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**Establishing India: British Women's Missionary Organisations and their  
Outreach to the Women and Girls of India, 1820-1870**

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## Abstract

*Establishing India* explores how British Protestant women's foreign missionary societies of the mid nineteenth century established and negotiated outreach to the women and girls of India. The humanitarian claims made about Indian women in the missionary press did not translate into direct missionary activity by British women. Instead, India was adopted as a site of missionary activity for more complex and local reasons: from encounters with opportunistic colonial informants to seeking inclusion in national organisations.

The prevailing narrative about women's missionary work in nineteenth-century India is both distorted and unsatisfactory. British women's missionary work has been characterised as focused on seeking to enter and transform the high-caste Hindu household. This both obscures other important groups of females who were key historical actors, and it reduces the scope of women's work to the domestic and private. In fact, British women missionaries sought inclusion in mainstream missionary strategies, which afforded them visibility, largely through establishing schools and orphanages. They also engaged with mainstream discourses of colonial and missionary education in India.

*Establishing India* also details how India was established for British missionary women through texts and magazines. Missionary magazines provided British women with a continuous record of women's work in India, reinforcing a belief in the providential rightfulness of the project. Magazines also both facilitated and misrepresented various types of work that British women engaged with in India: orphan sponsorship was established through the magazines and myths of zenana work were constructed. Missionary magazines were crucial to counteracting male narratives of white female absence or victimhood in India and they served to keep the women's missionary project in India both visible and intact.

### **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis has been composed entirely by me, that it is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Caroline Lewis.

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## Glossary and abbreviations

*Adivasis* contemporary word for ‘tribals’.

*Bhadralok* educated members of the Bengal higher classes.

*Brahmin* member of the priest caste

*Brahmo Samaj* Hindu reform movement founded by Ram Mohun Roy in 1828.

*Pathshala* village school

*Sati* female immolation on funeral pyre of husband

*Zenana* female quarters of the Indian household

Baptist Missionary Society (BMS)

British and Foreign School Society (BFFS)

Church Missionary Society (CMS)

London Missionary Society (LMS)

Scottish Ladies’ Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India (SLA)

Scottish Missionary Society (SMS)

The Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society (IFNSIS)

The Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East (SPFEE)

## Chapter One: What was built and what was said

What missionaries built was in many ways more important than what they said.<sup>1</sup>

The British missionary presence in India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was largely the result of the evangelical religious revival in the eighteenth century, strongly influenced by Wesleyan Methodism in Britain.<sup>2</sup> The British Protestant missionary movement of the nineteenth century had global pretensions, seeking to evangelise inland China as well as following in the wake of imperial expansion in South Asia and Africa.<sup>3</sup> With the renewals of the East India Company's charter in 1813 and the inclusion of a 'pious clause', British Protestant missionary societies consolidated and expanded their work across India throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, it is clear that the missionary encounter with Indians was rather different from the popular images of male missionary heroism and derring-do that proliferated at home. The social reality

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey L. Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> There was variation in the growth of evangelicalism across Britain, and Scotland's relationship with evangelicalism and early foreign missions reflected its distinct religious history and national identity. For an account of evangelicalism in Scotland and its relationship to urban expansion and the growth of the middle-classes, see Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 19-21 and pp. 101-110; for the Scottish context of the early missionary movement, see Esther Breitenbach, *Empire and Scottish Society: The Impact of Foreign Missions at Home, c. 1790 to c.1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 54-89. For a study of how English evangelicalism created a missionary-philanthropic culture in the early nineteenth century which was central to middle-class formation, see Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle-Class, 1792-1850: the 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 25-50; for a foundational study in how evangelicalism and serious Christianity shaped gender and class ideologies in late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century England, see Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 73-148; for the argument that the industrial revolution and the rise of the lower-middle class were central to the advent of the missionary movement in Britain see Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa, Volume 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 49-85.

<sup>3</sup> The relationship between British Protestant missionary activity and imperialism is challenged by Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990); See also Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of how British missionaries negotiated with the East India Company in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, see Porter, *Religion Versus Empire*, pp. 68-75.



behind the tales of missionary men confronting Hinduism in India was rather different. As the historian Jeffrey Cox has argued,

[a] typical missionary in the late nineteenth century...was not a male itinerant preacher but a female schoolteacher or administrator. The encounter of missionaries with Indians occurred, not in the open air, but mainly in an institutional setting.<sup>5</sup>

Before most British Protestant foreign missions allowed single women to engage in overseas work for their own religious denominations towards the end of the nineteenth century, there were three British societies that enabled women to support and develop foreign missionary work under the aegis of national organisations.<sup>6</sup> These organisations are an under-researched context for the British women's foreign missionary movement which became, according to one historian of missions, 'very probably the largest mass movement of women in nineteenth-century Britain.'<sup>7</sup> The Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East (SPFEE), the Scottish Ladies Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India (SLA) and the Free Church Ladies' Society sent money, resources and women missionaries to India in order to 'uplift' girls and women. These three foreign

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<sup>5</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the numbers of women entering Scottish Presbyterian foreign missions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see Esther Breitenbach, *Empire and Scottish Society*, pp.58-59; for a discussion of women's recruitment into the China Inland Mission and other more established English Protestant missionary societies in the nineteenth century, see Peter Williams, '“The Missing Link”: The Recruitment of Women Missionaries in some English Evangelical Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century,' in *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Oxford, 1993) eds. Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener (Oxford: Berg, 1993), pp. 43-69; for a discussion of the recruitment of single women to missions in South Africa in the nineteenth century, see Cecillie Swaisland, 'Wanted – Earnest, Self-Sacrificing Women for Service in South Africa: Nineteenth-Century Recruitment of Single Women to Protestant Missions,' in *Women and Missions*, pp. 70-84. Rhonda Anne Semple's seminal study, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2003), explores the recruitment and training of single women to the China Inland Mission, the London Missionary Society and the Church of Scotland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The wives, and to a lesser extent other female relatives, of male missionaries often had an important role in foreign mission work. Even after single women missionaries were being trained and sent overseas by the women's foreign missions under discussion in this thesis, missionary wives played a crucial role throughout the nineteenth century. The national women's mission organisations at the heart of this study also sponsored the work of missionary wives directly. For a discussion of the missionary wife, see Deborah Kirkwood, 'Protestant Missionary Women: Wives and Spinsters' in *Women and Missions*, pp. 23-42.

<sup>7</sup> Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 94. Thorne's study argues that there was both a discursive and numerical 'feminisation' of missionary philanthropy in the second half of the nineteenth century.

missions gave women's missionary work a national presence. They were also national presences, seeking visibility in the national missionary press, publishing their own magazines, occasional papers and histories, and participating in international missionary conferences and exhibitions. The visibility that these women's foreign mission organisations sought at home and at a national level was matched by the visibility of the work that they undertook in India, largely through the establishment of a variety of school and orphan institutions.

The title of this thesis, *Establishing India*, puns on the idea of creating visible 'establishments' as a goal for British women's work in mid nineteenth-century India. British women's missionary work in nineteenth-century India has been characterised as almost exclusively focused on entering the private, and less visible, domain of the Hindu household to convert high-caste Indian women. This thesis contends that this is a misrepresentation of the work that British women sought to prosecute and the people they sought to uplift or convert during the mid nineteenth century. The work that British missionary women sought to prosecute is explored beyond the narratives that they and others often presented in print. Through using the extensive, unpublished, archival material related to these three early national societies, the private and more equivocal story of their work emerges, suggesting their interest in varied and marginal social groups of women and girls. Archival sources also suggest something else that was often at odds with early published narratives of British women's outreach to Indian women and girls in India: institutional visibility was sought through a variety of forms and zenana work was often, in practice if not in print, considered rather second rate.

However, the many narratives, in magazines and speeches, that British missionaries told about the work they were doing among the women and girls of India often obscured and distorted, sometimes quite deliberately, the work that was valued and actively prosecuted. Narratives of missionary work by both male and female missionaries are also central to the thesis, as I argue that missionary writing about the uplift of Indian women and girls in this period needs to be read with a greater degree of historical contextualisation, which I provide through archival sources. The narratives of missionary outreach to Indian women that appeared in print in the early and mid nineteenth century are often read at face value, leading to

distorted story of a stand-off between white missionary women and the Hindu elite at home. In reading missionary rhetoric at face value, historians and literary critics continue to ignore other actors in these early and missionary encounters between British women and women and girls in India, particularly socially marginal groups like mixed-race, Jewish and Armenian girls.

There are two striking cases that exemplify the gaps between what was said and what was done by missionaries in relation to work among Indian girls and women. In Chapter Four, I use archival sources to argue that the SPFEE transformed itself from a missionary training and fundraising organisation at home into a more conventionally missionary enterprise with its own project in India: this shift was made by founding a boarding school for mixed-race girls in the hill station town of Mussoorie in the Himalayas and trying to manage it long distance from London. This was its great, flagship project, which marked a decisive shift in its treatment of mission work to the females of India. In founding this school, it had identified a group of girls whom it believed would be central to the evangelisation of India in general. It theorised how these girls could use their roles as educated Indo-British young women to fulfil the public lives it imagined for them. The SPFEE also made the largest economic outlay of their institutional history in founding this boarding school, and it was prepared to take complicated financial risks at a time when its finances were precarious. The school was beset by practical problems but remained a model venture that was emulated by other missionary groups across India. Yet the narrative the SPFEE told about its work and strategy for the uplift of Indian women and girls was very different. In the 1860s, the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, the SPFEE's official monthly magazine, constructed a narrative that privileged zenana work among the women of high-caste Hindu households. The story of its work in India effaced its identification of mixed-race girls as the key to evangelisation and downplayed the building of schools as one of its primary missionary strategies. Its annual reports also exaggerated its zenana work which, in private, it barely financed and only occasionally used for missionary women it would rather not situate in public roles.

The second case study which discusses discrepancies between what was said and what was done about outreach to Indian women and girls is presented in Chapter Six.

In 1838 Alexander Duff, the first Church of Scotland missionary in India, addressed the first annual meeting of the Scottish Ladies' Association (SLA). His speech argued that until access to high-caste women Hindu was genuinely viable, women's missionary work in India was largely pointless.<sup>8</sup> Educating the young men of the Bengali elite was criterial, according to Duff, to the uplift of India and that had to be privileged in terms of a Scottish missionary strategy. In reality, Duff became a powerful advocate of putting money into building a female orphan institution in Calcutta which housed a variety of socially marginal girls, and he engaged in endless financial wrangling to ensure that the missionary work of Scottish women had a very visible institutional presence on his home turf.

These two narratives foreground a story about the uplift of high-caste Indian women which formed, at most, a marginal part of their respective missionary organisations' encounters with mid nineteenth-century India. *Establishing India* challenges a dominant narrative about whom among the females of India British women were interested in reaching in the nineteenth century and how they sought to achieve this. The British women missionaries of this study had, at best, a limited interest in the uplift of high-caste Indian women of the zenana, and their focus, as in the case of the SPFEE became mixed-race girls, or, as in the case of Scottish women, highly varied and difficult to generalise. The narrative about zenana work certainly originates in much missionary writing of the early to mid nineteenth century as exemplified above, but it subsequently became embedded as the overarching narrative about British women's missionary work in India. The narrative that the conversion of the high-caste Hindu woman in the zenana constituted the main aspiration for early British women missionaries is therefore reinforced by multiple historical and postcolonial narratives and has become the default position in much academic work. That white, British missionary women were ideologically committed to penetrating the spiritual heartland of the Hindu home in order to convert the Hindu woman to Christianity and, by extension, to transform a whole family and society is a powerful and pervasive conceit through which women's missionary work in the nineteenth century is continuously read and narrated. Janaki

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<sup>8</sup> Alexander Duff, *Female Education in India, being the Substance of An Address Delivered at the First Annual Meeting of the Scottish Ladies' Association, in Connection with the Church of Scotland, for the Promotion of Female Education in India*. (Edinburgh, John Johnstone, 1839).

Nair and Geraldine Forbes characterised the zenana as the key site of early attempts at conversion and reform by British women missionaries and Antoinette Burton argues that it continued to be an imaginative focus and rationale for the medical training and work sought by British women in India in the late nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Even Jeffrey Cox generalises, at times, that zenana work was a portal into mission work for British women in the nineteenth century. He argues that British women sought justification for missionary work through the unique case of zenana uplift that could not be prosecuted by male missionaries:

[a]nother contrast in both tone and style may be found in women's account of their own work with Indian women. The British feminist depiction of Indian women as helpless and dependent is found even more densely in the much more extensive women's missionary writing on Indian women. If British feminists depended on this image, women missionaries needed it even more to justify their intrusion into the world of male clerical heroism. But unlike British feminists, missionaries knew Indian women directly; indeed their privileged access to Indian women, unavailable to male missionaries, was the justification for their entry into mission work, first as zenana visitors, then as doctors, nurses, teachers, and administrators.<sup>10</sup>

The focus on the high-caste Hindu woman in missionary discourse is partly related to defamatory missionary writing about Hinduism in this period, and in particular missionary accounts of sati, reflecting interest and involvement in the anti-

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<sup>9</sup> See Janaki Nair, 'Uncovering the Zenana: Visions of Indian Womanhood in Englishwomen's Writings, 1813-1940' in *Journal of Women's History*, 1 (1990): pp. 8-34. Nair argues that the zenana was deemed important for spreading Christianity, although '[b]y the 1860s, the *zenana* as a site for education gradually yielded place to the notion of the *zenana* as a site for conversion.' Nair, 'Uncovering the Zenana', p. 15; Geraldine H. Forbes, 'In Search of the 'Pure Heathen': Missionary Women in Nineteenth Century India', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 17 (1986): pp. WS2-WS8. She argues that surplus women from Britain were employed by Ladies' Missionary Societies and 'went out to India with the expressed purpose of converting 'pure heathens', i.e. Indian women confined to the zenana.' Forbes, 'In Search of the 'Pure Heathen': p. WS-2. Forbes argues that zenana education as a missionary aspiration replaced early and futile attempts at girls' schools and she characterises British women's missionary work as zenana-focused in both aspiration and practice. See also Antoinette Burton, 'Contesting the Zenana: The Mission to Make 'Lady Doctors for India,' 1874-1885, in *Journal of British Studies* 35 (1996): pp. 368-397. Burton argues that 'the conviction that Indian women were trapped in the...allegedly unhygienic Oriental zenana motivated the institutionalization of women's medicine and was crucial to the professionalization of women doctors in Victorian Britain...For women involved in pursuing a medical education, the specter of the zenana was more than a source of personal motivation; the provision of medical care to Indian women was nothing short of national and, indeed of imperial obligation.' Burton, 'Contesting the Zenana', p. 369.

