with depression and feelings of insanity, and at least two of his sons. One of them committed suicide at the University of Virginia. Another was committed to an "insane" asylum after years of inappropriate public behavior, "excessive masturbation" around others, and "unpleasant familiarities" with his female cousins (J. Manley (1999, pp. 12, 27–30, 88, 107, 272, 279–86)). Basil Jr.'s wife was molested by her guardian uncle, one of Alabama's largest slaveholders of 235 people (L. Manly 1898, pp. 6–7). Family friend Edmonia Moon who grew up on a slave plantation in Virginia, mentally unraveled in China and eventually committed suicide (Crawford 1852–1881; Sullivan 2011, p. 196, n40; Allen 1980, pp. 258–61, 281, n53).

- 30 Forret (2012); Mueller (2017) on mechanics (recursive language, mindsets) of social epistemologies of ignorance and racism in institutional structures and everyday life, especially “willful blindness”, “evasion”, “tautological ignorance”, and “mystified solutions” that existed for generations.
- 31 Examples from or married into families who owned slaves or defended the practice: Harriet Almira Baker, Isabella Hall Toby, Eliza Moring Yates, Martha Foster Crawford, Frances Elizabeth Patrick Percy, Elvira Adkisson Cabaniss, Lurana Davis Bowen, Olivia Elizabeth Barkley Lacy, Clara E. Warner Priest, Mary Eugenia Canfield Reid, Elizabeth Jewett Hartwell, Susan J. Broadus Stone, Anna M. Bennett Burton, Susan Sexton Taylor, Edmonia Moon, Lottie Moon, Justa Buck Greer David. More work should be done about them and Keziah Turpin Clopton, Virginia Young Roberts, Eliza Sexton Shuck, Fannie Dennard, Fannie C. Phillips, Mary E. Morehead Trimble, Sallie Little Holmes, Sarah Robinson Rohrer, and more. On the FMB’s complicated relationships with antebellum black missionaries, such as Polly Day, see Flowers (2008).
- 32 Being the household mistress meant vying with other mistresses, and SBC missionaries’ fraught interactions and power struggles with each other often reflected the social competitions in the Bible Belt where matriarchs and patriarchs competed to be the patron at the top of the social pyramid, based on number of dependents, “servants”, and others in one’s debt. MFC 1852–1870; McCurry (1995).
- 33 *Christian Index* published the letters in 1853–1856, quoted in Lewis (2000), pp. 491–92; 478, n8.
- 34 Diagram by T. J. Bowen sent to FMB, Lewis (2000, pp. 485, 490).
- 35 SBC missionaries in Tengchow (Penglai) also used “pistol evangelism” to obtain and occupy property. Orianna Moon, celebrated by Southern Baptists as a “Confederate doctor,” spent the rest of her life regaling people with stories about her use of a revolver during her “self-funded” mission adventure in the Middle East in the late 1850s. Scottsville Museum (n.d.).
- 36 Henry M. Robert supported ministries to improve living conditions of Chinese immigrants, women’s rights, and a Society for the Rescue of Fallen Women. Silk (2021).
- 37 Foss and Mathews (1850, p. 313). The American Baptist Free Mission Society formed in the early 1840s and lobbied other Baptists to stop accepting slaveholders’ “blood-money” donations or appointing slaveholding missionary volunteers. They published *Facts for Baptist Churches* naming Baptist slaveholders and numbers of people they held in bondage, quoting their ads in Baptists newspapers to recapture “runaways”.
- 38 See for example further research about Margaret Foreman Hartwell and her daughters Maria Rebecca Hartwell Haynes, who died at seventy-one in 1892 in De Soto, Louisiana; Ann Judson Hartwell Alison who died in 1891 at age sixty-four; Mary Ellen Hartwell Gibbs who died in 1908 at seventy-three; and Ellen Cox Hartwell Edwards who died in 1902 at age seventy-four. Ellen was known in SBC records as “Mrs. Robert G. Edwards” as she continued living at the family home at “Society Hill” in Darlington, South Carolina, exerting influence in the “sisterhood of our Southern Zion” and WMU. Hartwell Family Papers.
- 39 Heck (1913, pp. 70–72). The Boyces, Broaduses, Burtons, Cranes, Currys, Eagles, Earlys, Greers, Graveses, Gwathmeys, Hatchers, Hartwells, Hecks, Houstons, Jeters, Joneses, Manlys, Moons, Rylands, Toys, and Tappers were just a handful of examples of the more expansive network.
- 40 “Southern Baptists assumed the role of a cultural establishment by sanctifying a secular order devoted to states’ rights, white supremacy, laissez faire economics, and property rights” alongside their home missions. Eighmy (1972), p. x; “religiosity”, Maxwell and Shields (2019, pp. 15–16).
- 41 Heck (1913). The Lost Cause mythology fused various factors to explain and insist that “if the Confederacy could not have won [the war], it somehow did not lose”. Nolan (2000, p. 17); Leonard (2018).
- 42 Nash (2005), p. 140. On Southern Baptists’ *mythos* of “chosen-ness”, exceptionalism, triumphalism, and “powerful denominational self-consciousness”, see Leonard (1990, pp. 25–26).
- 43 Confederados described in Mexico and South America in Heck (1913). The *Religious Herald* chronicled Jeremiah Jeter’s trips to Canada where the Jefferson Davis family still had supporters during his trial for treason; Sheehy (2017). “Old Path” Baptist associations of ex-Confederates formed new churches across various Southern states. Blevins (2019, p. 149); State Historical Society of Missouri (n.d.). Some of the “Old Path” became Landmarkers and maintained tense relationships with other Southern Baptists over missions bureaucracy and who could claim to be a “Southern Baptist”, but they were all devoted to the Lost Cause. Martha Foster Crawford’s husband’s memoir, which she helped write with her nephew, another SBC minister, was dedicated “to all persons everywhere who love ‘the old paths’ and seek to walk therein”. “Dedication”, *My Fifty Years in China*.
- 44 Baker’s story-telling often blended or exaggerated facts with fiction. Silvertale (1873); Death of an Authoress (1889); She Died Neglected (1889). With appreciation to Kyndal Owens, Archives and Records Specialist, International Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, for assistance.
- 45 See the Holmes, Yates, Hartwell, Crawford, and Graves families in China, for example, where SBC missionaries had scouted cotton mills for FMB members in the early 1850s, according to MFC Diaries. During the U. S. war, most male SBC missionaries in China did business there and earned profits to sustain their missions as “self-supporting”.
- 46 These included Corinthia Read Williams, member of Red Bank Baptist Church, who came from an Eastern Shore “plantation family”, according to “Mrs. J. W. M. Williams” in Blanche Sydnor White’s 1966 hagiography *Far Above Rubies* published by Woman’s Missionary Union of Maryland. Another was wealthy Ann Baker Graves, whose two sons served in the Confederate

army and whose other son Rosewell was an SBC missionary in China. Fannie Heck exaggeratedly credited Graves with single-handedly coming up with the idea of Woman's Work for Woman by which American Christian women would have "a way to the heathen home, the citadel of heathenism". Heck (1913) 94. An author of popular conservative advice manuals and an advocate of female education, Graves maintained "there cannot be a shadow of doubt" that for a woman the "home is appropriate and appointed sphere of action". She asserted that "the imperatives given in scripture" were as "explicit" as "the dictates of nature are plain and imperative on this subject" of women's submission to men. A wife "must not assume to herself any right of participation with him in the management or control of civil or political affairs", Graves wrote. She denounced women she called "ultra-reformers and social disorganizers", declaring they were "justly condemned" for "draw[ing] woman from her appropriate sphere" in the home and church. L. Allen (2005).

47 SBC Annual (1845–2023): Tupper, "Foreign Mission Board Report" 42; Heck (1913, p. 102).

48 "Discretionary income", Allen (1980), p. 56; Davis portrait, Crawford 1/28/1876.

49 J. B. Hartwell to Eliza J. Hartwell 25 August 1864, 3 July 1864, 9 April 1864. Further research beckons scholars about the Hartwell sisters in Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Louisiana before and after the war. Hartwell Family Papers.

50 Crawford, 15 April 1865, 31 March 1865, 27 May 1865, 17 June 1865. SBC missionaries in China during the U. S. Civil War continued to reflect the views of those they represented. Some opposed war because they wanted the Union to allow the Confederacy of slaveholders to leave without a fight. Some opposed secession, hoping the Union would allow slaveholders to continue to be decision-makers about slavery. The majority considered themselves citizens or allies of the Confederate States of America.