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 67.

sati campaigns of the 1820s.<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey Oddie's account of the missionary construction of Hinduism details how crucial missionaries were for creating a 'dominant paradigm' of India and how the missionary work of British women followed a focus on the Hindu woman and girl in the zenana.<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Cox has argued that the Protestant missionary rhetoric up to the mid nineteenth century was particularly aggressive and defamatory in its presentation of Hinduism, which suggests its centrality to much missionary thinking about the uplift of both the men and women of India.<sup>13</sup> The degraded, high-caste Hindu woman and the necessity for her rescue was vital to the defamation of Hinduism in popular missionary writing of this period.

The aspiration of British men and women to rescue the degraded Hindu woman is a foundation narrative that inflects much important postcolonial scholarship from Gayatri Spivak's seminal essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak', to studies of nineteenth-century British imperial feminism.<sup>14</sup> Scholarship on the representation and prohibition of sati in the early nineteenth century underscores how central the figure of the high-caste Hindu woman is to narratives of British identity, colonial state formation, civilising mission, and conflicting colonial discourses. The rescue of and comparisons with the degraded Hindu woman also informs narratives of how British evangelical women and feminists of the nineteenth century justified their demands to access a national political culture at home from the mid nineteenth century onwards. As Jane Rendall argues, 'empire came to be a constitutive element in the rewriting of nineteenth-century femininity and feminism'.<sup>15</sup> Antoinette Burton has argued that

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<sup>11</sup> See Andrea Major, *Pious Flames: European Encounters with Sati* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006); Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India, 1780–1833* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant Missionary Constructions of Hinduism, 1793–1900* (New Delhi and London: Sage, 2006) pp. 320–340; pp. 235–240.

<sup>13</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, pp. 61–64.

<sup>14</sup> See Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions*; Andrea Major, *Pious Flames*. This will be discussed in Chapter Two. See also G. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988); Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History, British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790–1865* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Jane Rendall, 'The Condition of Women, Women's Writing and the Empire in Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, eds. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 105. Rendall explores how important gender relations were to stadial theory, a key Enlightenment theory of civilisation: she writes how, '[t]he stadial theory of the Scottish Enlightenment,

British feminists utilised images of degraded Indian women needing rescue to create a feminist argument that enabled British women to enter into a national political culture.<sup>16</sup> The work of Inderpal Grewal, Tanika Sarkar and Partha Chatterjee also underscores the political and symbolic nature of the Hindu woman in the Indian home, and how the Hindu home became a site of nationalist symbolism and consciousness needing protection from the incursions of the colonial state.<sup>17</sup> As Grewal argues, the zenana served conflicting purposes in colonial and nationalist narratives:

[t]he ‘purdah’ construct of the English imperialists becomes the ‘home’ of the Indian nationalists; Indian women’s location in the women’s part of the house becomes the symbol of what is sacred and private for Indian nationalist culture. The colonialist’s use of Englishwomen as signs of the advanced state of their civilisation is seen by Indian nationalists as the depraved state of Western culture.<sup>18</sup>

The story of white British women seeking to enter and uplift the degraded Indian women of the zenana is freighted, therefore, with multiple colonial and postcolonial histories and narratives. Yet loading the zenana work of British women missionaries with such symbolic weight and ideological import has led to distorting its place in

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constructing a hierarchy of four stages of civilisation – nomadic (or ‘savage’), pastoral (or ‘barbarian’), agricultural and commercial – defined by their material condition but also by their manners, culture and political structures, was immensely influential. That framework legitimated British cultural superiority, and provided a way of classifying the variety of societies encountered in British imperial expansion. A hierarchy of gender relations was at its heart. William Alexander wrote that the condition of women in any country indicated ‘the exact point in the scale of civil society to which the people of such country have arrived.’ Rendall, ‘The Condition of Women’, p. 103.

<sup>16</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*.

<sup>17</sup> Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Cultures of Travel* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996); see also Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism* (London: Hurst, 2001), explores how conservative gender relations with an emphasis on the domesticity of the Indian woman evolved among the middle classes in nineteenth-century Bengal as a result of structural economic changes. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Chatterjee argues that the Indian home became the spiritual sphere for anticolonial nationalism in the nineteenth century: ‘[t]he colonial state... is kept out of the inner domain of national culture; but it is not as though this so-called spiritual domain is left unchanged. In fact, here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative and historically significant project: to fashion a ‘modern’ national culture that is nevertheless not Western.’ Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Grewal, *Home and Harem*, p. 54.

the outreach to Indian women and girls and obscuring some other important historical actors.

Much of the material related to the work of missionaries in India towards Indian females and the writing that represented it is integrated within each individual chapter. However, the thesis is clearly divided between the discussion of the British SPFEE and the Scottish Presbyterian missions to India. Chapters Two, Three and Four of *Establishing India* focus on the SPFEE, the first national British women's missionary society to be established. Chapters Five and Six discuss the establishment and work of the two national Scottish Presbyterian missionary societies for women, the SLA and the Free Church Ladies' Society.

The exploration of how the SPFEE established India as its most important mission field in the mid nineteenth century considers how, over two decades, a systematic policy eventually developed for the education of a key group of Indian females. The three chapters relating to the SPFEE consider how magazines shaped and distorted policies towards the uplift of Indian females; these chapters also consider the development of practical school projects in India and strategies for the uplift of specific groups. Chapter Two explores how the cause of Indian women came to be adopted by the SPFEE in London, and how there is little evidence of an early policy or missionary strategy for their uplift during the 1830s and 1840s. Chapter Three discusses the importance of the SPFEE's magazine, the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, in the project of missions to Indian women: the magazine encouraged a culture of sponsoring orphans in India which the SPFEE often found problematic, and its representation of mission work to Indian females was often at odds with the reality of the SPFEE's policies and projects. Chapter Four argues that by the 1850s, the SPFEE had distinct policies and strategies towards work in India and had identified mixed-race girls as their central concern. Chapter Four explores the establishment of a flagship school in the Himalayan town of Mussoorie, which would serve as a model for the missionary education of a group of girls considered the key to the evangelisation of India.

The two chapters on Scottish Presbyterian missions to Indian females also explore both the textual representations of work in India alongside other, often



conflicting, evidence of practice and policy. Chapter Five examines the early Scottish missionary encounter with India and explores why Indian and Scottish women were absent from the accounts of a society that eventually became the first denomination to allow for a separate women's mission with a national status. Chapter Five also contextualises the adoption of missions to India for Scottish women in emerging discourses of Scottish national identity. Chapter Six explores the development of Scottish women's missionary work in India and argues that much of the rhetoric of high-caste outreach does not coincide with the missionary work that was undertaken and highly valued.

### **What was said: re-contextualising missionary writing**

Early to mid nineteenth-century texts produced by missionaries, and published in Britain for an evangelical audience, are one of my key sources to reading and re-contextualising British women's outreach to the girls and women of India.

*Establishing India* explores the place of women's work in India, not simply through their own writing, but also through the accounts of male missionaries, particularly early missionaries from Scotland. Accounts of early missionary work in India were often male, heroic, focused on a high-caste education and excluded both Indian and British women.<sup>19</sup> And such writing read at face value can lead to fundamentally skewed understandings of who was doing what in an experimental and varied missionary enterprise which interacted with the social realities of life in mid nineteenth-century India. I show that much missionary writing seriously misrepresented work in India, and this is particularly true when dealing with Indian females as subjects and the presence of British missionary women. Exclusions, misrepresentations and contradictions are crucial to understanding areas of anxiety in the project of outreach to Indian females, and my readings focus on interpreting the writing of male missionaries in India that sought to exclude women, as well as new and under researched magazine publications by a variety of missionary women.

The role of missionary texts in shaping or representing who British women imagined they could uplift or convert in India and how this could be prosecuted are

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter Five.

reconsidered and re-contextualised in this thesis. I argue that the role of missionary writing in women's missions to India has been simultaneously overstated, neglected and read with a degree of literalism to suggest a one-dimensional focus on the high-caste Hindu woman. Much of the missionary writing I examine in this study undermines the relationship between what was being published at home and what was being prosecuted by missionary women and men. The gaps between missionary writing about Indian females and women's work are crucial because otherwise there is the keen risk of ignoring how immediate historical factors and contexts shaped the ideas and practices of women's missions to India.

As Hayden Bellenoit has argued, 'missionary methods and understandings were, in the long term, shaped by Indian society itself rather than purely metropolitan influence...Indian social realities also, in the end, had a central bearing upon the later nineteenth and early twentieth-century missionary educational enterprise..<sup>20</sup> The relationship between the metropolitan missionary text and missionary practice is explored explicitly in Chapters Two and Five to suggest that British missionary women were not simple repositories of the ideologies embedded in such texts, which were later enacted in their work in India; nor was the missionary work reported back always a representative reflection of the groups at the centre of uplift, or the social realities of missionary practice.

In Chapter Two I explore why, for example, when the *Missionary Register* carried endless accounts of the degradation of Hindu women and why when the humanitarian plight of India was continuously recorded, the SPFEE started its institutional life with a focus on China. In Chapter Five, I argue about why Scottish missionaries presented their early work in India as a homosocial endeavour, with almost no discussion or reporting of Indian or Scottish women, when the Church of Scotland became the first religious denomination in Britain to accord women's missionary work to India a national role. Exploring the disjuncture between the rhetoric and reality of British women's outreach in India is possible because of reading the published missionary material against the private and unpublished missionary archives related to both men and women's work in India in this period.

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<sup>20</sup> Hayden J.A. Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India, 1860-1920* (London: Pickering and Chatto), p. 31.

However, I also contend that a critical focus on a small oeuvre of missionary texts, and fiction in particular, written in the mid nineteenth century has led to overgeneralisations about the work that British missionary women aspired to and prosecuted in India. Anna Johnston's work on missionary writing during this period focuses on two texts to generalise about the work of British women in India and argues that, for example, *The Eastern Lily Gathered* by the Reverend Storrow, a London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary, represented a unanimous belief by the mid nineteenth century that 'there was more value in the education of a zenana lady than a ryot's child.'<sup>21</sup> Johnston contends that there was a general belief among missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century that village schooling among girls had failed as an experiment in outreach and that only work with high-caste women was considered plausible.<sup>22</sup> Johnston sees women's missionary writing as not only a predominantly late nineteenth-century phenomenon but also focused on the Hindu woman and home.<sup>23</sup> This has resulted in the erroneous reiteration of British missionary women's outreach to India as a rescue narrative focused almost exclusively on the high-caste, Hindu woman of the zenana, or women's quarters of the Hindu household.

The published missionary texts I explore in this study are a corrective to the claim that there is little published writing by missionary women during this period. More significantly, by focusing on magazines, rather than fiction, travelogues or single-authored studies, British women's outreach to Indian females can be recontextualised rather than overgeneralised. If a small oeuvre of texts by single authors delivers a one-dimensional and ideological uniform picture of whom British women sought to convert and how they attempted to prosecute it, then using the multiple perspectives of magazines, offers 'instead of a coherent progressive

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<sup>21</sup> Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 70.

<sup>22</sup> Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing*, pp. 70-72.

<sup>23</sup> 'However, in the LMS archive up to about 1860, women's published writing is difficult to find.' She argues that women's writing about India and Indian women was largely a late-nineteenth-century phenomenon: '[M]any such women became strong, well-represented figures and public advocates for missionary work, and as such they published an influential body of work. Female writers dominated certain genres or subjects – particularly narratives about children, family life, or women – in the late nineteenth century.' Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing*, p. 44.

sequence,...gaps, discontinuities and unexpected connections.’<sup>24</sup> Jane Garnett argues that the growth of magazines and periodicals in the nineteenth century enabled a shift in the representation and consumption of ‘knowledge’, in which ‘new models of reality’ came to be represented by magazines, where connections in knowledge and ideas ‘were made by the individual reader.’<sup>25</sup> The nineteenth-century periodical, especially magazine publications associated with empire, was particularly prone to ‘gaps, discontinuities and unexpected connections’; yet it became the lifeblood of metropolitan audiences seeking encounters, through texts, with the non-European world.

Religious and missionary periodicals expanded phenomenally in the nineteenth century, particularly after all tax was abolished on printed material in the 1850s.<sup>26</sup> Joseph L. Altholz, in his study of the religious press in Britain during the long nineteenth century, argues that in the fourfold increase in religious periodicals and magazines at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the missionary press dominated.<sup>27</sup> Yet, as Terry Barringer has argued, missionary magazines and periodicals are neglected as sources for ‘understanding how the Victorians perceived and portrayed the non-European world and how attitudes changed over time’.<sup>28</sup> The nineteenth-century mass media in Britain, comprising magazines, periodicals, and newspapers, has not been a fertile field for exploring the encounter between metropole and colony, in spite of the growth of bibliographical endeavours, studies and databases.<sup>29</sup> David Finkelstein and Douglas Peers, in an edited volume on India and the mass media in the nineteenth century, have argued that ‘studies of imperial discourse have for the most part been confined to a limited range of genres, such as novels, travel accounts, autobiographies and works of history.’<sup>30</sup> They suggest that

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<sup>24</sup> Jane Garnett, ‘Religious and Intellectual Life’, in *The Nineteenth Century: The British Isles 1815-1901*, ed. Colin Matthew (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 201.

<sup>25</sup> Jane Garnett, ‘Religious and Intellectual Life’, p. 201.

<sup>26</sup> David Finkelstein and Douglas M. Peers, ‘A Great System of Circulation’: Introducing India into the Nineteenth-Century Media,’ in *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth-Century Media*, eds. David Finkelstein and Douglas M. Peers (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Josef L. Altholz, *The Religious Press in Britain, 1760-1900* (New York and London: Greenwood, 1989). p. 123.

<sup>28</sup> Terry Barringer, ‘What Mrs Jellyby Might Have Read. Missionary Periodicals: A Neglected Source’. *Victorian Periodicals Review* 37:4 (2004): p. 46.

<sup>29</sup> Eds. J. Don Van and Rosemary T. Van Arsdel, *Periodicals of Queen Victoria’s Empire: An Exploration* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

<sup>30</sup> Finkelstein and Peers, ‘A Great System of Circulation’, p. 2.

what the mass media can offer in terms of the representation of India in writing are 'sites of contestation'.<sup>31</sup> The multi-authored text leads, inevitably, to the sense of inconsistency and discontinuity that Jane Garnett noted. More compellingly, as Finkelstein and Peers have suggested, periodicals and magazines had a greater readership than novels in nineteenth century Britain.<sup>32</sup>

Magazine material as a source for interpreting British women's outreach to Indian girls and women offers a site of contestation, rather than the uniformity derived from the works of fiction offered in Johnston's study. In Chapter Three, a case study of how orphans and work with orphans were represented in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* argues that the multiple perspectives deriving from missionary accounts by men and women across different regions and denominations in India, does not deliver any ideological coherence or rationale for this important area of work. Instead, readers were left with multiple perspectives, partly determined by the crude need of missionaries to raise funds through magazines, and partly through very conflicting ideas within the wider missionary community about missionaries acting *in loco parentis* to young Indians. The magazine representations of women's missionary work showed it as varied, ideologically inchoate and experimental, which reflects some of the complex realities of the missionary encounter with India.