51 Crawford, 20 June 1865. "Now the miserable drunken traitor Johnson is president of the United States!" Crawford, 8 June 1865.

52 See *Southern Baptist Foreign Missions* (Ray 1910, pp. 35, 38).

53 The first life-long member of the National Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) from Alabama was an African American professor at Tuskegee Institute. Williams (2023).

54 *Robert's Rules* were produced in 1876 by Henry M. Robert, an American Baptist whose parents had left the family slave plantation in South Carolina to become anti-slavery advocates in Ohio. He supported ministries to improve living conditions of Chinese immigrants, women's rights, and a Society for the Rescue of Fallen Women. Silk (2021).

55 Eagle also chaired the Exposition's Committee on Woman's Congresses and edited the official volume of papers presented at the Woman's Pavilion during the Exposition. C. F. Williams (2017); Eagle (1894).

56 Lee and Manly ([1895] 1899, pp. 578–81; 553–54, 565). Accompanying, rich illustrations of "New Inventions Contrasted with the Old" evoked both nostalgia and technological possibilities.

57 "Mrs. Kate Tichenor Dill" (n.d.) Parallels were found among Southern Presbyterians. See, for example, Pollack (1971).

58 DAR romanticized "the southern plantation" and "mammies" as much as SBC leaders did. A DAR leader asked Southern white members in 1900 "how many of you Southern women remember her with tenderest affection, the blessed old mammy of your childhood". DAR supported UDC's Arlington Monument of 1914 that "heralded Confederate patriots as American patriots on the basis that they too were preservers of 'Anglo-Saxon' civilization". Cooper and Law (2021).

59 Commemorations of "Martha Washington's recipes", for example. Tyree (1879), pp. vii–viii; Arendt (2020, pp. 162–64).

60 "our narrative", Robertson (1901, p. 11). Controlling the narrative about slave uprisings in the 1830s was part of Lost Cause mythology attempting to explain why so many Baptists became more anti-abolition and devoted to slaveholding in and after this decade.

61 *Atlanta Constitution* (1/2/1925) 18; Faust (1990). The Southern Historical Society Papers, like *The Religious Herald*, need further mining for the scope of SBC women's roles in Confederate Lost Cause mythology.

62 This particular SBC fraternity (there were several) included Julia Anna Toy's husband John Johnson and Julia's brother Crawford Toy of whom William was especially "fond." Parsons (2019, pp. 24–33); Moore (2019, pp. 15–17). Nannie Boyce Tupper's husband commiserated with Julia Anna's friend Lottie Moon about "your love for Dr. Toy, which cannot be greater than mine for I love him with the love of a woman". Allen (1980, p. 138). Such language that was not uncommon among SBC men in the nineteenth century.

63 Soldiers' diaries recorded "very palatable and abundant meals, nicely cooked and of a fine variety" delivered by slaves. Jones (1876). Further research beckons regarding Lost Cause writing by Judith Jones and other women in the *Southern Historical Papers*, *Religious Herald*, and the SBTS's early *Review & Expositor*.

64 L. Manly (1895); Lee and Manly ([1895] 1899). Manly co-wrote the latter with teacher Susan Pendleton Lee of Lexington, Virginia, a cousin of William Jones, and member of the extended Lee family by marriage, at the epicenter of Baptist-Episcopalian Confederate myth-making in Virginia. The book copied some material from Manly's Southern Literature and presumably some of Lee's other Lost Cause textbooks. B. F. Johnson in Richmond originally published *Lee's Advanced History of the United States* in 1895 alongside J. T. Derry's *Story of the Confederate States: or, History of the War for Southern Independence*. This paper cites the 1899 reprinted edition. Louise Manly partnered with They praised white women like themselves writing hagiographical memorials that "made biography more charming and more instructive than romance", such as "Mrs. Smedes' 'Memoir of a Southern Planter'". Lee and Manly ([1895] 1899, pp. 16–20, 583).

- 65 See Manley (1999, p. 95).
- 66 “Mrs. Smedes’ ‘Memoir of a Southern Planter’” cited. Lee and Manly ([1895] 1899, pp. 16–20, 583).
- 67 Lee and Manly ([1895] 1899, pp. 358, 378). John C. Calhoun was presented as “the illustrious statesman” and champion of other secession leaders called “the gravest and wisest” citizens, concerned only about “honor of their States” and “the righteousness of her cause”. Lee and Manly ([1895] 1899, pp. 351–52, 366–67).
- 68 Manly pointed out that Virginia lawmakers “had nearly done so in 1832”, but she ignored what all Virginia lawmakers did after 1832 to preserve slavery. Lee and Manly ([1895] 1899, pp. 315–16).
- 69 Manly decried the 1846–47 Wilmot Proviso that prohibited slavery in new territories for “shut[ting] up the Southern people with their slaves to the States which they already occupied; while the Northern States, with their population already changing in character by foreign immigration, would get all the power in the government”. Lee and Manly ([1895] 1899, pp. 315–16).
- 70 SBC Annual (1845–2023): “Foreign Mission Board Report”, pp. 49–51.
- 71 Manly (1895) quoting Henry Grady, pp. 413–19, “but” emphasis added.
- 72 For example, “it may have been presented as Christian/missions/evangelism, *but* it was chattel slavery”.
- 73 The book was introduced by popular pastor Lansing Burrows, a hero of the WMU for his support of the sisterhood of “our Southern Zion.” A Confederate veteran, son of a Convention founder, and 1871 Princeton graduate, Burrows pastored wealthy SBC churches and facilitated publication of Wright’s book by the American Baptist Publication Society. A leading “reconciler” who helped mainstream the postwar SBC, Burrows remained an “apologist for the Old South” who “maintained white Southerners had been in the right” and lamented the passing of what he considered the South’s “Golden Age”. Gourley (2017, pp. 110–11).
- 74 Wright later became dean of the female Baptist Institute for Christian Workers in Philadelphia and the first female officer of the Pennsylvania Baptist Convention. Jones (2021).
- 75 The “dazzling white” main house resembling “southern Italy” with “Greek portico of Doric columns high in the air;” its lake with swans and an island with Corinthian temples “for festive occasions;” the multiple arbors, fountains, galleries of expensive paintings and sculptures; the leisured “amusements” of slaveholders in “olden times” such as “driving, riding, hunting, visiting, eating, dancing, talking love and politics”. L. Manly (1898, pp. 2–3).
- 76 See note 39.
- 77 Charlotte Whitfield Manly attended the same college as Margaret Lea Houston, Adeline Smyly Catts, and Georgia Jenkins Burlison. Louise Manly’s *History of Judson College* was also a Lost Cause project (1913).
- 78 Louise Manly, who never married, moved to Florida around the same time as Eddie Moon and the Catts family and opened a women’s college in Ocala. J. Manley (1999, p. 274).
- 79 Du Bose described slaveholders’ “wives and daughters” as “polished as *pillars* of the temple.” Du Bose (1892, p. 87); Manly (1898, p. 4).
- 80 Moon to “My dear Bettie”, Sullivan (2011, pp. 133–34, 209, n55).
- 81 Lee and Manly ([1895] 1899, pp. 335, 435). On “negrophobia” in which “white people [came] to fear black people as after their lives, their liberties, and their happiness”, see Newton (2019, pp. 303, 312).
- 82 Lee and Manly ([1895] 1899). Louise’s father bought a plantation of enslaved people in Greenville near the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary during the war and employed overseers to manage them. Overseers of at least twenty slaves were exempt from military service by Confederate law, so to keep the overseers he wanted, Basil Jr. decided, “I must contrive, somehow to have 20 negroes on the place. . . . I reckon I must hire someway enough darkies to make up the constitutional number.” He had inherited ownership of people in Alabama, but he complained that the total, “21 little and big”, were not all in Greenville. When the plantation was not profitable, partially because one of the overseers was embezzling and side-selling the meat and corn, Basil Jr. sold the plantation and people and bought another one near what had been John C. Calhoun’s home. Manley (1999, pp. 181–85).
- 83 To counter what Emancipation and Reconstruction meant to those who had been enslaved, Manly promulgated another Lost Cause trope that “the negroes . . . quickly reduced” land redistributed by federal authorities “to rank wilderness or barren deserts”. Lee and Manly ([1895] 1899, p. 437). Claims that those who had been cultivating the land did not know how to maintain it were absurd. War, cotton monoculture, and slaveholders’ resistance to cooperation contributed to environmental problems brought about by slaveholders. Mauldin (2018).
- 84 Manley (1999, p. 199, n31). Basil Manly Jr. said, “Let the negroes vote” because “We can control their votes, as they will be more concerned for bread and meat, to please those from whom they got their living, than to sustain the abstractions of the Radical Party” (Manley (1999, pp. 197–98)).
- 85 Lile (2020) 59; “memorial of Mary Faison Dixon” (c1922).
- 86 Hill (1898) “Hints to Housekeepers” 395, 129. Without forced laborers transporting food and water from storehouses and kitchens to the main house, the introduction to Hill’s book urged men to change houses’ architecture to bring pantries, kitchens, and dining spaces closer together.