Magazines, particularly the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* discussed in Chapter Three, also formed part of a strategy of visibility in the outreach of British women to Indian women and girls. Schools, institutions and magazines were arguably a form of Christian 'witness' to the working of providence in India, through which the Christian presence could be encountered and recorded. The continuous reporting of the work of women missionaries among Indian women and girls became, I argue, its own providential rationale for the rightfulness of women's missionary work and the expansion and success of the encounter. In Chapter Three I show that an account of the 1857 uprising by one of the missionaries sent to North India by the SPFEE is a testimonial to the survival of the women's missionary project in India and that it acts as a corrective to the dominant narratives of the event

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<sup>31</sup> Finkelstein and Peers, 'A Great System of Circulation', p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> Finkelstein and Peers, 'A Great System of Circulation', p. 3.

where Indian women are excluded and white European women are rendered fragile and suffering. As I discuss later in this chapter, schools and other institutions were important to a missionary strategy of visibility; yet when the presence of British women in India was threatened by the uprising, the female missionary presence, both British and Indian, re-established their authority and presence over the business of women's work in India.

British women missionaries, therefore, asserted their presence and authority in India through making visible their work in magazines and, as part of that, representing different groups of girls and women. The 'making visible' of the girls and women they sought to uplift was, undeniably, underpinned by orientalist ideologies and presuppositions.<sup>33</sup> I am not arguing that only the Indian women of the zenana were subject to the attitudes and ideologies that infantilised and denied the subjectivity of Indian women and girls. The making visible, for example, of Indian women's actions and behaviour through conversion narratives in magazines was often underpinned by a need to scrutinise and see visible evidence of their conversion. Eliza Kent argues that '[u]nder the unequal conditions of power in the colonies, the missionaries often met converts' claims to have embraced Christianity with scepticism and disbelief.'<sup>34</sup> The presence of Indians in the missionary magazine sources in this study is theoretically complex. On the one hand, there is almost no reliable or meaningful information about the identities and numbers of Indian women or girls in the institutions run by missionaries, which typifies what Jeffrey Cox describes as the 'nameless Indian' issue in much missionary writing and record keeping.<sup>35</sup> And, put simply, the accounts of Indian women and girls were still from the vantage point of the more powerful actors in the missionary encounter who gifted 'representation' to those who could not define themselves. As Antoinette Burton argues about the representation of Indian women in nineteenth-century British women's magazines:

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<sup>33</sup> Edward Said argues that 'Orientalism is premised upon exteriority, that is, on the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West'. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> Eliza Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Cox argues that the obfuscation of data about Indians in the administrative records of missions distorts the picture of, for example, the racial composition of Bible women working in nineteenth-century Punjab. Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 105.

[i]n a post-Enlightenment liberal framework, representation was extended only to those who could be acknowledged as subjects; and where political subjecthood was by definition masculine, subjectivity itself functioned by asserting authority over others...Indian women, imagined as colonized and dependent on British feminists for the representation of their cause, were evidence of the kind of conquering power that was required of those who sought admission as full citizens of the imperial nation-state.<sup>36</sup>

However many magazine sources replicate the orientalism of other forms of writing, they offer a more varied, conflicting and multi-authored account of the missionary encounter between British women and Indian women and girls. Missionary work cannot be presented as monolithic: the representations vary across magazines, particularly those explored in this thesis, which were effectively interdenominational, and which represented the work and aspirations of foreign mission societies with varied attitudes to outreach.

### **What was built: missionary work by British women in India**

British missionary women largely sought inclusion in mainstream missionary strategies being conducted in mid nineteenth-century India. They sought to build schools, orphanages and engage in colonial initiatives for vernacular education. The women missionaries of the three societies at the heart of this study mostly shared their central missionary strategy with men: they wanted to build institutions and sought groups of young people they imagined could create a more permanent Christian presence in India.

Building schools and orphanages, as Jeffrey Cox argues, articulated a visible Christian endeavour: ‘so convinced were missionaries of the efficacy of the Christian ethos in an institutional setting that they genuinely believed in an influence that was visible.’<sup>37</sup> Cox argues that early missionary strategies based on defamatory attacks on Hinduism were replaced by the emphasis on a missionary institutional presence in the second half of the nineteenth century. Cox exemplifies this shift in a quote from the Baptist missionary F.W Hale who claimed that institutions ‘have

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<sup>36</sup> Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History*, p. 19.

<sup>37</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 68.

preached the Gospel as the tongue could never do.’<sup>38</sup> This thesis contends that women also sought an institutional presence and visibility from the beginning of their outreach to the females of India, and that these aspirations were, in reality, supported and facilitated by their husbands, if they were married, and by other male missionaries within their networks.

Through exploring the archival material related to both men’s and women’s missions, it is clear that the very ‘separate’ nature of much missionary work has also been overstated. Missionary schooling has been constructed as an aggressively male enterprise in the mid nineteenth century. Much of this derives from the defamatory and homosocial rhetoric that shaped some missionary accounts of using schools as a means of attracting high-caste Brahmin and bhadralok to Christianity, as I show in Chapter Five. But these accounts have been read as reflecting a widespread consensus and reality among Protestant missionaries. In a critique of Hayden Bellenoit’s work on late colonial missionary education in India, Jeffrey Cox points out how easy it is to read such gendered accounts of missionary work at face value: Cox questions the

acceptance — albeit in a revisionist form — of a missionary narrative of male, clerical heroism. Even if the story is limited to education (and missionaries were doing a lot more than that), important people are marginalized in his book. One would never know from reading Bellenoit that a majority of Protestant missionaries to north India were women and that these women were deeply involved with the education of Indian women.<sup>39</sup>

The gendered narrative of missionary work can separate male and female endeavour, assigning men the confrontational role of reforming Hindu society through schooling urban, high-caste young Indians and prosecuting a policy of ‘stratified diffusion’, while women missionaries confronted their future wives, mothers and sisters in the zenana.<sup>40</sup>

Key studies have argued that schooling orphans, mixed-race children, or lower-caste Indians was, if it happened at all, a virtue of necessity until opportunities for

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<sup>38</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 76.

<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey Cox, ‘Review of Missionary Education and Empire in Late Colonial India, 1860-1920 by Hayden. J.A. Bellenoit’ in *Victorian Studies* 4 (2009): pp. 750-751.

<sup>40</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 71. This is a useful term to describe a theory of using elite education to ‘influence the upper classes and those below will follow.’



zenana work emerged, particularly after 1857. In an influential article on how missionaries developed a zenana-focused ideology of female education in the mid nineteenth century, David Savage argued that schooling through public institutions became displaced by ‘a zenana strategy’ which enabled missionaries to cohere ‘the essential linkages within a missionary-colonial ideology of education’.<sup>41</sup> Anna Johnston argued that schools failed to deliver access to the higher castes and ‘[b]y the mid to late nineteenth century, evangelising the zenana came to be seen as an integral part of the Christianisation of India...’<sup>42</sup> The work of Geraldine Forbes, Hayden Bellenoit, and even Jeffrey Cox at times characterises zenana education as the practice or goal of British women’s missionary endeavour in nineteenth-century India, summarised by Bellenoit’s statement that, ‘[m]ost female educational efforts, importantly were directed towards *Zenana*...education, which witnessed substantial growth during the latter nineteenth century’.<sup>43</sup> Establishing India uses archival material to challenge a story that mid nineteenth-century missionary women aspired primarily to enter the Hindu home in order to affect ‘cultural transformation’ through the imposition of Victorian gender ideologies.

This thesis is not a simple refutation of zenana work because that would not be historically accurate: there were ample examples of male missionaries such as Thomas Smith and John Fordyce who argued for focusing on zenana work in the context of early Scottish missions and there were female missionaries like Hannah Mullens of Calcutta who promoted this work in print and practice. However, I explain in Chapter Four that the SPFEE sought to build institutions and develop policies that placed them within more mainstream missionary concerns, including those that were being evolved by male societies. Not only did the SPFEE establish a flagship school that was supported, indeed *suggested*, by male missionaries, but also the school was taken up by other Christian societies in India, run by men, as a model project.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> David W. Savage, ‘Missionaries and the Development of a Colonial Ideology of Female Education in India’, in *Gender and History* 9 (1997): p. 213

<sup>42</sup> Johnston, *Missionary Writing*, p. 71; for her discussion of education see, pp. 67-72.

<sup>43</sup> Bellenoit, *Missionary Education*, p. 52.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter Four

The story of British women's missionary work that emerges in *Establishing India* is one of inclusion: in spite of the rhetoric, women's work was central to Scottish male missionaries and women also sought inclusion in wider issues related to colonial education in mid nineteenth-century India, and Wood's Educational Despatch in particular. The SPFEE deliberately attempted to enter a discourse of missionary education and its relationship to the colonial state, which was being developed through male officials and male missionaries in the Educational Despatch of 1854. In Chapter Six, through an examination of archival material related to both the male and female Scottish missionary societies of the period, it becomes clear that the separatist model of male and female missionary work is problematic. Not only did male missionaries, particularly after the Disruption of 1843, support the expensive business of building very visible institutions for Scottish women to conduct their outreach work in India, but also many men made outreach work to Indian women central to their own careers.

This is not to argue that these missions were 'ungendered'. It clearly was gendered: the work of Catherine Hall and Eliza Kent explores, in the contexts of Jamaica and Southern India respectively, how missionaries shaped their converts' expressions of masculinity and femininity according to the gendered expectations of white, European, Victorian women.<sup>45</sup> What I am arguing is that a separatist narrative that relegates women's work to the zenana misrepresents the variety of work they did and ignores some of the groups they aspired to uplift in India.

By questioning whether what happened in India was embodied in a rather Manichean narrative about exemplary British women bringing light to the degraded women of the zenana, this thesis reconsiders the historical actors in the mid nineteenth-century encounter. Both the women missionaries themselves and the groups they sought to uplift are reconsidered in Chapters Two and Four. The work of the Comaroffs on the London Missionary Society's early nineteenth-century encounter with the Southern Tswana people of South Africa rightly called for historians or anthropologists of missions not to treat evangelists as 'a taken-for-

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<sup>45</sup> See Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002). Hall's ideas will be discussed in Chapter Three. See also Kent, *Converting Women*.

granted, faceless presence on the colonial stage', but as 'individuals possessed of socially conditioned biographies that make a difference.'<sup>46</sup> Their scholarship attends to how these early missionaries were, like Robert Moffat, 'dominated by the currents of the age – hardening class divisions, the transformation of the countryside and the peasantry' and 'his evangelical career was dedicated to the re-enactment of his own life amidst those currents.'<sup>47</sup>

Yet it is problematic to argue that missionaries were straightforward incubators and conveyor currents for the transformations or ideologies of their age, on two counts. Rhonda Semple used recruitment records, letters and interview material to argue about the biographies, expectations and attitudes of women applying to join missionary societies from 1865 onwards.<sup>48</sup> Semple made assumptions about the values and attitudes of missionary recruits based on this denominational data which simply does not exist in earlier records. She also argues that 'individual character and belief' are crucial to understanding the 'development of a specific mission or station'; she attributes significance to nationality, arguing that individuals could exhibit 'Scottish qualities' of 'educational attainment, theological rigour, and practicality.'<sup>49</sup>

I have attempted, in Chapter Two in particular, to construct what characteristics and expectations were embodied in the role of the British woman missionary to be sent to India. I also agree with Esther Breitenbach in her argument that for the Scots, missions expressed a sense of national identity, and I argue in Chapter Five that this was important to how Scottish women framed their early interest in foreign missions.<sup>50</sup> However, biographical data is too unreliable and limited to be able to make extensive assumptions about the social, cultural or, sometimes, the national provenance of most of the women missionaries in this study. Secondly, it cannot be assumed that missionary women's work and behaviour in India was shaped, like Robert Moffat's, by the 'currents of the age', or metropolitan discourses of gender and India absorbed in Britain. In Chapter Two, I argue that assumptions about what

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<sup>46</sup> Comaroffs, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 54.

<sup>47</sup> Comaroffs, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 83.

<sup>48</sup> Semple, *Missionary Women*, pp. 7-28.

<sup>49</sup> Quotes from Semple, *Missionary Women*, p. 17; p.10.

<sup>50</sup> Breitenbach, *Empire and Scottish Society*.

evangelical women believed about India, and what ideologies of imperial feminism might have suggested about a British woman's role in the uplift of the Indian female were not necessarily internalised, and how, instead, encounters with colonial informants from overseas provided the early impetus for outreach in India.

The other parties in the missionary encounter are even more opaque and problematic, even though my work dismantles the fiction that they were simply high-caste Hindu women. Some recent histories of European missions to India have revisited a long-standing narrative about missionaries as cultural imperialists who imposed a European religion on passive individuals and communities. This thesis is not a work of historical anthropology in which I am able to examine evidence about the responses, resistance or motives of the groups of females in India who encountered the missionaries. But it is possible to discuss who the missionary organisations encountered, and in Chapter Four, I argue that the SPFEE focused on the education of mixed-race girls, who constituted a socially and racially marginal group in India. As the historical anthropologist Eliza Kent argues, '[i]t is notoriously difficult to assess the degree of agency wielded by social actors in any historical era, especially those whose fields of action are consistently constrained by poverty, exploitation, ill health, violence and degradation.'<sup>51</sup>

But by exploring the work of British women beyond a narrative of the white female aggressor seeking to make visible the passive Hindu woman in the zenana, one can recalibrate crude narratives of coercion and powerlessness in the missionary encounter, and by doing this one can engage more historically with some of the marginal groups who were often the focus of uplift. The scholarship of Robert Eric Frykenberg, Eliza Kent, Christopher Harding and Jeffrey Cox decentres the confrontation between the high-caste Hindu and the European missionary in India.<sup>52</sup> This recent work explores the attraction and dynamics of Christian conversion among a number of socially and politically marginal groups, as well as the nature of religious conversion, social agency and power relationships.

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<sup>51</sup> Kent, *Converting Women*, p. 8.

<sup>52</sup> See Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From the Beginnings to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Christopher Harding, *Religious Transformation in South Asia: The Meanings of Conversion in Colonial Punjab* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Even though I cannot provide evidence for what ‘uplift’ or ‘conversion’ might have meant to the mixed-race girls who attended the SPFEE’s boarding school in Mussoorie, the work of recent scholars on how different communities sought Christianity has enabled an analysis beyond, as Jeffrey Cox summarises it, ‘the old missionary history trope of agency/response.’<sup>53</sup> The work of Eliza Kent is particularly important in affirming that any study of the missionary encounter ‘did not involve the simple imposition of Western gender roles and expectations onto the bodies of colonial subjects.’<sup>54</sup> Kent argues, in the context of mass conversions in Southern India, that ‘the influence of social aspiration’ for marginal groups was one of a number of important factors for seekers of Christianity.<sup>55</sup> I argue that this is crucial to understanding why the mixed-race community of the mid nineteenth century might have been attracted to what the SPFEE offered, and that the encounter was not simply between the exemplary white missionary woman and the degraded and passive Indian female.