- 87 Hill (1872, 1898); Fowler (1995); Veit (2015) 161–205; Tipton-Martin (2015); Deetz (2017). Malinda Russell (1866), who had been enslaved, published her own recipes from “Southern culture” a year before Hill’s, one of the first cookbooks by an African American woman in her own name.
- 88 The Warren Memorial Hospital in Shandong treated scores of Chinese patients for several decades. Flynt and Berkley (1997, pp. 183, 187, 382, n92); C. Jones (2021).
- 89 Lile (2020); *Favorite Southern Recipes* with “recipes . . . copied from Mrs. Robert E. Lee’s book of recipes in her own handwriting,” Washington and Lee University (1937).
- 90 William Carey Crane published the biography of Sam that Margaret Houston, a devoted Southern Baptist, wanted in order to make Sam appear more pious. Crane (1884); Cantrell (1993).
- 91 Hutchison (2007, pp. 604–8); Roller and Twyman (1979, pp. 364–65). The 1853 “Alabama State Bible” that was used for the 1861 CSA inauguration was continuously used to swear in every Alabama governor thereafter, including Kay Ivey, a Southern Baptist, in 2017. Her pastor at First Baptist, Montgomery, held it for her because she did not have a heterosexual spouse to participate. Sharp (2019). At Auburn University’s Baptist Student Union in the early 1960s, Ivey performed a “comedy” skit dressed as a “pickaninny” in overalls crawling around on the floor. As governor she issued an apology calling it “deeply regrettable” and pledged “I will do all I can going to forward to assure the nation that the Alabama today is a far cry from the Alabama of the 1960s”. In 2021 Ivey posted on Twitter, “We have permanently BANNED Critical Race Theory in Alabama. We’re focused on teaching our children how to read and write, not HATE”. In 2023 Ivey fired a black woman she appointed to direct state Early Childhood Education for refusing to purge teacher material Ivey called “woke” and “divisive” about slavery and systemic racism. Ivey was emulated by Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders, an SBC pastor’s daughter, who on her first day in office banned teaching about slavery and racism critically. Taylor (2019); @kayiveyforgov (2021); Morris (2023); Sanders (2023).
- 92 “A story-hour with them is a perfect delight”. Robertson (1921, p. 74).
- 93 Kathleen Mallory, “The Author”, Robertson (1941, p. 9).
- 94 Hall (1993, pp. 177, 345, n42). Published in 1921 by Messenger Book House in Oklahoma, *TMOW* came off the press the year white mobs massacred African Americans and destroyed homes and businesses in Tulsa. Williams (1972).
- 95 ‘Remember, my son, you are polite to another man, not because he is a gentleman, but because you are one’. Robertson (1930, p. 95).
- 96 There were parallels among Southern Presbyterians. A 1971 biography of the Southern Presbyterian in-laws of Southern Baptist evangelist Billy Graham mirrored SBC hagiography, beginning with “Old Virginia” Lost Cause mythologies perpetuated by family genealogists. The “Heritage” chapter emphasized endogamous networks, “hero” Robert E. Lee, and the family’s continued ownership of “Belvidere” plantation after the war. Nelson Bell, who became a medical missionary, Graham’s father-in-law and co-founder of *Christianity Today*, “taught” daughter Ruth “the old plantation dialect to perfection”. His wife Virginia “read the Uncle Remus books as only a Southerner could,” and the Bells’ North Kiangsu quartet “became quite famous in missionary circles” for their minstrel shows. They “would dress up as minstrels and sing the old plantation songs with local parodies.” According to family lore, “other nationalities loved to hear ‘Dixie’ sung with the appropriate make-up [black face] and Southern dialect [black voice]”. The book also included Lost Cause anecdotes about Confederate women’s “spunk” and resistance to federal soldiers, popular anecdotes among SBC audiences. Graham wrote the “Foreword”. Pollack (1971, pp. 20, 88, 90).
- 97 Apparently, a specialty of long-time SBC missionary in China, Wesley W. Lawton, praised by John Broadus. Harvey (1994, pp. 210, 219, n13).
- 98 See Warwick H. Jenkins Family (n.d.).
- 99 See Warwick H. Jenkins Family (n.d.); Harper and Hoch (2021); Parsons and Chaves (2023, p. 109).
- 100 E.g., the Foreign Mission Board, the Home Mission Board, Woman’s Missionary Union, the Sunday School Board, the Cooperative Program, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, and state convention operations. In 1969 WMU leaders continued encouraging members of Girls Auxiliaries to don “an old-fashioned dress like Miss [Lottie] Moon” to raise money for their missions. Allen (1969, pp. 16–17).

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Article

Reclaiming Voices: We Sent Women First

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Abstract: “We sent women first” could well describe Australian Baptist mission history. Australian Baptist State associations were formed in the crucible of 19th-century history, shaped by divisive issues of their British Baptist heritage and the colonial influences as each pursued an independent identity. Mission work in Bengal, India, inspired by William Carey, the BMS and BZA traditions, was the common factor, and in the six independent Australian Baptist Missionary Societies, women were sent first, starting with two from South Australia in 1882. The first man (also from South Australia) joined eleven of these women for their first ‘Convention’ in 1887.

Keywords: gender roles; zenana; ‘Paradise of Dissent’; South Australia; Bengal; Five Barley Loaves; cheaper option; migrants and currency lasses; cultural captivity

1. Introduction

We sent women first could well describe Australian Baptist mission history (Cupit et al. 2014). Australian Baptists were formed in the crucible of Nineteenth-Century migration history, shaped by divisive issues of their British Baptist heritage and the complex colonial influences as each Australasian colony pursued an independent identity (Manley 2006). Women were more available in Baptist churches, for at the time, there was a lack of trained ministers for the churches that had formed. Women themselves were receiving more education, and there was an increased development of factory-produced food, which freed daughters from domestic duties and provided alternative options for employment.

Mission work in Bengal initiated by William Carey, the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), with its iconic Serampore Trio of Carey, Ward and Marshman and the Baptist Zenana Mission (BZM),¹ were the common influences for the six colonial Australasian (Australian and New Zealand) Baptist Mission Societies. Women missionaries were sent first, starting with two, Marie Gilbert and Ellen Arnold, from South Australia (SA) in 1882. Then, in 1885, there were the ‘Five Barley Loaves’ (Ellen Arnold, Alice Pappin (SA), Ruth Wilkin and Marian Fuller (Victoria) and Martha Plested (Queensland)). The following year, they were joined by Rosalie Macgeorge (New Zealand). The first man, Arthur Summers, also from SA, travelled out to India with Annie Newcombe and Jessie Clelland (Victoria), Faye Denness and Agnes Pearce (SA) to join the first ‘Convention’ in 1887 on their arrival. Two years later, in 1889, nine of them, representing five different societies, negotiated their independence from the BMS when they were visited by A. H. Baynes (BMS General Secretary) from Britain and George Kerry, their BMS advisor from Calcutta. The BMS agreed to redeploy their missionary couples to other work. Small was beautiful, and it was to be a bite-sized area they could attempt.

In 1898, which was 16 years later and a time when it seemed men would be able to have the majority vote at that annual Convention, Ellen Arnold wrote a short review for readers in Australia of the changes that came with the presence of so many men.² Based on this article and other of her writings, the voice I want to reclaim is that of Arnold (1856–1931), a migrant from Birmingham, England, to Adelaide, SA, via New Zealand and Melbourne. Also, this article will refer to the perspectives of her women colleagues.

She was a pioneer, along with Marie Gilbert, of this group of eleven Baptist women missionaries from Australia and New Zealand who reached Bengal, India, in 1882 before



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any Baptist men from Australia were available to be sent to India. She was sent under the ministry of Rev. Silas Mead from Flinders Street Baptist Church.

Although Arnold (1883) was repatriated for ill health in 1883, after less than two years in India³, she was eventually to serve there for 49 years. In 1897, when men missionaries had eventually achieved a majority at the worker's Conference, she wrote a defence advocating a legitimate but different way single women worked.⁴

2. Australasia in the 1800s

Despite Australasia⁵ having some of the oldest human communities on the globe with their deep attachment to country and distinctive spiritual perception, it was not until British and other European explorers were sailing into unknown southern territories of Oceania that there was any chance of Australia or New Zealand being a "new home of British Baptists" (Thompson 1982, p. 2).

The American War of Independence in the 1770s–1780s pushed Britain to look for other recipient destinations for their convicts. The First Fleet was sent to Sydney in 1788 with 850 convicts and their guards. Some free settlers later were able to buy their passages. Tasmania was settled in 1830. The last convicts arrived in New South Wales (NSW) in 1852 and in Western Australia in 1868. By then, the colony of South Australia, settled in 1836, was struggling economically to survive.

Plans for the settlement of South Australia were different. There were to be no convicts, only free migrants:

In 1834, the South Australian Colonisation Act was passed in the United Kingdom, leading to the British colonisation of land that is now the state of South Australia. The 1834 Act empowered the King to establish South Australia as a British Province, initially as a commercial and administrative partnership between the British government and the SA Colonisation Commission. The province was to be designed for migrants, not convicts and was to be funded by the sale of land to the wealthy and to investors. This money in turn would partially fund the transport of labourers and other workers to the colony. The South Australia Act of 1842 repealed the earlier Act and made South Australia an official British Crown Colony. The South Australian Company, formed in London in 1835, made a significant contribution to the foundation and settlement of South Australia. It was founded by George Fife Angas and other wealthy British merchants. Its immediate purpose was to encourage the purchase, in advance, of land in the planned colony.⁶

South Australia was proclaimed as a colony on 28 December 1836 at Glenelg by Governor Hindmarsh.

Douglas Pike, in his definitive research on the founding of South Australia, called his book *Paradise of Dissent, South Australia 1829–1857* (Pike 1967). A promised freedom of religion for Dissenters, or Non-Conformists, was attractive to many from Britain, including Baptists.

George Fife Angas (Hodder 1891) and David McLaren (Hughes 1937) were early members of the South Australian Company, and both were Baptists. Angas was very influential in early Dissenter developments in South Australia and in attracting colonists. He is most known for enabling German migration to South Australia. His promotion of the new colony to church communities was prolific. He was very involved in the anti-slavery discussions before SA was formed. Dissenters were attracted particularly by promises of unknown freedoms of worship not granted them in Britain (Pike 1967). This resulted in South Australia having one of the highest percentages of Dissenters or Non-Conformists in the British world, even though they did not reach a majority. Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians were well represented. Baptists were mainly merchants and a source of young potential labour for the developing community (Hilliard 2024, p. 8). The city of

Adelaide is, even today, referred to as the ‘City of Churches’, much to the dissatisfaction of the present tourism advocates.

Angas’s vision was not just that South Australia be a place of civil and religious liberty but a headquarters for the diffusion of Christianity to the Southern Hemisphere. McLaren, as well as his work for the SA Company, pastored an early group of Baptists. Two of the earliest Baptists to the colony were William and Helen Harvey Finlayson; coming with a passion for reaching the Aboriginals but limited by language skills, they were invited by McLaren to work for the SA Company. One of their granddaughters, Ethel Ambrose, went to India as a missionary doctor with the Poona and India Village Mission (PIVM).

Those early Baptists who travelled to SA were described by later leaders in separatist terms. “They showed a most unhappy tendency to quarrel over their beliefs and practices and to separate . . . without really sufficient reason” (Hughes 1937, p. 25). Open or closed membership and open or closed communion were common, but their natural links with the Congregationalists were complicated, for they shared a common theology of churchmanship, with the responsibility of the whole local membership to discern the purposes of God, but they disagreed on believer’s baptism by immersion.

3. Immigrants and Currency Lasses

Early mission advocates were convinced that the experiences of migration were a bonus for prospective missionaries. They had experienced separation from loved ones, communities and churches. They had experienced months of uncomfortable sea travel. They were now living in much closer proximity to the great unreached mission fields of India, China and Japan.

The Arnolds, Alfred and Ellen Jane nee Seager, who migrated to South Australia in 1879, brought a family of eight children; Ellen, their eldest, was 20 at the time. Her father, a jeweller from Birmingham, came to Adelaide for the health of his wife. Ellen was an initial student of the first Teachers College in Adelaide in 1880.

Similarly, her colleague, Marie Jerome Gilbert, arrived in Melbourne with her mother and two sisters in 1864 on the *Champion of the Seas*. The passenger list records Carolyn Gilbert, matron; Marie Gilbert, seven years; Hannah, four and Louisa, one [month]. The family stayed in Victoria until Marie came to Teachers College in 1880 in Adelaide, accompanied by her mother and sister Louisa from Aberdeen Street Baptist Church, Geelong.

Of the first nine women who joined the work in Bengal, most were immigrants. Alice Pappin was the earliest exception in that she was born in SA (Schwarze 2024, p. 121) and so could be described as a “currency lass”, an affectionate term for the first generation of female colonialists born in Australia (currency lads was also used). Bertha Tuck was also SA-born. They all knew their family history of parents or even grandparents. The stories of shipwrecks and boring food supplied on board were part of their collective family memory, augmented by their travel to India.

4. South Australia and Silas Mead

Angas of the SA Company was also concerned for the pastoral care of churches, and in 1861, he and a group of SA Baptists arranged for the recruitment of a pastor for a Baptist Church to be established in the City Business District (as distinct from North Adelaide, which was more residential, and where there was already the North Adelaide Baptist Church). Silas Mead’s arrival in 1861 marked a new era for Baptist consolidation, co-operation and associational action in Adelaide. At the time, British Baptist interests still focussed on India, the jewel in the British crown, and the main object of their global support was the BMS work begun by William Carey.

Mead had trained theologically under Joseph Angus at Stepney College in London and alongside future Indian missionaries. But he was not content just to form an auxiliary for the London Society and send support to the BMS. The SA Baptists formed a denominational Association in 1863, and just a year later, on 10 November 1864, formed the South Australian Baptist Missionary Society (SABMS). At the time, there was no Australian

Baptist missionary society in other colonies nor attempts to unite Australian Baptists, no settled sphere for missionary work, and no workers accepted. But SABMS, and particularly Mead, after considering Samoa in the Pacific, arranged that BMS workers in India would enable the SABMS to take responsibility for work in the district of Faridpur (Furreedpore)⁷ in what was then called East Bengal.⁸ The SABMS work from 1864 was financing Indian workers who were supervised by the BMS missionaries from the nearby Barisal District or from Calcutta. Regular reports were received from their workers and published in the South Australian Baptist newsletter *Truth and Progress* (another of Mead's SA initiatives).

5. Victorian Baptist Developments

On the other hand, the traditions of Baptist missionary work had different roots in Victoria. BMS missionaries from India came to Australia, particularly Victoria, rather than going home to recuperate from ill health. James Smith (from Delhi) and James Chamberlain Page (from Barisal) both stirred up support for Bengal, India, and were catalysts for the particular societies formed in SA and Victoria in 1864–65. Page had reached an understanding that Victoria would concentrate on Mymensingh District while he would supervise preachers for the SABMS in Faridpur.

James Martin, the minister who came to Collins Street Church in 1869, was accompanied by his wife, Hannah. She had been a member of the BZM that had formed in London on 23 May 1866 by a group of women following the release of a pamphlet by Mrs. C.B. Lewis, "The Plea of Zenanas". Hannah Martin also had contacts with the BMS missionary wives who were supervising zenana work among Indian women. She had been part of the support in Britain, had brought out a hundred copies of the Lewis's pamphlet to Melbourne, and got in touch with the workers in Calcutta. She started an auxiliary of the BZM in Victorian churches to help finance workers. Marie Gilbert actually approached her with an offer of her service for the BZM, and Hannah Martin approached them, recommending her wholeheartedly. The BZM accepted Gilbert's offer, providing the financial support came from Australia, but Gilbert's home church, Aberdeen Street, Geelong, was involved in a building programme. Gilbert's application lapsed, and she moved to Adelaide and that first Teachers College.