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<sup>53</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> Kent, *Converting Women*, p. 11.

<sup>55</sup> Kent, *Converting Women*, p. 27.

## Chapter Two: Establishing India 1820-1850

### Introduction

In 1834, a London-based foreign missionary society became the first British, Protestant mission run by women to train and send single women missionaries to evangelise overseas. The Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East (SPFEE) sought the conversion of ‘heathen’ females through Christian education and the sponsorship of schools and orphanages in the expanding missionary world.<sup>1</sup> Its committee members, vice presidents and presidents were evangelical women from London. The society was founded by the Reverend Baptist Wriothsley Noel, the minister of the Anglican St John’s Chapel on Bedford Row in Bloomsbury, after his meeting with David Abeel, an American missionary. The SPFEE trained women missionaries as teachers in London, mainly at the model Borough Road School, which was run by the British and Foreign School Society.<sup>2</sup> Once an agent, as she was called, completed her training, her travel expenses were paid by the society and she was dispatched to do missionary work wherever there was an appropriate opening. The SPFEE was interdenominational and relied on invitations by other large, British, Protestant foreign mission organisations to conduct educational work at overseas mission stations. The financial obligations of the SPFEE notionally ended as the single woman missionary entered the service of the foreign missionary society working in India, China or a variety of other fields.

In the 1830s and 1840s, the SPFEE could not *establish* missions or schools overseas. This was the provenance of denominational foreign missions run by men,

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<sup>1</sup> The society’s name was popularly abbreviated to the FES (Female Education Society). For clarity, and to differentiate it from the Scottish women’s missionary societies, I abbreviate it to the SPFEE.

<sup>2</sup> This had been established by Joseph Lancaster in 1797. The school and methods were used for training teachers by the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS). Alison Twells describes the Lancastrian System, which was non-denominational, as ‘unremarkable for the content of its curriculum, combining religious instruction with spelling, reading and writing; girls...were instructed in needlework.’ Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle-Class, 1792-1850: the ‘Heathen’ at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 65. The Lancastrian system used class monitors, as did the system devised by Andrew Bell, who became a rival to Lancaster in the religious politics of nineteenth-century elementary schooling. See M.A. Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal, 1793-1837* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 5-13.

and single women missionaries had no official access to overseas work in the mainstream denominational foreign missions until the second half of the nineteenth century. However, women's missionary work, through the wives, daughters, and sisters of missionaries, was well established in India by 1834 and single women were invited by the large British foreign missions like the Church Missionary Society (CMS) or the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), to supplement their work. As a metropolitan society, the SPFEE could raise funds for the training of women missionaries and the sponsoring of schools, orphanages and projects overseas.<sup>3</sup> The economic activity of the SPFEE is complex: the London committee did not establish separate financial records until the 1860s and much of its income, as recorded in committee minutes, was actually made up of donations sent by individuals or auxiliaries that were designated for a specific purpose and not available for central funds.<sup>4</sup>

The SPFEE was founded with an initial focus on China, but expanded quickly into India, and then to South Africa, Lebanon and Syria in the period up to 1870. Its first woman missionary was sent to Malacca in 1836 and by 1868, India was well established as its centre of missionary activity with ten of its twenty-four women missionaries stationed there.<sup>5</sup> Although the overall number of missionary women sent overseas was small, the society achieved a national presence and became crucial to the development of missionary work to the women and girls of India.

The SPFEE was established in 1834 following a period of growing philanthropic and missionary activity, particularly in the 1820s, by British women evangelicals. Alison Twells, in her study of missionary and philanthropic activity in Sheffield in the early nineteenth century, argues that there evolved a 'missionary philanthropic movement' in England that encompassed the moral reform and Christian uplift of both the 'heathen' at home and overseas, and which was particularly important to the formation of the English middle class.<sup>6</sup> English women, argues Twells, were 'at the

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of women's fund raising activities and economic contribution to missionary societies, see F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 23-32.

<sup>4</sup> I explore this aspect of their finances in Chapter Three, when discussing orphan sponsorship.

<sup>5</sup> SPFEE, *The Thirty-Fourth Annual Report of the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East* (London: Suter and Alexander, 1864), p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> Twells, *Civilising Mission*, p. 2.

heart of the missionary philanthropic movement' in terms of their activities within voluntary societies.<sup>7</sup> These organisations included the Bible Society, which ministered to the godless at home, as well as missionary societies, which attempted to convert the heathen overseas. Twells' study explores how missionary philanthropy provided the context for women like Hannah More, the eighteenth-century playwright turned nineteenth-century evangelical, to theorise about women's 'active domesticity', which was supported from scriptural readings of figures like Lydia and Priscilla from the New Testament.<sup>8</sup> This missionary philanthropic culture was also 'lived' and integrated into the domestic lives of evangelical women. An early nineteenth-century woman's role in this emerging 'national culture' was also centred on raising children as active participants in missionary culture, as well as constructing a 'missionary domesticity' at home, where the injunction and entitlement to imagine oneself as participating in local and global uplift was incubated.<sup>9</sup>

There is another context to the emergence of a women's voluntary society focused on the uplift of non-Europeans: the anti-slavery campaigns of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Clare Midgley's study explores the involvement of British women in different phases and aspects of the anti-slavery campaigns up until 1870. Although evangelicals distanced themselves from the initial campaign against the slave trade after the French Revolution for fear of being associated with radical politics, British women had an early opportunity to participate in activities predicated on arguments 'that women should take action on behalf of other women.'<sup>10</sup> Discourses of the uplift of degraded women overseas were rehearsed in the late eighteenth century, even if the social action was subsequently abandoned by evangelicals.

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<sup>7</sup> Twells, *Civilising Mission*, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Twells, *Civilising Mission*, p. 44.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of an emerging national culture, see Twells, *Civilising Mission*, p. 2; for a discussion of missionary domesticity, see pp. 83-98; also see Alison Twells, 'Missionary Domesticity, Global Reform and 'Women's Sphere' in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Gender and History*, 2 (2006): pp. 266-284.

<sup>10</sup> Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 24. For a discussion of the early campaign against the slave trade when there was a broad social spectrum of support and then for the subsequent decline in evangelical support, see Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, pp. 24-29.



These contexts set the broader historical scene for the establishment of the SPFEE in 1834, and this chapter explores how Indian women and girls became the focus of the society's missionary endeavours in its first two decades. At one level, the link between a national women's missionary society and the uplift of Indian women seems obvious: the early missionary press was saturated with accounts of the degradation of Indian women and calls for their humanitarian plight to be embraced by the women of Britain. But I argue that these arguments and discourses did not result in India being straightforwardly adopted by the SPFEE on the basis of its humanitarian claims in the missionary press of the 1820s. I suggest that these discourses of Indian women in the missionary press have been overstated as an influence on early women's missions and that there were other factors that shaped how this organisation decided on who and where in the missionary world required uplift. What seemed to inflect the foreign mission causes and people that the SPFEE took up between 1830 and 1850 was often motivated by personal encounters and interactions.

However, by the 1850s India did become privileged as a field of foreign missionary endeavour for evangelical women in England by the SPFEE. Yet there is little evidence for outreach to Indian women being underpinned by clear humanitarian or ideological reasoning. Instead, decisions about who or how to uplift in India were often dictated by personal opinion and contact, rather than policy or strategy until the 1850s, and so the personal dimension is a persistent element in the SPFEE's work. Finally, I argue that one can discern the makings of later 'policies' or more 'schematised' attitudes towards Indian females by the SPFEE through two case studies of early women missionaries. The skirmish between a Miss Cravan of Madras and her Church Missionary Society (CMS) host reveals the aspiration to build institutions and schools. The second case study in this chapter, the trial of Miss Mackay for the murder of her niece in Benares, hints at how the missionary woman might be expected to take a role in the reclamation of girls deemed '*Indianised*'.

### Contexts for early women's missions: India in the 'Missionary Register'

The *Missionary Register* and its representation of India and Indian women in the 1820s are crucial to interpreting the impact of missionary writing and rhetoric on the attitudes and activities of the evangelical women who formed the SPFEE in London in the 1830s.<sup>11</sup> The magazine was important to the SPFEE in the years before it launched its own publication, the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, in 1853 and the status of the SPFEE as a national missionary organisation was enhanced by its regular appearances in the *Missionary Register* from 1834 onwards, alongside other British denominational foreign missions.<sup>12</sup> Although connected to the Church of England-based Church Missionary Society (CMS), the *Missionary Register* became the *de facto* interdenominational publication for the English missionary public in the early to mid nineteenth century, reporting on both local philanthropic societies and foreign mission organisations from Europe and the United States.

The importance of the *Missionary Register* was such that the Scottish Missionary Society (SMS), an interdenominational foreign mission society, set up an equivalent magazine in 1820, inspired by the success of the *Missionary Register* in boosting both funds and support for the CMS:

[t]he Church of England Missionary Society, the income of which has, in a very few years, increased from £2000 to £30,000, has found that the circulation of its Missionary Register has been the most important instrument in effecting this great enlargement of its fund; and it has marked with much satisfaction that the collateral advantages which have resulted from the increase in missionary zeal, which this great accession to its fund necessarily implies, have been of a most important character.<sup>13</sup>

A rapid growth in funding, ever crucial to the business of expensive foreign missions, was attributed to the advent of the magazine. But a 'collateral advantage' was the growth in missionary interest, suggesting that early missionary magazines acted as a crucial conduit of accounts about and representations of India, as well as the wider missionary world, in the decades before the establishment of the SPFEE. It

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of the frequency of publication and circulation figures of the *Missionary Register* and other missionary periodicals, see Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant Missionary Constructions of Hinduism, 1793-1900* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006), pp. 205-211.

<sup>12</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1834, pp. 390-396.

<sup>13</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1821, p. 1.

was through the pages of periodicals such as these, rather than through novels, learned studies or travelogues, that many evangelical supporters of foreign missions encountered missionary constructions of India and Indian females.<sup>14</sup>

The *Missionary Register* was crucial to establishing popular evangelical discourses about India during a highly formative period in the British Protestant missionary movement in the early nineteenth century. Much of the writing that appeared in the missionary periodical press established ideas about India that, according to Geoffrey Oddie, shaped evangelicals' attitudes for decades.<sup>15</sup> Missionary accounts of Indian women in the 1820s were generally embedded in ideas about Hinduism and caste as defining features of Indian society, religion and culture. The *Missionary Register* helped develop and consolidate the discourses that framed the figure of the Indian female and her humanitarian plight. Popular writing by and for British women was already established by the end of the eighteenth century as a means of dramatising transnational and humanitarian issues. Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, a seventeenth-century popular romance that used the heroic figure of an African slave, 'whose honour was such as he had never violated a word in his life,' explored the brutality of the Caribbean slave trade on the life and human relationships of an idealised male protagonist.<sup>16</sup> The anti-slavery poetry of eighteenth-century British women, from the milk maid Ann Yearsley to the evangelical writer Hannah More, used the suffering of the enslaved to argue for humanitarian action, although often through the heroic misery of male rather than female figures.<sup>17</sup> Clare Midgley argues that the humanitarian claims of the enslaved, represented through tracts, periodicals, newspapers and poetry, had been central to the involvement of evangelical, as well as radical, women in the anti-slavery campaigns of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Chapter One of this thesis.

<sup>15</sup> Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism*, pp. 205-230.

<sup>16</sup> Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, The Rover and Other Works*, ed. Janet Todd (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 103. For an analysis of *Oroonoko* that argues for the importance of gender in its reading, see Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 23-63.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Ann Yearsley, *Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade* (London: C.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1788), and Hannah More, *Slavery, a Poem* (London: 1788).

<sup>18</sup> Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, pp. 29-35; pp. 56-60.

Many of the works that informed evangelical ideas about India and Indian females were filleted and made accessible through the pages of the *Missionary Register*. Caste, Hinduism, and the practice of sati were represented through the work of seminal writers like the Catholic missionary, the Abbé Dubois, the Bengali reformer, Ram Mohun Roy, and the Baptist missionary, William Ward. The Abbé Dubois provided a foundational study of caste in the first half of the nineteenth century, particularly through the publication of his *Description of the Character, Manners, and Customs of the People of India, and of their Institutions, Religious and Civil* in 1816. The *Missionary Register* of 1816 carried an extensive extract of a letter written from Dubois when he was in Mysore Country in 1815, which summarised some of his ideas about caste, especially in relation to Indian Christians. Dubois was generally dismissive of Indian Christians, arguing that missionaries seemed only to have real success with ‘outcasts.’<sup>19</sup> Dubois’s letter also articulated what would become an on-going debate among missionaries about the relationship between caste and Hinduism, and the tensions between understanding caste as either a civil or a religious phenomenon. Dubois, in this letter, suggested that caste had a fundamental civil nature, rather than a religious one, given that it was prevalent among Indian Christians long after notional conversion and given that converts could not accept the concept of equality between former caste groups.<sup>20</sup> His work would lay the groundwork for many evangelicals’ accounts of Indian society and culture, which were often totalising and simplified, and the publication of his work in the *Missionary Register* gave his ideas greater prominence among evangelicals at home.

Hinduism was another system through which nineteenth-century evangelicals, among other colonising groups, refracted India in their ideas and writing. The *Missionary Register* popularised and circulated accounts of Hinduism as a unified,

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<sup>19</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1816, p. 443.

<sup>20</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1816, p. 445. For a discussion of Abbé Dubois and missionary views on caste, see Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 21-28. For the classic anthropological discussion of the Abbé Dubois and others related to the reception of caste in Europe, see Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: the Caste System and its Implications* (London: Paladin, 1972), pp. 21-32. For a critique of Dumont and the assessment of his legacy as replicating totalising theories of Indian society, see Ursula M. Sharma and Mary Searle-Chatterjee, ‘Introduction’ in *Contextualising Caste: post-Dumontian Approaches*, eds. Ursula M. Sharma and Mary Searle-Chatterjee (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994), pp. 1-20.

ancient religion, which implied that India was both ‘timeless’ and premodern.<sup>21</sup>

Richard King has argued that this idea of Hinduism as a world religion is relatively modern and a product of Western colonisation that located ‘the core of Indian religiosity in certain Sanskrit texts’ and interpreted Indian religion ‘in terms of a normative definition of religion based upon contemporary Western understanding of the Judaeo-Christian traditions.’<sup>22</sup> King argues that Ram Mohun Roy, the nineteenth-century Bengali reformer, was important to the early nineteenth-century popularisation of the idea of Hinduism as ‘a signifier of a unified, all embracing and independent religious entity in both Western and Indian circles,’ as well as being part of a group of indigenous informants from the *brahmāna* castes.<sup>23</sup>

Like the Abbé Dubois, Ram Mohun Roy was a key figure in the interpretation of India to an evangelical audience, and the *Missionary Register* published a series of articles about him which enabled ordinary evangelical readers to access his ideas. In 1816, the *Missionary Register* published a commentary on Ram Mohun Roy’s tract, *Translation of an Abridgment of the Vedant, or Resolution of all the Veds; the most celebrated and revered work of Brahminical Theology; establishing the Unity of the Supreme Being; and that He alone is the object of Propitiation and Worship*. In arguing against ‘idolatry’ and establishing a case for monotheism, Ram Mohun Roy claimed to be restoring Hindu religious practice to its true, textual authority in the *Vedant*, ‘the most highly revered [source texts] by all Hindoos; and in place of the more diffuse arguments of the Veds, [the one which] is always referred to as equal authority.’<sup>24</sup> Roy acts as a Brahminical authority on ‘Hinduism’, arguing for its essential, textual provenance, and becoming a translator for those interested in India: ‘[t]he present [tract] is an endeavour to render an abridgement of the same into English; by which I expect to prove to my European Friends, that the superstitious practices, which deform the Hindoo Religion have nothing to do with the pure spirit of its dictates.’<sup>25</sup> As an informant, Ram Mohun Roy communicated to a less learned evangelical audience in England the idea that ‘Hinduism’ was coherently located in

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<sup>21</sup> See Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism*, pp. 203-230.