6. Visit of Panchanon Biswas—The "Real Live Indian" Christian

The first convert resulting from the South Australian work in Faridpur, Panchanon Biswas had studied in Serampore and then returned to work in Faridpur for the SABMS. He met Mead, who visited Faridpur following his first wife's death in 1874. Later, Mead invited Panchanon Babu to visit Adelaide in the summer months of 1881. He was heard by Ellen Arnold at Flinders Street Church. Arnold wrote later, "I heard him say that they wanted a school in Furreedpore so immediately the thought came 'There's hope for me yet' and perhaps I could be self-supporting and so no burden to the society, [I] told God about it and left it".⁹ She said nothing to Mead until she discovered that Marie Gilbert had already offered to go and women in the Church were telling Arnold she should accompany Gilbert. Biswas went on to encourage mission interest and support in the other States, encouraging the women particularly to be concerned for the women of India and to support such work.

7. The Pioneers—Marie Gilbert and Ellen Arnold

Both Gilbert and Arnold, young schoolteachers who had very limited teaching experience, were bought out of their financial bonds to the SA Education Department. The rules were that for the provision of their training, teachers had to agree to teach for three years or refund a pro-rata amount. It cost the SABMS GBP 48 for Gilbert and presumably the same for Arnold. They were given a few weeks of medical observation at Adelaide Hospital, organized by Dr Hone, one of the doctors from Flinders Street Baptist Church.

They were farewelled at Flinders Street Baptist Church (FSBC) on 26 October 1882. Both refused to sit on the church platform or speak and left Mead to read their written messages. Women speaking could not have been the issue; maybe it was youthful reticence

or expected modesty, for by this time, Mead had hosted meetings at FSBC with Emilie Baeyertz, a converted Jew, and also booked the larger Adelaide Town Hall for meetings, but that is another story (Gooden et al. 2023, pp. 94–96).

Gilbert and Arnold departed on 28 October from Glenelg, arriving in Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka) on 14 November 1882, then Calcutta on 5 December 1882. They were just in time to attend the Decennial Missionary Conference for India/Burma (Anonymous 1883). This was a conference of 475 mission representatives from 27 Societies to which women had been invited for the first time. They heard some of the most current thinking on zenana mission work. Ellen, in her hand-written diary, wrote “At 10 a.m. the ladies meeting—all lady missionaries, who gave first class addresses which were ‘to the point’. We gained much knowledge as to methods of work and were impressed with the desirability of missionaries obtaining medical knowledge”.¹⁰ Also, “. . . An additional ladies meeting in the evening. Rather flat, owing to some old men getting up & holding forth without saying anything . . .”.¹¹ It was significant that Panchanon Biswas met them again there and the three of them were registered at the Conference as representing SABMS.

Mead had arranged for them to live with Rev. George and Mrs. Marie Kerry and family in Calcutta, attend Bengali Language classes while living on the BMS compound and learn how to work in that context. Meanwhile, a house was being built under Panchanon Biswas’s supervision for them in Faridpur. Arnold and Gilbert moved to Faridpur in January 1884, where they were nurtured by Panchanon Babu, his wife and family and the other SABMS preacher, Kailash Chandra Mitra, who, after years of working alongside Arnold, wrote her Bengali biography. In Arnold’s first letter from Faridpur¹², she is full of excitement at the people they were meeting: students, people of the British community (who came for a noon service on their first Sunday), Bengali enquirers and questioners. She and Gilbert prayed as one or the other met and spoke to a wide range of individuals. Their basic consistent message was the need for specific, persistent prayer, for which Arnold was prepared to supply them with details in all letters she sent.

But all too soon, Arnold was sick, having to return to Australia an invalid, while Gilbert stayed in Faridpur, continuing with contacts, visiting homes and learning more Bengali. Ellen’s sister, Mary Arnold, on a visit that was to have been with her sister, stayed with Gilbert for company for a while. Mary later served in Kerak, Jordan, and there were numerous items for prayer for her included in *Our Bond*.

8. The Arnold Crusade

What a disappointment! But how providential! On the way to Australia, the ship took Arnold via Sydney, and she was able to contact Baptist women about zenana work. Eventually, in Adelaide, the medical advice was against her early return to India. But as soon as Ellen was well enough, Mead, her minister, seized the opportunity and wrote “Mr Mead’s Circular” and sent it out to every Baptist Church in the Australian and New Zealand colonies. His vision was that missionary societies in each of the colonies would take responsibility for an adjoining district in East Bengal, India. He addressed it to pastors, deacons, superintendents, Sunday school teachers and Baptist and Christian churches of Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania, which was an interesting view of the colonial history of the area.

Ellen, armed with maps, papers, curiosities, posters of Hindu gods and boundless enthusiasm, set off—Tasmania, New Zealand, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania again. While she was in Queensland, the church leaders wrote:

First, let us say that Miss Arnold is worthy of the confidence of all our churches, and all should render her all the help in their power. Indeed, it is not Miss Arnold they are helping, for she is now doing our work, and setting our missionary society on its legs. To the South Australian friends we are under great obligations for their sparing and sending Miss Arnold to us; and the best things that would please them would be the knowledge that the Queensland Churches had made Miss Arnold’s visit a striking success in the raising of funds for our missionary

society, and above all in lifting us up into sympathy with Christ in His efforts to save men. From the programme of the visits arranged, . . . it will be seen that, so far as possible, all our Churches will be visited. Miss Arnold will in all probability leave here for Sydney on Tuesday, the 7th of July, and her final meeting will be held at Wharf-street Church on the Monday previous. The Committee of the Queensland Baptist Missionary Society ask that all the churches will do their best to make every meeting fruitful in results that may be seen in the glory of God, the quickening of believers, and the conversion of the heathen.¹³

This is an incredible claim of her exposure to the Queensland Baptist churches and can also be made for most Baptist churches in all the colonies, including New Zealand, in the period 1885. This real-life missionary was given a preaching and teaching role. Arnold was given a good hearing in nearly all Baptist churches, and through her, societies were formed. She met several women willing to go overseas. Her travels became known as ‘The Arnold Crusade’. For her visits, she had a mandate to raise funds, not for the SABMS but for their own Society. Any funds given her were to put a second storey on the Faridpur house so the Australasians could bypass living in Calcutta and perform their language study and cultural and ministry orientation away from the capital city. She raised enough money for that project and to cover all her deputation expenses.

Arnold was asked by the Victorian Baptist Missionary Society to interview the women who were offering to them. She was very happy with her contacts with Ruth Wilkin and Marion Fuller. In Queensland, Martha Plested, who had only arrived in the colony to join her sister within the year, being certain of the call of God, was ready at Arnold’s meeting to indicate she would join the group in Adelaide if Queensland would send her.

9. The Five Barley Loaves—Ellen Arnold, Ruth Wilkin, Marion Fuller, Martha Plested and Alice Pappin

By the time Arnold was permitted to return to India, there were four new recruits: Marion Fuller and Ruth Wilken for the Victorian work in Mymensingh, Martha Plested to commence work for Queensland Baptists and Alice Pappin, another South Australian, from North Adelaide Baptist Church. New South Wales had not been able to find someone suitable, nor had New Zealand, but they had both formed their own Missionary Societies.

The five women gathered in Adelaide, had their studio photos taken and were farewelled in a great service in Flinders Street Church. This time, they all spoke, for Arnold’s experience of speaking in so many churches around Australasia had confronted her reluctance. Mead addressed them and the 1000 in the audience. He was convinced of the role of women in the spread of the gospel:

God best knows how the Christian women of America, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Australasia ought to be doing at this hour a hundred times more than they are doing for the evangelization of their sister women in heathendom. They might do it. They ought to do it. They ought to do it at once. In Christ Jesus there is no fundamental difference of sex. Undoubtedly woman’s special mission is to women the wide world over. Seas, oceans, mountains, and political divisions should not constitute barriers to the devotion of women to women’s salvation in this day of the printing press, of the steamship, of the railway, and of telegraphs. Awake, awake Christian women of our Saxon race to the imperious needs of your sister women in heathen darkness, and go ye into all the world of womankind to preach the gospel to every wife, mother, daughter, sister.