<sup>22</sup> Richard King, ‘Orientalism and the Modern Myth of “Hinduism”’, *Numen* 46 (1999): pp. 146-185.

<sup>23</sup> King, ‘Orientalism and the Modern Myth of “Hinduism”’, p.165.

<sup>24</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1816, p. 372.

<sup>25</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1816, p. 372.

‘the Hindoo Scriptures’.<sup>26</sup> In 1818 two more translations by Roy were published in the *Missionary Register*, purporting to be chapters of the ‘Veds’ and claiming that they were ‘of unquestionable authority among all Hindoos’.<sup>27</sup>

Another source of information came from the writing and published speeches of the Serampore Baptist missionary, William Ward, which were central to the early nineteenth-century representation of sati for evangelicals in Britain. Ward’s writing in the *Missionary Register* also helped advance many of the humanitarian arguments about the duty of British women to uplift and educate Indian females. Ward’s written work, in the form of extracts, appeared in the *Missionary Register* from 1813 onwards and his writing on the plight of Indian females was part of the foundation myth of British women’s missions to India. A Miss Cooke, formerly the governess to the Earl of Mulgrave’s family, went to India as a single woman missionary in 1821.<sup>28</sup> Her work in Calcutta led to the establishment of the Central School at the end of the 1820s, which was a celebrated institution for female education in India and which was fulsomely supported by women at home.<sup>29</sup> Even in 1868 after her death, Mrs Wilson (Cooke) was a secure part of the foundation myth of British women’s missions, and a memoir of her life clearly stated how Ward’s writing on Indian females was the inspiration for her educational mission to Indian women in the early 1820s:

[h]er thoughts were directed to the work of female education in India by the published appeal to the ladies of Liverpool, by the Rev. W. Ward, of Serampore. At that time no distinct effort had been made to educate the Hindu females, and the task appeared to be surrounded by insuperable difficulties.<sup>30</sup>

This link between the discourses of sati in Britain, particularly through the pages of the *Missionary Register*, in the 1820s and the development of British women’s missions on a national scale in the 1830s is made most forcefully by Clare Midgley.

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<sup>26</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1818, p. 519.

<sup>27</sup> In 1816, Roy claimed that the ‘whole body of the Hindoo Theology, Law, and Literature, is contained in the Veds, which are affirmed as coeval with creation.’ See the *Missionary Register*, 1816, p. 372. He argued that this collection of sources were, ‘extremely voluminous,’ and ‘in many passages seemingly confused and contradictory.’ See the *Missionary Register*, 1816, p. 372; quote from *Missionary Register*, 1818, p. 519.

<sup>28</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1868, p. 54.

<sup>29</sup> See Priscilla Chapman, *Hindoo Female Education* (London: R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1839), pp. 75-84.

<sup>30</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1868, p. 54.

Midgley's study focuses on the nineteenth-century British women who were involved in a variety of humanitarian causes across the British Empire and she argues that Indian females were privileged in the 1820s as the humanitarian focus for 'women associated with the evangelical missionary movement.'<sup>31</sup> She characterises the 1820s as a period in England when social action on behalf of Indian females in the form of anti-sati campaigns became 'linked to garnering female support for the foreign missionary enterprise and also led to English women being drawn into organising the dispatch of the first single women [Miss Cooke] to India to provide Christian education for Indian girls and women.'<sup>32</sup>

Midgley's work explores how the cause of uplifting Indian women through education evolved in the 1820s, and how central Ward's accounts of sati were to galvanising different forms of women's activity, from anti-sati petitions to the formation of an early missionary Ladies' East India Female Education Society in 1829.<sup>33</sup> For Midgley, the cause of India and its women became privileged in what she terms the 'evangelical reform agenda' from 1790 to 1830.<sup>34</sup> The work of Ward was crucial for Midgley in activating the interest of British women about India and for the development on discourses of sati.<sup>35</sup> Building on evangelical ideologies of the family, early women missionary supporters 'couched their opposition to *sati* in terms of an Indian woman's duty as a mother... Here, we see 'women's mission to women' taking on an imperial dimension at a very early stage. Here, too, we see the evangelical ideology of domesticity being deployed to promote a pro-imperial message.'<sup>36</sup> Midgley is adamant that this elision of evangelical domestic ideology and pro-imperial message cohered around sati for British evangelical women: '[i]n such ways were evangelical British women encouraged to imagine that they had the

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<sup>31</sup> Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), p. 65.

<sup>32</sup> Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, p. 65.

<sup>33</sup> Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, pp. 74-76.

<sup>34</sup> Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, p. 65.

<sup>35</sup> Lata Mani also discusses Ward's accounts of sati in the *Missionary Register* but places more emphasis on its fundraising intentionality than its call to British women for missionary action. See Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India, 1780-1833* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 121-157. For a discussion of how accounts of sati were deployed to encourage women to engage in the anti-sati cause at home, see Andrea Major, *Pious Flames: European Encounters with Sati* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 173-179.

<sup>36</sup> Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, pp. 72-3.



power, under the auspices of the British Empire, to extend their own privileges to other women, and so to mitigate what Wilberforce had labelled the ‘family, fireside evils’ of ‘Hindoostan’, epitomised in the horror of *sati*.<sup>37</sup>

Midgley’s discussion of sati and its impact on evangelical women in the early nineteenth century assumes that responses to reports of the practice resulted in social action, from the formation of missionary auxiliaries, the support for active mission work by a woman in India, to political action in terms of petitioning. It is this, apparently straightforward, link to social action in the form of early women’s *missions* to India that is, I argue, contestable. This does not, however, detract from the importance of evangelical discourses of sati, or the evangelical ideologies embedded in them. Instead of inspiring missionary mobilisation focused on the privileged status of the Indian woman, the discourses of Indian women, and particularly sati, in the early missionary press gave British women the entitlement to have more general involvement in active philanthropy. Andrea Major argues that sati embodied a respectable cause ‘that women were encouraged to get involved in...with suitable themes such as morality and family, or which involved the uplift of other women.’<sup>38</sup>

In Chapter Six, I explore how Scottish women used the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* to negotiate an entitlement to engage in active Christian philanthropic activity. These articles focused on work with Bible societies to uplift the ‘heathen’ at home, and the uplift of Greek, not Indian, women. Therefore a variety of causes were deployed in the early missionary press to facilitate the entitlement of British women to engage in active philanthropy. The figure of the Indian woman became, therefore, a facilitator, rather than an exclusive focus, of early women’s missionary organisations.

### **Establishing India**

Missionary discourses in magazines such as the *Missionary Register* of the 1820s did indeed foreground the ideological and humanitarian claims of Indian females for

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<sup>37</sup> Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, p. 73.

<sup>38</sup> Major, *Pious Flames*, p. 177.



British evangelical women. Yet the SPFEE, as the first women's foreign mission society with national aspirations, was founded with the initial intention of evangelising China. This does not detract from the fact that the humanitarian plight of Indian females was certainly foregrounded in the missionary press of the period, as I shall explore later in this section. Nor does this suggest that evangelical woman in Britain ignored missionary reports of Indian females, in spite of reading accounts of sati in the missionary press. The fact that the SPFEE had an initial focus on China simply means that missionary discourses of Indian women did not translate straightforwardly into making the females of India, or even India itself, a *privileged* focus of outreach for the first national missionary organisation for women. The reason, I would suggest, is that early choices about where and to whom to direct the SPFEE's resources were often founded in personal, face-to-face, encounters with missionaries and other colonial informants. These early personal encounters were vital to securing sponsorship for a mission station or individual missionary and for building transnational networks. Such encounters could be quite opportunistic, but the personal petition rivalled missionary discourses of Indian women in terms of forming early decisions by the SPFEE about where uplift and missionary support were most urgently needed.

The fact that China was established as the first field of interest for the SPFEE shows how the personal encounter had a greater impact initially than the humanitarian discourses in the missionary press. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century, China never rivalled India in terms of humanitarian claims in the missionary press. In 1814, when the London Missionary Society (LMS) sent William Milne to Canton to join the Reverend Robert Morrison who was translating the Bible into Chinese, the *Missionary Register* published a letter written by Milne to argue the claims of the field in China:

[f]rom the land of China, I beg leave for a moment to address you...allow me, in the name of Three Hundred Millions of Pagans, a considerable proportion of whom can read, and all of whom understand the same language, to entreat that your Christian Benevolence may be extended to them.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1814, p. 456.

Milne's claim for China was based here on population and linguistic uniformity and it was the editorial commentary on the LMS's letter that argued that China 'presented a most interesting and affecting spectacle to the Christian Philanthropist', including 'blind and stupid idolatry, with all its attendant degradations and cruelties.'<sup>40</sup> Yet these alleged horrors were generally unreported and unspecified and, in 1816, it became clear that little was actually known of China outside the limits of Macau, a Portuguese colony off the South China coast, and Canton, a city in the South China mainland open to overseas traders for limited periods of the year. Even Morrison's accounts underscored the ignorance of this potential field of missionary work when he claimed that he 'was grieved...that I cannot obtain particulars respecting the effects of the Divine Book sent to China. They are but a drop thrown in the ocean...'<sup>41</sup>

The *Missionary Register* of 1820 exemplified how limited the claims of humanitarian need in China were, particularly when confronted with the reporting of India. In 1820 the magazine contained multiple accounts of sati, 'Hindoo Cruelties', voluntary deaths by fasting in India, fatal superstitions, Hindoo tracts against sati and appeals on behalf of Indian women.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, there was only one attempt in the magazine to attract female interest in a future Chinese girls' school in Pulo Penang, an island in the Straits of Malacca.<sup>43</sup> Mrs Beighton, a missionary wife, wrote a one-paragraph appeal that claimed:

[t]he Chinese...have little affection for their female children, and think them unworthy of any instruction; and when females grow up, they are treated like brutes. If a man speaks of his wife, he will say – 'My dog,' or 'My worthless woman within.' Let Christian Females remember to what they owe their advantages, and they will not think any sacrifices too great, as that they may promote the cause of Christ.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1814, p. 458.

<sup>41</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1816, p. 262.

<sup>42</sup> For accounts of sati, see *Missionary Register*, 1820, p. 119, p. 123, p. 179; for an account of 'Hindoo Cruelties', see p. 125; for an account of death through fasting, see p. 296; for an account of fatal superstitions, see p. 533; for a tract against sati, see p. 171; for appeals on behalf of Indian women, see p. 433, p. 465.

<sup>43</sup> The LMS were operating in the Malacca Peninsula under Dutch colonial rule, where Dr Morrison and Mr Milne were hoping to attract the diasporic Chinese to the newly founded Anglo-Chinese College.

<sup>44</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1820, pp. 33-34.

Footbinding, female infanticide, and the practice of mui tsai, the selling of girl children, would become humanitarian rallying calls much later in the nineteenth century among missionaries and Western philanthropists.<sup>45</sup> There is little writing related to discernible female suffering compared with that of India, and I would argue that it was a personal encounter, rather than discourses of Indian women in the missionary press, that provided the initial impetus for the founding the SPFEE.

It was a meeting in London between the Reverend Baptist Wriothsesley Noel and an American missionary, the Reverend David Abeel, which provided the rationale for the foundation of the SPFEE and shaped its early focus on China. The Reverend David Abeel arrived in Canton, China, in 1830 under the auspices of the Seamen's Friend Society.<sup>46</sup> He was subsequently adopted by the American Board of Missions, and made a tour of the Chinese diaspora in 'Java, Malacca and Siam' before arriving in London in 1833. In the memoir of his life published by his nephew in 1848, there is an elliptical reference to the fact that he 'founds [a] Ladies' Missionary Society in London.'<sup>47</sup> The account of meeting Baptist Noel and founding the society in 1834 is brief and mundane, consisting of barely a paragraph, with little rationale for why such a society with a focus on China should be important to English women: '[b]efore he quitted England, he united with the Rev. Baptist Noel, and a few ladies in forming the Society for Promoting Female Education in China and the East.'<sup>48</sup> The two men formed a literary bond, and Noel wrote the preface for Abeel's account of his first visit to China and subsequent missionary tour in South-East Asia.<sup>49</sup>

Abeel's account of his travels, published after the founding of the SPFEE, contained limited material on the condition of Chinese women. A brief informational, rather than critical, account of footbinding in Canton is followed by a

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<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of how European and American women campaigned against a variety of Chinese practices related to women, see Susanna Hoe, *Chinese Footprints: Exploring Women's History in China, Hong Kong and Macau* (Hong Kong: Roundhouse, 1997), pp. 187-224. For a discussion of how European women became involved in campaigns against mui tsai, which they considered to be female child slavery, see Susanna Hoe, *The Private Life of Old Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 232-246.

<sup>46</sup> Rev. G.R. Williamson, *Memoir of the Rev. David Abeel, D.D. Late Missionary to China* (New York: Robert Carter, 1848), p. 67.

<sup>47</sup> Williamson, *Memoir of the Rev. David Abeel*, p. vii.

<sup>48</sup> Williamson, *Memoir of the Rev. David Abeel*, p. 145.