Mead outlined the purpose of this special gathering in the FSBC in Adelaide as small beginnings to much bigger results. And so sparked the iconic image of Australian Baptist missionary work—the Five Barley Loaves. He went on:

To-night we are bidding farewell to five women going to the millions of women in what I shall designate the Australasian Missionary District of East Bengal. What

are these among so many? Possibly in some degree what the five loaves Christ blessed were to the hungry thousands around Him in Judea.

He then described how this could work out for the women in the local Baptist church congregations, even with the limitations of the early days of colonisation:

...but how many Australian Christian women are left behind? thousands upon thousands. You may be and ought to be Zenana Missionaries though you stay behind in our dear Australia. I do not bid you to take ship for India. Live on in this fair Australia—one of the brightest and happiest lands on the face of the globe to live in—live on here, I say, Christian women, but let your hearts' sympathies go to India.

Let these five sisters understand that five thousand go with them onboard the "S.S. Clyde" next Saturday afternoon—five thousand warm and earnest hearts. We can be with them in Furreedpore all through the next twelve months and any number of months afterwards in spirit if not in body. Hold yourselves responsible ye Australasian sisters for the evangelization of every woman and child in Furreedpore, Mymensing, Comillah, Pubna, and Sylhet.¹⁴ No one else will be likely to evangelize them unless you do. Let us consider ourselves and our fellow colonial workers as an army of brave assaulters of that stronghold of idolatry and uncleanness in those Indian districts.¹⁵

10. Why Women, and How Did They Work?

At this early stage (1885), there was an attempt to describe a justification for starting the work with women. Arnold was aware of the following discussion:

As men missionaries cannot carry the gospel to the women of India whom it is so important to reach; as women missionaries can visit the homes of the people, conduct schools for girls and superintend the native preachers' work amongst the men of the country; as it costs less to support a European woman than a man; and as the work in these colonies is as yet young and funds are scarce it is advisable for each colony to send out Zenana missionaries as speedily as possible, to accept the offer of housing and training them by South Australia, and to build a house for their occupation in their own district as soon as may be. The option of engaging and dismissing native teachers and preachers, with the assistance of the secretary of the London Baptist Missionary Society, resident in Calcutta, should be allowed to these ladies, and they should be requested to use their own judgement in organising the work. (Gooden 1998, pp. 126–46)

It was an initial plan, a method for beginning. Culturally there was work that the men could not do in India, but which needed to be done and done to the point of conversion. They did not accept the concept that winning the men would have a trickle-down effect on the women. But also, for struggling new missions, single women would be a more affordable option based on the assumption that zenana missionaries would remain single.

There is a delightful poem about Mission Miss Sahibs that Arnold introduced to the Australian Baptist supporters written by ALOE, A Lady of England, Charlotte Marie Tucker, a successful author, who in her 50s went to India as a self-supporting missionary. She did not ever return to England and died in 1893 (Gooden 2019, pp. 273–89). It describes the lives of single women missionaries and outlines their expected behaviour. It concludes with an important N.B.:

N.B. Let all Mission Miss Sahibs single remain. For if not, they step out of their proper domain, and can never be Mission Miss Sahibs again.

On the other hand, single men were expected to marry and would need financial support for a wife and children and, therefore, would become more and more costly. Payment was based on needed finance to live and work and allowances, not wages for services.

Yet this was more than the traditional BZM role where the BZM pattern was based on expected supervision by missionary wives as legitimization for the sending of unmarried women and widows. This initial plan did endorse an on-the-spot supervisory role of native preachers, and even the women were to be trusted in establishing work. They could hire and fire preachers with advice/agreement from Calcutta. This resonated with Arnold's thinking, for later in her life, she was seen by the Bengali Baptist Church as their missionary icon. She was their friend. Later, she saw her role with Bengali pastors as a confidant and advocate for them with her colleagues and the mission at home rather than as a boss.¹⁶ Later in her career, she was the one who strongly advocated for the East Bengal Baptist Union to have its own work and lived not on the mission compound at Pabna but as the only missionary with her Bible women in a simple house at a village of Ataikola. It is interesting that she is the one Australian missionary who the resulting Bangladesh Baptist Church Fellowship celebrates with Ellen Arnold Day on the anniversary of her death.

Today, such a policy may be interpreted as racial superiority, culturally insensitive, and colonialist. But for its time, it was the culturally captured view that single women as recipients of the Gospel were responsible for spreading that good news. They had a part in the overall mission and, in fact, could be the initial phase in developing work in areas that were so uninformed, unevangelized and unreached.

That memorandum also has a hint of federalism, which was not a reality at that stage for Baptists in the church life in the various states of Australia, nor was it politically so. Political federation was much discussed for years before Australia federated at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. And Arnold was a strong supporter of federation for the mission work. However, Baptist leaders were being encouraged to recognize co-operation as the way to see the commencement of 'work from the colonies' even as they were struggling to maintain their own growth.

That endorsed call of 1885 was, virtually, as follows: send your own women and accept South Australia's offer of initial housing and the guidance that can be given by their two women (who, after all, had only two years' experience!). Moreover, there was the help of SABMS's trusted 'missionary', Panchanon Biswas, who was their first convert and a theologically trained worker. It was a call to some measure of agreed methods, with each having bite-sized responsibilities that were in geographic proximity within East Bengal.

The final statement that the women "should be requested to use their own judgement in organising the work" is a recognition of experience and giftedness and that what had already happened with Arnold and Gilbert justified them also sending their own women who could also be trusted.

Therefore, the arguments can be summarized as follows:

- Women have a crucial role in missions, even if it may take them longer to fulfil.
- Their role is more than just a traditional role of teaching women: they are competent to work with native agents. They need to win women to Christ.
- Single women are cost-effective.
- Australasian Baptist resources are limited.
- The women are not on their own; they have the help of other experienced missionaries.
- They can use judgement in organising the mission—they are trusted to establish the work (Gooden 1998, pp. 126–46).

11. One Household to Several

So, the response came, and the Five Barley Loaves boarded the *Clyde* and got to know each other. They soaked in the experience/advice of the more experienced Arnold, whom they had all spoken to somewhere during her 'Crusade'. They enjoyed praying, chatting, and interacting with other passengers. They were on the lookout for opportunities to commend Christ to fellow travellers. They were rather disconcerted when they were unexpectedly disembarked in Ceylon for five days so that the *Clyde* could go and rescue passengers from a nearby wrecked *Indus* and so were delayed reaching Bombay. They then

faced 60 hours of train travel to Calcutta without receiving special instructions sent from Calcutta for their journey.¹⁷

Of course, Gilbert had come to Calcutta, excited to meet them. But she was the conveyer of unwelcome news. The additions to the house were not complete, and four of them would need to stay until January with the Kerrys in Calcutta while Arnold went with her to Faridpur. It was an interesting household as they learnt of their new setting.

Then, unexpectedly, Gilbert, who had been on her own, requested time off to do what she felt was some much-needed medical study. She believed that responding to women's medical needs was a means of contact even more fruitful than visiting and teaching. She was sent to study in Edinburgh, UK.

Eventually, upon return to India, Gilbert became independent of any society and spent her life in Calcutta. But she shared much of the work from time to time, filling in when there was sickness, coming to Conventions and following up with people, particularly students in Calcutta. She eventually died there on 27 June 1926 after almost 46 years of service with hardly any leave. Her voice also deserves recovery, but it is not as accessible, for she mainly disappears from Australian Baptist records.

The five women spent eighteen months in language study, living in one household at Faridpur, visiting the zenanas in the Hindu homes, seeking ways to engage but continually yearning to find their own town, their own work and their own women. Ruth Wilkin was asked to go to Calcutta to look after Mrs. Kerry's girls' school while she accompanied her husband on a deputation visit to Australia and New Zealand.

Eventually, the women separated to work in different towns, sometimes alone, usually in pairs. Fuller and Wilkin went to Mymensingh, where there was a BMS couple. Arnold went to Comilla with Plested for New South Wales, also to join a BMS couple. Both these couples were reassigned by BMS, and gradually, men joined the 'Band'. Plested went later on her own to Noakhali, and Denness went to Comilla. Pappin stayed in Faridpur.

Reports have it of those early Victorian staff (Fuller and Wilkin) as they contemplated the task of presenting Christ to the huge district of Mymensingh with its three million people (as it was then) and as they lost colleagues from ill-health or death that they were awed at the immensity of their task. Pleading with their Victorian committee to send out more workers, they offered to surrender most of their allowances, providing it secured them further colleagues. This was their constant plea—send more workers. The women also argued that they should not have to wait for the presence of men in order to open work in new towns. Another issue for them was housing. They wrote a joint letter to all their Missions, pointing out that houses for zenana women should be sufficiently distanced from any married couple so that Indians would not misconstrue their relationships.

12. More Staff—Rosalie Macgeorge and the Jubilee Five

More women came to join them. Rosalie Macgeorge was from Dunedin, New Zealand. She arrived in 1886, accompanied by Rev. and Mrs. Kerry, who had been on a visit to Australia and New Zealand. Macgeorge came with the expectation of finding a suitable location for New Zealand Baptist work (with the advice of the BMS advisers in Calcutta). She spent her initial time at Faridpur. Eventually, NZBMS settled on the towns of Brahmanbaria and Chandpur. Sadly, while traveling on her way home on leave in 1891, at the end of her five-year term, Macgeorge died in Sri Lanka and is buried in Kandy. She was the first death of the group. The next death followed in 1894, another New Zealander, Hopestill Pillow (who arrived in 1889), and then that of Marion Fuller of cholera at Mymensingh in 1897.

Another four women, Jessie Clelland and Annie Julia Prout (Victoria) as well as Agnes Pearce and Fanny Denness (SA), travelled to India with Arthur Summers in 1887, and they were known as the Jubilee Five. Summers, the first man, went to live with BMS missionaries for language learning and orientation. He eventually opened a second centre for SA at Pubna while the four women joined the group at Faridpur.

Denness, although from Flinders Street, Adelaide, was designated to work for New South Wales at Comilla, and Prout from Victoria was connected to the New Zealand work as the needed companion for Rosalie Macgeorge. She later married one of the Baptist ministers, H.H. Driver, in New Zealand, was the driving force for support of the NZBMS from Dunedin and started a training institute for women missionaries.

So, our eleven women are Marie Gilbert (SA), Ellen Arnold (SA), Marion Fuller (Victoria), Ruth Wilkin (Victoria), Martha Plested (Queensland), Alice Pappin (SA), Rosalie Macgeorge (NZ), Fay Denness (SA but for NSW), Jessie Clelland (Victoria), Agnes Pearce (SA) and Annie Newcombe (Victoria for NZ), and the first man was Arthur Summers, whose fiancée, Annie Hearne, was waiting in Adelaide for him to pass his language requirements. She was also from Flinders Street Church. When Summers and eight of the women met for Convention in Faridpur in 1889, they were visited by the BMS Home Secretary, C.H. Baynes and Rev. Kerry from Calcutta. Baynes wanted to come to an understanding of the relationship of the colonials with BMS. The decision was reached that BMS would withdraw their workers from the towns where the Australasians were working!

'The Band' was a common way of referring to the whole group, men and women. They met for Convention once a year, and they started to send a hand-written circular letter around the group with instructions for the next recipient. By the time, the letter got back to the writer, their previous pages were to be removed and new ones added. The first letter was one from Rosalie Macgeorge with news that a doctor was advising her to go home. The group corresponded about what they would name it and eventually decided on Our Bond. In 1889, this became a printed means of news for their supporters as well as themselves. It was printed at the BMS Press in Calcutta, and an editor was appointed at the annual Convention. Arnold was appointed as its first editor. This gave a field perspective, unedited by the committees at home. Those home committees published their own mission publicity.

13. Comings and Goings

Over the next decade, eight more women were recruited before the next man (Abia Neville) arrived. He was also from Flinders Street but was sent out by the Victorian Society. He referred to Summers and himself as 'the two fish'. He was to marry Ruth Wilkin, after he finished language study. He was followed by Dr. Cecil Mead, who married Alice Pappin (Gooden et al. 2023, pp. 217–18). Both these women were older than their husbands.

That next decade saw the loss of a few of the women. Jessie Clelland returned home within a year, broken in health. Fay Denness also returned home sick and resigned when she could see no possibility of an early return so somebody else could be sent to Comilla. Marion Fuller died in Mymensingh and is buried in the mission compound there. Agnes Pearce married Kedall, a British civil servant at Cuttack, and moved to live in Mayurbanj, where important leprosy work was developed. By 1897, there were 13 zenana workers and 5 wives.

By then, the Societies had been able to have trained and sent out several men. The men were usually single as they came out to study the Bengali language for two years, then they could be joined by their fiancées and marry. In a couple of cases, as has already been stated, they married women who were already in India. By 1897, there were 16 men, with 3 of them arriving that year.

14. Arnold's Response to Perceived Attitudes to the Zenana Work in 1897

At this time, Arnold went into print in a fascinating article titled "From a Zenana missionary's point of view" (*Southern Baptist*, 13 January 1898, p. 16). She wrote:

Some evil-disposed brother used to call our meeting a hen convention, but he cannot do that now, for the men outnumber our Zenana missionaries this year.

The said brother is unnamed. The meeting she is referring to is the Convention of the Australian and New Zealand Baptist missionaries held annually late in the year for fellowship but not for business because they were members of separate, independent

missions. It was held then because it was the cool season. Mid-year, the missionaries in India usually holidayed in the Himalayas, away from the heat. November or December was the one time in the year they got together, a chance to welcome new colleagues who tried to time their arrival in the cool season so they could attend Convention and meet the whole 'band'. Convention was a time for corporate worship, singing English tunes from the latest hymn book they could obtain, chatting, sharing prayer points and reporting on the year. Praying took up sessions, as did biblical studies. Papers were researched and presented on relevant topics. The Convention was held at the various stations at the invitation of the local missionaries with hospitality in the hands of the local missionaries. One wonders just who she had in mind as the evil-disposed brother and quite what was the implication of 'hen'¹⁸ at that time.

In looking at the statistics, there were nine Australian men and three from New Zealand, and of these, nine had arrived since 1896, so they had not yet finished their language study. She went on:

Oh, what freedom in prayer we used to have! what free and sympathetic telling of our work during the year, what pillow fights in the bedrooms—yes, your missionaries worked all the better, and carried lighter hearts from their fun—it used to be like schoolgirls coming home for the holidays.

Now! Well, of course, we have decorous meetings, and try to teach the young men how to behave (some of them have behaved so badly as to carry off several of the old Zenana missionaries;¹⁹ but we did not tell them to do that and hope in future the committees will see young men properly disposed of before embarking).

Obviously, Arnold was sensitive to the suggestion that the women did not know how to conduct mission work. She went on:

The brethren say we are [now] more business-like—we certainly take longer to reach conclusions. Perhaps the brethren talk more slowly! Well, no doubt, dear friends at home feel more satisfied, and think things will go on better now we have so many men. Especially married men, which some folks seem to think are the cure for all ills in a mission.

But she writes:

Some folks say I hate men. Well, that's not true, for I am very glad to welcome them to the work and am very thankful the men of this country should have the gospel preached to them. But does this mean that the women, the mothers of the race, who train minds for all life, are not to have it?

There was a strong sense among zenana missionaries that the hand that rocked the cradle was a significant influence not only in her family circle but also in world events.²⁰ She adds:

Look at it, dear friends! Taking the last three or four years, two women workers have left the field for every man added—that means that, in all our stations except two, where Zenana work has not started, work which was carried on amongst women and children has lapsed, and those women who received the news gladly have been left to go back to Satan from lack of workers. In fact, there is FAR LESS work for the souls of women and children going on in our stations now than there was three years ago. This is absolutely the fact, and it ought not to be.