<sup>49</sup> David Abeel, *Journal of a Residence in China and the Neighbouring Countries from 1830 to 1833* (London: James Nisbet & Co, 1835).

short chapter on Chinese women.<sup>50</sup> In this chapter, his account of female infanticide is derivative, relying on accounts from the *Indo-Chinese Gleaner*; his comments about the general condition of Chinese women are also highly derivative and reliant on the same source, with no pretence of first-hand experience.<sup>51</sup> None of his material on Chinese women appeared in the *Missionary Register* or was reported as one of his concerns until *after* the founding of the SPFEE.<sup>52</sup>

The foundation narrative of the SPFEE did not involve the *foregrounding* of India. Instead, it initially privileged China, a field of missionary endeavour where the humanitarian claims of Chinese females were hardly comparable to those of Indian females, and where there was almost nothing already established in terms of female missionary schooling. On the other hand, the *Missionary Register* continuously reported on the school-based work of missionary wives in India, particularly those based in Bengal, which was both a well-established and expanding field for many British denominational foreign missions. At the first meeting of the society in July 1834, the claims of India had to be argued and were deemed only equal to those of Chinese women:

it was resolved that India, whose females stand equally in need of elevation by Christian education, with the additional claim of being subjects of Britain, be included in the objects of this society, which shall be designated *The Society for Promoting Female Education in India, China and the adjacent countries*.<sup>53</sup>

The appeal that appeared in the September issue of the *Missionary Register* in 1834 grafted material about Indian women onto an appeal by David Abeel focused exclusively on Chinese females.<sup>54</sup> In the preamble about the formation and object of

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<sup>50</sup> Abeel, *Journal of a Residence in China*, p. 56.

<sup>51</sup> Abeel, *Journal of a Residence in China*, pp. 108-111.

<sup>52</sup> Before his appeal related to the SPFEE and Chinese women in 1834, two of his speeches given in London during in English tour were published. The first, delivered to the BFBS related to the dearth of Protestant missionaries in China compared with the efforts of other religious groups, *Missionary Register*, 1834, pp. 251-2; the second speech, delivered to the LMS, focused on the role of England and America: there is an exceptionalist rhetoric as '[t]hese nations seemed destined in the hands of God, to exert an influence for the conversion of the whole globe.' *Missionary Register*, 1834, p. 252.

<sup>53</sup> Church Missionary Society Archive (Marlborough, Wiltshire: Adam Matthew Publications, 1997) microfilm, Section II: Missions to Women, Part 1: Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East (or Female Education Society) 1834-1899, Reel 1, Administration AM1 8.

<sup>54</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1834, pp. 390-393.

the society, the appeal states that Abeel ‘communicated to some friends such information on the condition of Chinese females as to determine them to exert themselves for their present and eternal welfare. It was thought right, however, to extend the view, and to comprehend other females of the east, particularly those of India, in any attempt which should be made.’<sup>55</sup> The appeal foregrounds the claims of China, despite the near lack of actual missionary activity by women in the field. India is a secondary competitor in the appeal, in spite of the exhaustive account of educational activity by Mrs Wilson in Calcutta, the Ladies’ Society for Native-Female Education, and the ‘1370 girls taught in their (CMS) schools alone, in Calcutta, Burdwan, Gorruckpore, Benares, Meerut, Madras, Tinnevely, and Cotayam, i.e. in every part of India’.<sup>56</sup> India was obviously regarded as potential field of missionary activity for women in the appeal, but it was, at best, an almost-equal competitor with China whose humanitarian claims and evidence of evangelical activity were palpably limited. Given the asymmetrical claims of the two fields of missionary labour, Indian females were evidently not securely privileged by missionary discourses in the press.

As with the initial focus on China, it was early personal contacts and connections that proved critical in establishing India as a field for women’s missionary support. It was not simply the encounter between Abeel and Noel that shaped the SPFEE’s early interest in the claims of a particular set of women in the non-European world. Abeel was connected to a network of missionaries who used the new society to access money and support. And China remained a strong competitor for the SPFEE’s resources in the 1830s and 1840s. Key women in the missionary-philanthropic networks of South China and South-East Asia ensured that China and its diaspora got both economic sponsorship and women missionaries sent out to superintend schools. Lady Raffles, the wife of Sir Stamford Raffles, and Mrs Medhurst, attended committee meetings in London and Mrs Gutzlaff, a prominent missionary’s wife in Macau, petitioned early for materials and an agent to be sent out.<sup>57</sup> The first woman missionary sent overseas by the SPFEE was a Miss Wallace who was sent to

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<sup>55</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1834, p. 390.

<sup>56</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1834, p. 392.

<sup>57</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 93, AM1 253. Mrs Gutzlaff in Macau stipulated the requirements for a woman missionary, including linguistic ability.

Malacca, and an early example of feminised missionary hagiography in the SPFEE's publications was a memoir and obituary of Theodosia Barker, whose missionary career encompassed Macau, Jakarta and finally Hong Kong.<sup>58</sup>

As I have shown, early personal contacts and connections between the SPFEE in London and networks in the missionary world were more important in shaping where support and money went than the humanitarian needs of different groups of 'heathen' women in the missionary press. The claims of India and Indian females on the SPFEE were only secured in the 1830s. This largely evolved through face-to-face encounters between the committee in London and missionaries on furlough, or other colonial 'informants' who had direct experience of India. Personal encounters were central to the establishment of transnational networks such as these, as well as being at the core of British women's experiences of active philanthropy in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Alison Twells suggests that missionary philanthropy in the early decades of the nineteenth-century sought conversion to Christianity and personal and cultural reform, often through what she describes as 'intimate concerns and technologies', like face-to-face encounters, and through the emphasis on sympathy, personal example and visiting, which enabled the philanthropist to acquire 'knowledge through seeing and conversing'.<sup>59</sup> The personal encounter was important to missionary philanthropy both as a strategy for bringing the missionary and 'heathen' together, as well as being a means of emphasising the expectation of personal and cultural transformation.

### **India and Personal Connections**

Established male foreign mission societies had decades of experience of networks and personnel in the mission field. However, the SPFEE had no denominational infrastructure overseas and relied on missionaries from abroad to make connections. India became established as the key field of missionary endeavour for the SPFEE as a result of the connections that were forged in the early years of the society's existence. This came about largely through opportunistic visits and communications

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<sup>58</sup> For a reference to Miss Wallace being sent to Malacca, see CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 8; for the memoir of Theodosia Barker, see *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1854, pp. 141-142.

<sup>59</sup> Twells, *Civilising Mission*, p. 9. See also pp. 70-74.

from missionaries working within India itself. A variety of women philanthropists and missionaries from India would arrive in London and make direct appeals to the SPFEE for their personal projects.

In June 1837 Mrs Stewart Mackenzie, wife of the Governor of Ceylon, arrived in London with her daughter to petition for her project. Her statement read that ‘some time ago a considerable number of proprietors in the island of Ceylon did combine to liberate their slaves, and to provide them with the means of instruction...but that they have never received any countenance or encouragement, and on the contrary have met with much ridicule that it is very desirable therefore, that this committee do furnish them with some marks of their approbation.’<sup>60</sup> Seeking the metropolitan imprimatur for her cause through a face-to-face encounter, which used the emotive rhetoric of admonishment and protection, was instantly rewarded with the committee’s decision to prepare a document ‘testifying such approbation and expressing a hope that the Ladies of Ceylon have not neglected carrying into effect that part of the design which related to the instruction for the female children.’<sup>61</sup> The encounter was personal and opportunistic, yet limited only to the formerly enslaved of Ceylon and never broadened into a more systematic consideration of other enslaved groups of females in India.

Increasingly, Indian missionaries on furlough realised that by appearing in person their requests for money and sponsorship were more likely to be successful. In February 1838, a Mr and Mrs Pierce from Calcutta turned up in London on behalf of the Calcutta Baptist Female Society and the committee instantly resolved that ‘a grant of £25 be transmitted thro’ Mr Pierce, and a box of work forwarded without delay.’<sup>62</sup> Opportunistic encounters with missionaries and philanthropists from all over the missionary world reached absurd heights when in one meeting a Miss Hill from Calcutta, a Mrs Dyer from Malacca, a Mrs Jetter from Smyrna, a Madame Richert from Berlin and a Reverend Crisp from Bangalore came seeking cash through personal petitions and appeals.<sup>63</sup> Unsurprisingly, in January 1839 the committee of the SPFEE decided to restrict outside visitors’ attendance at meetings

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<sup>60</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 438.

<sup>61</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 438.

<sup>62</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 518.

<sup>63</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 845, 846, 847.



and they decided that ‘persons lately returned from the East may attend by invitation’ only.

Missionaries and their associates also visited the London committee in person to communicate their various views on female education in India and make institutional connections, and not simply to ask for cash. In 1836, the Reverend Gogerly, a London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary from Calcutta, opened the meeting and ‘stated his own views and that of the committee respecting female education in India, and the plans of this society.’<sup>64</sup> In the same year the London committee was visited by Alexander Duff, the Church of Scotland missionary in Calcutta with a considerable reputation for missionary work in India. He ‘gave several details on the subject of female education in India, the heads of which were committed to writing by the Rev. B. Noel.’<sup>65</sup> Lady Bryant, a committee member of the SPFEE, ‘gave some interesting particulars respecting the actual state of Lodiana, and the great advantage which would arise from the establishment of schools in that part of India, likewise the possibility by cautious and preserving measures of introducing Christianity among the higher class of females, now sunk in darkness and superstition.’<sup>66</sup> Various schemes and hypotheses about who and where to evangelise in India were also advanced through the face-to-face encounter in London.

‘Personal contact’ was central to the creation of an early transnational missionary network between Indian missionaries and the SPFEE in England. Letters could also act as a vehicle of sympathy and understanding when the face-to-face encounter was not practical. In 1836, the ladies of the committee were encouraged to write personal letters to women missionaries who had been sent out as a way of securing loyalty: ‘it was recommended that an occasional correspondence be maintained between any ladies of the committee and the agents abroad in addition to the official communications through the secretaries as a means of encouraging and attaching them.’<sup>67</sup> The cultivation of a ‘personal’ rather than an official relationship, and the emotive sense of ‘securing’ and ‘attaching’ the personal connection across the world was a powerful tool in building institutional relationships.

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<sup>64</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 251.

<sup>65</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 270.

<sup>66</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 379.

<sup>67</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 351.



In the 1830s, women from missionary networks in India both sought out and were actively approached by the SPFEE. In 1834 Mary Weitbrecht, a woman who would become something of a missionary celebrity in her own right in the mid nineteenth century and a powerful advocate for the SPFEE, wrote to the London committee from her CMS station in Burdwan to make contact and offer suggestions.<sup>68</sup> A Mrs Gordon from Madras, representing the ‘Vepery Ladies Association’ wrote in 1835 requesting help for an infant school and in 1837, the CMS missionary the Reverend Tucker, whose sister would become another key informant on India through her visits and her writing, established contact as he wanted to open ‘a better sort of school for the Education of East Indians’ in Madras.<sup>69</sup>

The SPFEE also sought ‘information derived from observation and experience, and advice, as to the best means of prosecuting their projected plans’, and this privileging of experiential, ‘colonial knowledge’ meant that women missionaries in India were able, through their sheer numbers and experience, to trounce the claims of other fields like those of China and the Middle East.<sup>70</sup> In 1834, a correspondence was opened with the Calcutta Baptist Female School Society ‘for the purpose of obtaining the aid of their experience and co-operation,’ and other key societies operating in Calcutta, such as the school society connected with the LMS and the Calcutta Ladies Society for Female Education were contacted.<sup>71</sup> ‘Personal’ letters or documents such as diaries were also used by missionaries in India to secure their connections with the SPFEE. In 1836 a letter from Mrs Weitbrecht included an epistle from the improbably named, ‘Baboo Joy’, an indigenous informant on native female education.<sup>72</sup> Extracts were also read from the journal of the Reverend Tucker related to his personal views on female education.<sup>73</sup> The personal or written encounter was the strong suit for well-established missionaries in a field like India to connect themselves to a new, London-based foreign mission; the paucity of active

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<sup>68</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 84.

<sup>69</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 177, AM1 496.

<sup>70</sup> The Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East, *History of the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East* (London: Edward Suter, 1847), p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 27, AM1 33, AM1 342.

<sup>72</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 253.

<sup>73</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 255.

female advocates from China, Africa or the Middle East ensured that women missionaries from India would always dominate in terms of numbers and sympathy.

The personal encounter, rather than a schematised or more ideologically-driven approach to where and on whom female missions should be focused, had serious consequences for the establishment of mission fields. The personal encounter could also lead to the personal rift and rupture, which also affected the relationship between the SPFEE and key missionary endeavours in India. The most dramatic of all was a rupture in 1838 with the iconic Central School of Calcutta and the Calcutta Ladies' Committee. Priscilla Chapman, the author of *Hindoo Female Education* and secretary of the committee in Calcutta, wrote a letter to the SPFEE in London which precipitated this rupture. The SPFEE's written response to this key women's missionary network in Calcutta embeds the affective and highly personal sense of injury and insult:

this committee have listened with extreme surprise and unfeigned regret to the remarks contained in Mrs Chapman's latter and to the resolutions of the Calcutta Committee which they consider alike uncalled for, uncourtious, and ungrateful – that these resolutions (taken in connection with former ungracious reception of aid) being a virtual renunciation of all co-operation and sympathy between the two communities, the Calcutta committee be requested no longer to reckon upon the London Committee for the selection and sending out a teacher for the Central School, or for any other assistance.<sup>74</sup>

Rudeness and lack of gratitude rather than a conflict in perspectives on the education of Indian females led to the cutting of ties with the Central School. Fortuitously, a more fruitful opportunity emerged in 1839 when the Bishop of Bombay's wife visited the committee in London and was awarded £25 on the spot for her plans to open a school in the north of Bombay, ensuring that the SPFEE had new missionary terrain in a cosmopolitan city with a long and varied history of missions.<sup>75</sup>

Other personal rifts advantaged India: in 1838, Mrs Gutzlaff, a key woman in the small Chinese missionary network based in Macau was cut. She had insulted Theodosia Barker, a young woman sent by the SPFEE to Macau, South China, to

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<sup>74</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 631.

<sup>75</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 706.

help with missionary work and the committee resolved that ‘it is advisable that the future proceedings of the society at Macao be totally unconnected with Mrs Gutzlaff.’<sup>76</sup> As the wife of Karl Gutzlaff, who was increasingly important as a conduit of missionary information about China, Mrs Gutzlaff was a linchpin in the missionary network of South China and South-East Asia. This network had dominated the claims of the SPFEE through the personal connections of David Abeel, and now, at least part of it, had collapsed through a personal sense of injury. The establishment or rupture of transnational networks were very much rooted in personal connections in the early days of the SPFEE. India was able to make contact with the SPFEE through the men and women who belonged to a geographically and denominationally varied set of missionary networks, which enabled ruptures (even as symbolic as that with the Central School in Calcutta) to be absorbed.

### **The SPFEE and early ‘policies’ towards the women and girls of India**

As India became established as the key field for missionary endeavour through personal connections, the SPFEE did not develop any discernible ‘policy’ about outreach to Indian women and girls in the first two decades of its existence. From 1834 until the early 1850s the SPFEE committee in London clearly demonstrated a growing commitment to India, which would be most fully articulated in its first institution building scheme in the Himalayas in 1853. Up until then, however, ‘schemes’, policies, or ideologies of outreach were subsumed by the practical realities of having to send women to wherever there was an available opening in India and having to negotiate the personal opinions and preferences of the denominational host missions in India itself.