There were important facts that Arnold claimed needed to be understood in that Indian context so that all had the opportunity to hear the good news of Christ. Methods had to differ. Women's work was labour intensive. She wrote passionately at length:

Bear in mind, only women can reach women here; also remember, while a great many men can read, very few comparatively of the women can do so; so, we must speak the message to them personally. The men can be gathered in crowds

in the markets and other places; the women must be sought out in their own homes and gathered a few at a time. Our brethren can get Bengali preachers to help them; but women assistants cannot be had in these country places, so we alone must tell the gospel message to our sisters. Our brethren can go to one place and work, in the cool of the day, but we must walk from house to house, sometimes quite a distance, in the women's leisure time, viz., in the middle of the day, and we have not, as a rule, equal physical strength to start with, so we break down quicker. . . . It is quite usual for a brother to have three, six, or more Bengali assistants, while we have none.

Different people and different situations needed tailored methods. Contextualisation was everyone's responsibility, as was the importance of verbal proclamation. Her list included personal communication to the few, in scattered places, at quite limited times of the day. Women's lack of reading ability was also a concern. She also passionately regretted the lack of suitable Bible women to assist in rural areas. Although, in later years, some found some very faithful widows who were her companions. She did not accept a trickle-down methodology as adequate, where it was thought that if the husband was won, he would communicate the faith to his wife.

She concluded her tirade with the following appeal:

. . . , to let the two works go on at all equally, six Zenana missionaries to every one man should be sent out from Australia; and I respectfully ask committees to aim at this, Churches to work and pray for it, Christian Endeavour societies and Sunday-schools to train for it, sisters to set their hearts upon it, and companies of God's children to constantly remember it before the throne.

She then added an interesting comment that women could be used sometimes to reach men. It certainly was her experience. She wrote:

I need not remind you that, in visiting the homes of the people, especially in the villages, we often cannot avoid quiet talks with the men, and so influence them too.

We have also Bible classes for the schoolboys, whom some of our brethren don't mind letting us tackle to save them the trouble (Bengali school boys are 'awfully naughty' you know).

Men usually were hovering as the women listened to their visitors. She certainly spent hours with young students and requested prayer for particular ones. Mozir's name was often mentioned; he was a Muslim schoolboy who she nurtured in his faith. As her ministry developed, she also realized the potential of the influence of older women in that age-affirming culture.

She finished her submission with a statement and a question, and it would seem to be a question that is receiving new currency in current research into the contribution of women to church history:

So candidly, looking at it all round, it seems to me the Zenana Mission is most important. Don't you agree with me? E. ARNOLD.

15. Arnold's Later Life

Federation of just the Australian missions was achieved in 1913, leaving the East Bengal Baptist Union to relate to two missions, one Australian and the other New Zealand. With typical white colonial Saxon mentality, that federated Australian Baptist Missionary Society²¹ celebrated 'their' Jubilee in 1932, 50 years from the sending out of Arnold and Gilbert in 1882, overlooking the years of foundations laid by Bengali preachers and sellers of Scripture. At that time, Arnold had just died in India. Our Bond records this report of Ellen's words:

It was on July 9th of last year that the call home came to Miss Arnold. Just a few more months and she would have seen the Jubilee. Indeed, she was to have

written, something for this special number, but she felt too weak to make 'the effort, and contented herself with passing on this message, 'tell them to preach'. That was her one word for all who came near her on those last days. **Preach! Preach!**

It seems fitting to couple with this message her last spoken words on Earth—words breathed faintly, yet clearly, **He will give victory!**

Arnold had weathered 49 years of service, much of it without the companionship of missionary colleagues. She had moved from one locality to another, Faridpur to Comilla to Pabna and finally 'expelled' to the village of Ataikola. She was not an enthusiastic committee attender, but she loved the fellowship of that annual Conference. She certainly could not be persuaded that she should retire to be with extended family in Australia in 1930. Against Mission expectations, she got on a ship in Perth and told the Mission she was on her way to live on Bengali Church property (not on the Mission compound) and to lay her bones down in Bengal. It would be cheaper than a funeral in Australia!

She went back to live in Ataikola village, refusing to return to the Pubna Mission compound when dying, even though her old friends, Drs. Charles and Laura Hope, were working there at the time. (Laura Hope, nee Fowler, was the first woman medical graduate of the University of Adelaide. She and Charles spent several periods working in the same towns as the SABMS to give a medical expression to the message. Today, we might term them tentmakers).

The final message of Arnold's we must ponder is from a true copy of her Last Will and Testament signed on 5 March 1930 to be executed by the Secretary of the Mission and related to the Ataikola land.

It is my desire that girl's school and dispensary be carried on there under Mission or Union supervision and that an old workers' home be provided for Heronmay Das, her sister Shoronmoy Baul, Mono-mohini Coondoo and such like mission workers when no longer able for active service.

16. A Contribution That Has Lasted

In February 2024, at recent celebrations of the 125th Anniversary of the forming of the Pabna Baptist Church as part of the programme, the leaders of the Bangladesh Baptist Church Fellowship²² went 18 kilometres to Ataikola, where Arnold's grave is alongside the highway. On the headstone, written in Bengali, is "**Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. Ellen Arnold walked this way, taught this truth, lived this life**". When Mozir, the Muslim background believer who had been led to Christ as a teenager by Arnold in 1905, heard the news of her death in 1931, he wrote a moving tribute to the ABM and described her as his "mother in the Lord". I believe hers (and that of her women colleagues) is a voice not just worth reclaiming but also a life worth modelling.

17. Message and Its Significance

Church history inspires us to recognize God at work. World events, as they occur, open new possibilities and opportunities for followers of Jesus to recognize God's universal plans for people as they are able to be fulfilled in new ways. The history of the Church is made up of so many strands that invite our recovery of forgotten or overlooked voices. God's coincidences are important parts of the story. He works through people and history. Arnold was a strong advocate that women needed to hear the message of Christ's redeeming love themselves, and if the means of doing that took longer, that was part of the responsibility of women on his mission. Also, Christian women were called to share Christ, not leave it to men.

Hers was not a lone voice. It was shared by most, if not all, her female colleagues. The situation in the Nineteenth Century in the context of India, with its social segregation of women away from any significant influence of unrelated men (including foreigners), created the situation where Arnold's plea for both a longer period and for more women for the task was a significant contribution of the history of Baptists from Australasia.

But more importantly, the message of the particular role and responsibility of women following Christ needs to be reassessed and reaffirmed in our changing world. There are interesting new questions being asked of both past and present contributions in order that we gain the wisdom necessary to address our unrecognised cultural captivity in the rapidly changing world.

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Notes

¹ A zenana was the women's secluded part of the home.

² *Southern Baptist*, 13 January 1898, p. 16.

³ *Truth and Progress*, 1 November 1884, p. 124.

⁴ See notes 2 above.

⁵ Australasia is a descriptive term for the geographic region of Australia and New Zealand and some nearby islands.

⁶ <https://guides.slsa.sa.gov.au/southaustralianhistory>, accessed on 1 January 2024.

⁷ Various Anglicized spellings are found in mission literature of the period.

⁸ It became part of East Pakistan when India was partitioned by the British at Independence. Since 1971 it has been part of Bangladesh.

⁹ *Truth and Progress*, 1 December 1882, p. 145.

¹⁰ Ellen Arnold Diary, 1 January 1883.

¹¹ Ellen Arnold Diary, 2 January 1883.

¹² *Truth and Progress*, 1 April 1884, Supplement.

¹³ *Truth & Progress*, 1 November 1885, p. 135.

¹⁴ Variant spellings.

¹⁵ *Our Bond*, June 1890.

¹⁶ It is interesting that she is the one Australian missionary who the resulting Bangladesh Baptist Church Fellowship celebrate with Ellen Arnold Day, on the anniversary of her death.

¹⁷ *Truth & Progress*, January 1886, p. 9.

¹⁸ Australian use of the English language can be quite different from other English speakers and the Collins Dictionary gives the informal meaning for hen as a woman, but with different nuances for British English as gossipy, foolish, and for American, older, busybody and gossip, whereas my Macquarie Dictionary merely suggests, the female of any bird.

¹⁹ As mentioned, two of the Five Barley Loaves were to marry later arrivals, Ruth Wilkin married Abia Neville, and Alice Pappin married Dr Cecil Mead, (Silas Mead's son). Both couples had to wait marriage until the men completed their two year's study and passed the exams!

²⁰ William R. Wallace's poem, *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle Rules the World* (1865) had been quoted at that Decennial Conference in 1882.

²¹ Federation for the mission was 1913, leaving the East Bengal Baptist Union to relate to two missions, the ABMS and the NZBMS.

²² The current name for the Church as it has lived through the changes of country and name.

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