What underscores the argument that the SPFEE was not driven by an ideological approach towards Indian females in the 1830s and 1840s is its lack of engagement with and interest in colonial legislation related to Indian women and other humanitarian causes. The condition of Hindu widows, for example, was reported in women’s missionary writing as early as 1839 and Priscilla Chapman, writing from Calcutta, was clear that legislative intervention needed support. Her book, *Hindoo*

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<sup>76</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 628.

*Female Education*, used an extract from the *Friend of India* to raise awareness of the plight of Hindu widows:

[t]he marriage of Hindoo widows has latterly engaged much of the attention of the Hindoo community, and the repeated discussion of it in native papers, appears to indicate the approach of some favourable change. The Bombay government are also said to have turned their minds to it, and to have enquired of those learned in Hindoo law, whether there was any peremptory prohibition of the marriage of widows to be found in the shastras... It is difficult to conceive of any two injunctions more fatally injurious to a people, and more calculated to pollute the domestic circle with intrigues and licentiousness, than the early marriage of females, and the condemnation of the young widow to perpetual celibacy... Until there be a radical reform in this branch of Hindoo economy, it will be in vain to look for any improvement of the general tone of morals. The slow progress of improvement, by reason, by education and by enlarged observation, is anticipated wherever Christianity takes possession of the native mind... And if Christianity did nothing more than introduce these two radical changes into the country, and thus improve the social habits of the people, it would be the greatest blessing which the country has ever received.<sup>77</sup>

In spite of the availability of missionary writing by women that highlighted the prospect of colonial legislation on behalf of Hindu widows, it was only in the 1850s that the SPFEE even acknowledged the issue: it reprinted a lecture in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* on the women of Bengal, which stated that ‘alas for the widow! Though her life has been spared, the sentence upon her has been only commuted for one of a more terrible punishment... Those philanthropists and patriots on whom I think with reverence, who interested themselves in the abolition of the Suttee, indeed left the work half finished.’<sup>78</sup> But there was no attempt to engage in active campaigning for legislation that resulted in the Hindu Widows’ Remarriage Act of 1856 with all its alleged resonance of the campaigns against sati.

Indian slavery was another area where the humanitarian claims of Indian females were represented in the SPFEE’s publications but no steps were taken to engage in any form of social action. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century British attitudes to Indian slavery have been explored by Andrea Major and her work has highlighted the problem of ‘the absence of agricultural and domestic slavery from depictions of

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<sup>77</sup> Chapman, *Hindoo Female Education*, pp. 34-36.

<sup>78</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1856, pp. 13-16.

Indian society and customs' within a context where anti-slavery discourses and writing were crucial to evangelicals.<sup>79</sup> Major argues that missionaries were aware of different forms of Indian slavery, including domestic slavery, but it was subsumed for evangelicals by 'the conception of an entire heathen civilisation enslaved by the various forces of oriental despotism...idolatry and false religion.'<sup>80</sup>

However, it was obvious that the women of the SPFEE, particularly those attached to the London committee, would have had access to accounts of feminised forms of slavery. Priscilla Chapman's *Hindoo Female Education* of 1839 gave an account girls being trafficked into sexual and domestic service and of nautch girls or temple prostitutes; the letters from a Mrs Farrer of Nasik to the SPFEE in 1837 and 1839 describe how orphan girls were 'easily maintained by the natives, and become useful at an early age for household drudgery.'<sup>81</sup> The word slavery is used explicitly in a letter of 1839, when Mrs Farrer describes how a ten-year-old girl 'now called Mary Anne, was decoyed away from her home, and sold to various parties as a slave, in a distant province.'<sup>82</sup> Even though the SPFEE did petition the Ironmonger's Company in London for funds for the purpose of ransoming Christian slaves from captivity, the scheme was to purchase Christian children in Egypt only and train them up as future missionary teachers.<sup>83</sup> Indian slavery, even though acknowledged and described by women informants close to the SPFEE, was ignored as a potential area of humanitarian intervention in India, although in this instance, missionary women were conforming to the myopia which characterised the missionary response to Indian slavery in general.

In the 1830 and 1840s, the SPFEE committee in London did not have any discernible schemes or policies related to where their missionaries should work in India, which groups of Indian females would advantage the evangelical project most profitably, or what sort of outreach work would be effective. Until the society

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<sup>79</sup> Andrea Major, *Slavery, Empire and Abolitionism in India, 1772-1843* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), p. 247. For Major's discussion on evangelical attitudes to India and Indian slavery see pp. 246-292.

<sup>80</sup> Major, *Slavery, Empire and Abolitionism in India*, p. 285.

<sup>81</sup> Chapman, *Hindoo Female Education*, p. 11, p. 45; SPFEE, *History*, p. 128.

<sup>82</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 132.

<sup>83</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 171.

actually built an institution of its own in Landour and identified mixed-race girls as the group most likely to affect the evangelisation of India, the SPFEE trained women in London and policy was displaced by practical opportunities for work in India. As institution building was a vital component of missionary work, the SPFEE functioned as a partial missionary organisation up until the 1850s. Its agency in India was limited to the interaction between the women it had trained in London at the Borough Road School and the host mission in India that had requested a Christian female teacher.

By 1850 the SPFEE had trained and sent over fifteen women to India: requests for women missionaries had ensured that the society's teachers were working in all three presidencies and Ceylon. The institutions that these early missionary women from Britain ended up teaching in or supervising ranged from a large orphan asylum in Cawnpore, to a school for the daughters of native headmen in Colombo, to the usual day and boarding schools in Bengal, Madras and Bombay. The institutions that requested female missionary teachers from the SPFEE included most of the British Protestant foreign missions. The Church of Scotland and the LMS required women for their missions in the Bombay presidency; in Ceylon the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries requested help for their work among women; the CMS were particularly keen to recruit SPFEE women in the Bengal and Madras presidencies. Missionary women were also sent out for non-denominational ventures in India: in Cawnpore and Ceylon, requests came from the Chaplain's and Governor's wives respectively to help with schools they had established.

The earliest printed materials published on behalf of the SPFEE reveal a lack of consensus about strategies for women's work in India. Women missionaries who had been trained by the SPFEE or whose schools were sponsored by grants from the London committee wrote back to the metropole with a variety of views and opinions about how best to affect the evangelisation of India. Although the next chapter deals with how the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* presented multiple perspectives on women's mission work and the viability of different groups for outreach, the small number of publications that exist from the first two decades of the society's work suggest that letters from women in India were not edited or mediated to present a uniform perspective on female uplift. An early extract of correspondence published

by the SPFEE in 1835 suggested how experimental and tentative the project of female education and how limited metropolitan training in education could be.

Mrs Wilson, the celebrated Miss Cooke, wrote to the SPFEE that '[a]s to system, this must be left to the lady's own experience. The question in this trying country is not how we shall teach a child to read God's holy word, but how we shall induce ignorant heathen parents to give their girls for Christian instruction.'<sup>84</sup> An early letter from Mrs Weitbrecht also suggests an experimental rather than schematic approach to female uplift: '[t]hat heathen females should be educated does not admit of a doubt...the difficulty arises from deciding *how* the work shall be effected.'<sup>85</sup> In 1838, the SPFEE published more extracts of letters presenting a labile and speculative approach to female missions in India by Mrs Farrer of Nasik:

[t]he orphan school, of which we already have the nucleus, might be enlarged. We might attempt to collect a boarding-school of native girls, or to establish as many more day or infant schools as could be provided with efficient superintendence.<sup>86</sup>

By the mid 1850s the SPFEE would enact a bold policy: the committee would argue for the uplift of a specific group of girls in India as part of a strategy for evangelisation. However, missionary schemes or strategies towards Indian women and girls were absent in the first two decades of the society's existence. Outreach to Indian females remained erratic, opportunistic, and shaped by personal connections rather than driven by a policy from the centralised committee of the SPFEE.

### **The SPFEE's first single women missionaries in India: individuality, 'exemplarity' and public lives**

The first single women sent out by the SPFEE to India exemplified the problems of a society that had little by way of stated 'ideological' direction, or 'policy' about India,

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<sup>84</sup> The Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East, *Extracts of Correspondence*, (London: 1835), p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> SPFEE, *Extracts of Correspondence*, (London: 1835), p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> SPFEE, *Extracts of Correspondence*, (London: 1838), p. 2.



its female subjects, or explicit strategies for uplift and transformation until the 1850s. Several women missionaries, leaving London after their training at the Borough Road School, took highly personal decisions about who and where in India to evangelise. Two case studies of early women missionaries explore aspects of early outreach to Indian females that would inform the SPFEE's later encounter with India. First, Miss Craven's account of her conflict and negotiation with the ideologies of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Madras led to her assertion that women missionaries sought some measure of institutional independence to be found in schools, not zenanas. Secondly, the trial of Helen Mackay, who was sent to Benares by the SPFEE in the early 1850s, helped define the expectations of the woman missionary, particularly expectations of a public, school-based presence and a reclamative role in the lives of children who were imagined as dangerously 'Indianised'.

Underscoring both case studies is the negotiation of the public and exemplary roles missionary women were expected to perform in India. The SPFEE may not have had a clear, missionary strategy at this point, but what emerged from the experience of women like Miss Craven and Miss Mackay in India was the expectation that missionary women would be occupying quite public and visible roles in school institutions. The visibility and public nature of the roles being carved out for these single women in India also required a strong focus on their exemplary characters.

In 1840, a Miss Puddicombe who had been trained and sent out to Bombay by the SPFEE refused to teach in the school pre-assigned to her. She decided instead, to devote herself to the education of the Parsis, much to the chagrin of the Bishop of Bombay who wrote to the committee in London that Miss Puddicombe refused to teach at the school which 'consisted of Indo-Britons and not natives.'<sup>87</sup> The London committee were quite blunt about their on-going frustration with India as a field and 'resolved that as in more than one instance of late the agents of the Society on their arrival in India have considered themselves at liberty to select their own field of labour, and without sufficient cause, to decline proceeding to the stations assigned to

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<sup>87</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 901.



them.’<sup>88</sup> This was deemed a unique problem with India which did not extend to Africa, China or the Middle East: in an introduction to Africa in the SPFFES’s *History*, the editor stated that ‘Africa [is] unshackled by the peculiarities which attach to its work in India.’<sup>89</sup> Agents were turning up in India with much ‘imagined knowledge’ of the diverse groups they could evangelise, and the SPFEE offered no discernible ideological or policy directive about which groups of females in India held the key to successful evangelisation and cultural uplift.

In 1836, the Reverend J. Tucker, the superintendent of CMS missions in Madras, wrote to the SPFEE, appealing for women to work in the Southern Presidency of India. His letter outlining the work that a woman missionary would undertake rehearsed arguments about outreach to Indian women that were emerging within the CMS:

[t]he whole field is before us, we only want suitable labourers; and though female education has not been much attended to, I am persuaded that it would perceptibly produce a most important change in the next generation. As far as I have been able to observe, the opposition of wives and mothers has been the great hindrance to the abolition of caste among native Christians, and keeps many a heathen in thralldom. The women remaining so much at home, and the houses of the natives being inaccessible to Europeans, they are the secret strongholds of superstition and ignorance... The little that has been done is beginning to tell in some slight degree, and the girls educated in our schools are beginning to be sought after as wives, as bringing to their husbands something beyond mere bodily labour and service. I need not say what influence an educated mother must exercise over her children.<sup>90</sup>

Although Tucker’s first letter does not reveal an entirely lucid or coherent account of who exactly among Indian women he thought it would be effective to evangelise, the letter did rehearse familiar arguments about the influence of women as mothers and wives, the importance of the Indian women ‘hidden’ away in the zenana to the whole, defining infrastructure of caste in India. And Tucker was opinionated.

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<sup>88</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 902.

<sup>89</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 162.

<sup>90</sup> SPFEE, *History*, pp. 69-70.

In his second letter, published in the *History*, Tucker makes it perfectly clear that Miss Craven, the missionary sent by the SPFEE, already had her work decided for her: '[y]ou are already aware', he wrote to the London committee, 'that our wish was that Miss Craven should be stationed in Madras; and the sphere of labour we had marked out for her, in our own minds, was one which appeared, and still appears to us, the most important in its influence upon the future spiritual welfare of the Madras Presidency.'<sup>91</sup> Miss Craven was to be adopted into the Reverend Tucker's missionary milieu, and share his enthusiasm for establishing a boarding and day school in 'Black Town' to raise up 'a body of useful, intelligent, and active teachers for the next generation'.<sup>92</sup> When Miss Craven arrived, it was obvious that no such school existed yet because there were problems finding appropriate accommodation. More interestingly, Miss Craven was sent away to Palamcottah, in Tinnevelly, where there was CMS activity of sorts but much greater autonomy for women missionaries to decide on their schools and 'heathen' subjects. The school that the as yet silent Miss Craven took over was 'supported entirely by private friends and receive[s] no assistance from the Church Missionary Society'.<sup>93</sup>

Once out of the Reverend Tucker's orbit, and ensconced in her boarding school of twenty-nine girls, Miss Craven made her first incursion into the letters that made up the SPFEE's *History*. In extracts of letters written in 1837, she makes her personal view of outreach more than clear. The young girls at her school were 'of good caste' and receptive to her teaching, but '[t]he women, on the contrary, appear particularly stupid. The more I see and hear, the more convinced I daily become, that the instruction of these poor children is the most hopeful way of evangelising this dark land'.<sup>94</sup> Experience in the mission field and a lucky escape from the prescriptive discourses of the Reverend Tucker enabled this SPFEE missionary to report back a view of outreach that was personal and contradictory to Tucker's views. It was clear from Tucker's correspondence that the adult woman of the Indian household was, for him, the ultimate object of women's missions. Miss Craven made her view on evangelising adult Indian women clear, and the SPFEE

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<sup>91</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 71.

<sup>92</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 71.

<sup>93</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 72.

<sup>94</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 76.

published her letter next to those of the Reverend Tucker. I would argue that although we know little of the economic circumstances she found herself in after leaving Madras, she was evidently no longer dependent on the Reverend Tucker and the CMS, and was able to write about her school in terms of personal autonomy: she described her new situation as ‘my kingdom, that is the school-room’.<sup>95</sup>

Miss Craven’s small act of self-assertion and personal interpretation of effective work among the females of India would be used later in the 1830s by Scottish women, when they sought to argue against intransigent male ideas about where and among whom they should be allowed to work.<sup>96</sup> Miss Craven had little interest in emerging CMS arguments about zenanas and coveted more independent, institutional expression in the school. By the mid-1850s, the SPFEE would prosecute a policy of independent, institution building in India in the form of a school in the Himalayan hill station of Mussoorie that would become a model institution for others. They would also have a clearly stated and systematic rationale for the group of ‘Indianised’ girls they wished to uplift.

What was problematic for the SPFEE with some of the early women missionaries they sent to India were expectations of ‘exemplary’ behaviour. Exemplary Christian behaviour implied that women missionaries were expected to fulfil a role that encompassed a visible, public, as well as a domestic, life. In the 1850s, when the SPFEE established that mixed-race girls were the group most likely to facilitate the religious transformation of India, it was partly inspired by the *public* roles missionaries imagined for them. As single women, negotiating an exemplary Christian role outside motherhood and domesticity on an Indian missionary station, was uncharted territory. The exemplary role of the missionary *wife* in India was outlined by a woman who became a great champion of the SPFEE.

Mrs Weitbrecht, as she was known, was something of an authority on women missionaries, having published *Female Missionaries in India* in 1843.<sup>97</sup> Weitbrecht was married to a CMS missionary who worked largely in Burdwan, Bengal. Her perspective therefore, on women’s missionary work in the 1840s was drawn from her

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<sup>95</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 75.

<sup>96</sup> See Chapter Six.

<sup>97</sup> See Mrs Weitbrecht, *Female Missionaries in India*, (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1843).

experience as a missionary wife rather than as a single woman, such as Miss Craven. Mary Weitbrecht was a pragmatist about women's work in India rather than an ideologue. Her *Female Missionaries in India* acknowledged the value and importance of British women and their outreach to Indian females, but it certainly did not advocate a separate missionary project to evangelise Indian women. She claimed that

[t]here is, I know, a diversity of opinion on the point of single ladies going out to India, to engage in mission work; but as in practice they do it, and as there are societies both in England and on the continent which are organized for preparing and sending them forth, it seems desirable to describe the character and qualities that should appertain to the female labourer, irrespective of her being married or otherwise.<sup>98</sup>

In her early writing, Weitbrecht saw women inflecting the work of Protestant missions with 'the affectionate heart of the sex successfully occupied in communicating that sympathy which it has been peculiarly in their power to afford'.<sup>99</sup>

Weitbrecht's ideas about British missionary women in India were driven by gender ideologies that were typical of mid nineteenth-century missionaries. Far from advancing ideas about British women working independently, like Miss Craven, to uplift their 'Indian sisters', Weitbrecht believed that British women missionaries could model appropriately gendered relationships within the Christian family:

how many husbands have found in their partners the wise counsellor, the encouraging fellow-helper, the calmer of his troubled spirit, the messenger of comfort, directing him to God, and assisting him in drawing down his blessing. Women, as missionaries, have afforded the most important examples of the happiness of domestic life, when regulated on Christian principles. What instruction have they given to the heathen, of the extreme folly of degrading females, as they are accustomed to do; and in the other hand, how often have they exhibited to the degraded partners of a brutal husband, the lessing of religious principle, in making them happy, useful and independent.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Weitbrecht, *Female Missionaries*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>99</sup> Weitbrecht, *Female Missionaries*, p. 6.

<sup>100</sup> Weitbrecht, *Female Missionaries*, p. vii.

Modelling the ‘happiness of domestic life’ implies that the missionary home was still something of a public space, where appropriately gendered relationships can be showcased. Even though Weitbrecht did not address how *single* women could model exemplary Christian womanhood, her expectations of public visibility and exemplarity were at the heart of the mission project, even within the home.

In his work on early LMS missionaries in South Africa, John L. Comaroff explored how exemplarity was crucial to establishing a missionary ‘civilising colonialism’ to compete with other, early nineteenth-century forms of colonialism in the Cape Colony.<sup>101</sup> He argues that ‘far from limiting themselves to religious conversion, the evangelists set out to...create a theater [sic] of the everyday, demonstrating by their own exemplary actions the benefits of methodical routine, of good personal habits, and of enlightened European ways.’<sup>102</sup> Comaroff argues that early nineteenth-century missionaries exported, through their own self-image, a version of early capitalist and bourgeois ‘selfhood’ which embodied ‘the virtues of discipline, generosity, and ownership’ in ‘self-control, self-denial, and self-possession.’<sup>103</sup> Although Comaroff largely ignores gender in this analysis of bourgeois notions of self, he emphasises that early missionaries modelled, through their ‘character’ and behaviour, ‘the seeds of bourgeois individualism and the nuclear family’.<sup>104</sup> Modelling ‘selfhood’ remained central to the objectives of shaping and converting Indian females, but it underscored the transformative ethos of the ‘civilising colonialism’ that Comaroff describes.

Margaret Wilson, a Scottish missionary wife and pioneer of female education in Bombay, wrote about the public role played by Europeans and how detrimental it could be to modelling Christian behaviour:

[t]he conduct of Europeans has done much to hinder the advancement of the Gospel in India. It stands like a barrier in the way of the poor heathen’s approach to the tree of life. The standard of morality among Europeans here is very low...Human action has in all cases a more palpable language than

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<sup>101</sup> John. L. Comaroff, ‘Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience: Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa’ in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 163-197.

<sup>102</sup> Comaroff, ‘Images of Empire’, p. 181.

<sup>103</sup> Comaroff, ‘Images of Empire’, p. 170.

<sup>104</sup> Comaroff, ‘Images of Empire’, p. 181.

words, and looking to such a commentary on Christian profession, is it any wonder if the Hindus jeeringly and triumphantly exclaim, 'Where is now their God!' <sup>105</sup>

Missionary women in India during this period imagined most aspects of their lives as having a public dimension. Mrs Wilson asserted that all public behaviour was scrutinised in India and Mrs Weitbrecht described missionary domesticity as 'an example' of the evangelical order of things. The expectation of living out public roles in India, even within the home, placed a strong burden on the SPFEE to send out only women of exemplary Christian character. And this was underscored by a case of radical misjudgement on the part of the SPFEE in the early 1850s, when they sent an unstable woman missionary to teach in an established day school in Benares.

Helen Mackay's trial for the murder of her niece and her subsequent transportation to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) was not only a violation of ideas of white, Christian womanhood in India, but it was also an event that was exposed, graphically described and circulated by the colonial and provincial press. The public dimension of the trial highlighted the very public expectation of British women's missionary work in India in schools at established stations. The London committee was concerned about the character of Mackay, when the Sheffield Auxiliary put pressure on the London committee to accept her services.<sup>106</sup> Initially, the London committee turned her down due to unsatisfactory testimonials, which was something of a challenge to notions of a woman's suitability for missionary work in India, as Mackay's brother was already a teacher and catechist at the CMS station in Benares and his sister was automatically networked within missionary family ties.<sup>107</sup>

What finally forced the hand of the SPFEE in London was a letter from Mrs Smith, the wife of a CMS senior missionary at the station, who organised the girls' schools. In 1849 Mrs Smith had specified Mackay for the role of assistant at the schools and even after the London committee turned her down, Mrs Smith petitioned for her again, stating she categorically wanted her as an assistant in May, 1850.<sup>108</sup> Even though the London committee felt they could challenge local pressure from an

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<sup>105</sup> John Wilson, *Memoir of Mrs Margaret Wilson of the Scottish Mission, Bombay* (Edinburgh: William Whyte and Co., 1839) p. 174.

<sup>106</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM2 2007.

<sup>107</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM2 1981.

<sup>108</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM2 1949, AM2 2007.

auxiliary in Sheffield, they conceded to the greater authority of those in a CMS station in India itself.

The concession to the CMS missionaries in Benares, in the face of concern about Mackay's testimonials and her character proved fatal. On December 8<sup>th</sup> 1852, Helen Mackay and her brother were tried for the murder of John Mackay's elder daughter (also a Helen) in the Supreme Court in Calcutta. The only record of the trial exists in a transcript that was published in *Allen's Indian Mail* on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1852.<sup>109</sup> The extensive account of the trial detailed the isolation, starvation and flogging of the eight-year-old Helen Mackay at the hands of her aunt, until she was killed. The details of the killing were particularly gruesome and fully recounted in the civil surgeon's testimony, which dwelt on the violence and mutilation the child had suffered in the confines of the missionary bungalow.

The trial transcript could be read as establishing some crucial expectations of the woman missionary teacher in India. Miss Mackay was not only to teach in Mrs Smith's school but also to help reclaim her nieces from the Indianisation they had undergone on account of their mother's death and too much time in the company of Indian servants. Under cross examination, the Reverend Frederick Reunther, a CMS missionary attached to the station, argued that there had been concerns about the Mackay girls before their aunt was sent out by the SPFEE. A number of claims were made that were typical of British fears about the impact of close contact between children and Indian servants. Reuthner is reported to have said that '[b]efore Miss Mackay came out, the children were very much left to themselves amongst the native servants... They were greatly neglected under the native ayah. They associated much with the native servants, and that had a bad influence over them.'<sup>110</sup> The girls became de facto 'Indo-Britons': they had no white, Christian mother (she had died in 1845) and the testimonies of key male missionaries at the trial asserted the negative effect of contact with Indians on the characters of these children.

The Reverend William Smith's testimony claimed that 'a person of her nervous irritability [Mackay] would undoubtedly be excited by obstinate children who had

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<sup>109</sup> *Allen's Indian Mail and Register of Intelligence for British and Foreign India, China, and All Parts of the East*, Tuesday, February 3, 1852, pp. 58-62.

<sup>110</sup> *Allen's Indian Mail*, p. 59.

freely mixed with native servants.’<sup>111</sup> Alexander Aitkin, another missionary at the station even claimed that John Mackay feared his younger daughter had become dechristianised: Mackay allegedly reported his daughter Mary claimed to be ‘a child of Satan.’<sup>112</sup> The implicit intention was that Miss Mackay would fulfil the role of the white woman missionary and maternal substitute as a corrective to the moral danger being done to these children by their motherlessness and contact with Indians.

Miss Mackay, even before the extent of her atrocities was made known, was deemed deficient as the kind of British missionary woman needed in India. The testimonies at the trial continually asserted that she avoided public contact and any kind of public role at the station. The children were withdrawn from mission station society as a result of Miss Mackay’s presence in the bungalow, and other missionaries were discouraged from calling at the Mackays on account, John Mackay is reported to have claimed, of having ‘no sympathy with my sister.’<sup>113</sup> The girls and aunt became recluses, and the role of school teacher produced ‘injurious effects...upon her nervous system’ and was almost instantly abandoned.<sup>114</sup> To eschew the public dimensions of Christian womanhood and refuse to take up her place at a school where she could be scrutinised and monitored were clear indications that Miss Mackay was already under deep suspicion in the community at Benares. From the trial transcript it is clear that she was guilty of committing the kind of atrocities against female children in an enclosed part of the missionary bungalow that were being reported of Rajput women in the missionary press and parliamentary committees in the first half of the nineteenth century.

By the 1850s, female infanticide was being investigated in 418 villages in Benares, the region where the CMS mission was based and where Mackay murdered her niece. Early British accounts of female infanticide by Rajput mothers had noted killing children through starvation, which was a feature of how Mackay killed her niece.<sup>115</sup> Miss Mackay was found guilty by Sir John Colvile of an aggravated

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<sup>111</sup> *Allen’s Indian Mail*, p. 60.

<sup>112</sup> *Allen’s Indian Mail*, p. 61.

<sup>113</sup> *Allen’s Indian Mail*, p. 61.

<sup>114</sup> *Allen’s Indian Mail*, p. 60.

<sup>115</sup> Maria Bun, ‘Institutions Collide: A Study of “Caste-Based” Collective Criminality and Female Infanticide in India, 1789-1871: A Critique of Nicholas Dirx’s *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and*



manslaughter, and her brother was deemed an accessory. When asked by the doctor who found his daughter's body why he hadn't stopped his sister, he claimed 'I had not the courage to prevent it'.<sup>116</sup> Both were transported to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania), and the missionary press sought to discourage reports of the trial.

Helen Mackay also earned a public presence through the colonial press in India and provincial press in England (there is no evidence of it being reported in Scotland). The trial transcript from *Allen's Indian Mail* was what informed the SPFEE 'with grief and horror' of the details of her case and transportation. In turn, *Allen's Indian Mail*, referred to rumours about the Mackays' trial in the *Hurkaru* and the trial itself was summarised in a number of British provincial newspapers. Even though the CMS and SPFEE sought to suppress reports in the missionary press, and the Mackays were completely expunged from the Benares report in the *Missionary Register*, the *Bombay Times* carried a report on January 3<sup>rd</sup> and this was used as the basis of the story from the *Preston Chronicle and Lancashire Advertiser* to the *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*.<sup>117</sup> Ironically, the report of the trial based on the *Bombay Times* summary was preceded by an account of the meeting of the chief Rajpoots of Mynpoore held 'to put down the horrible custom of infanticide formerly so prevalent amongst that nation but which of late years has been well nigh extirpated'.<sup>118</sup> For the SPFEE, this was a salutary lesson: networks of colonial and British provincial newspapers were powerful and unconcerned with the need to protect the reputation of the Christian woman in India. The fear of scrutiny by the colonial press, and the inability to contain reporting within the missionary press alone, would play out again, although less tragically, in the very public nature of the Landour School experiment in Mussoorie.

A missionary woman's 'public self' in India was central to the project of schools and schooling Indian women, and exemplary public behaviour by both male and female missionaries underscored the moral project of missions to India. But it also had some unexpected and complicated dimensions. Schools were part of social and

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the Making of Modern India', in *Development Studies Institute Working Paper Series at the London School of Economics* 10-104 (2010): pp. 1-30.

<sup>116</sup> *Allen's Indian Mail*, p. 61.

<sup>117</sup> *Preston Chronicle and Lancashire Advertiser*, Feb 7, 1852; *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, Feb 7, 1852.

<sup>118</sup> Quoted in the *Daily News*, Feb 2, 1852, p. 5.

denominational networks in India and there were strong expectations that these places were open to scrutiny. The public nature of much of missionary life left men and women open to the scrutiny of the colonial press. But as the trial of Miss Mackay demonstrates, a single woman missionary had a particular duty to fulfil a public role within station life and in the school room. The story of Miss Mackay highlights a number of expectations that the SPFEE would embed in their flagship school project in Landour: a missionary woman's public role in schooling and her role as a surrogate mother modelling Christian womanhood to girls who were too 'Indianised'.

## **Conclusion**

Indian women and girls were established as central to the work of the SPFEE in the 1830s and 1840s largely through personal and written contacts with missionaries in India. The link to networks in the non-European world, either in South East Asia or India, proved to be the most important factor in where the SPFEE directed its sponsorship and early missionary women. Discourses of Indian females were important to creating the entitlement of British women to engage in active philanthropy. However, the prevalence of the degraded Hindu woman in the early missionary press did not privilege her when the first national women's missionary organisation was established. As Indian women became increasingly established as the focus for the SPFEE's support, there was no evidence of policies or coherent ideologies that directed that early support. The London committee had no interest in the cause of the remarriage of Hindu widows and like many other missionary societies, it did not engage with Indian slavery as a humanitarian issue. The early encounter between the SPFEE and India was opportunistic and pragmatic. The work they sponsored by sending out women missionaries or raising funds was not directed, at this stage, by an interest in a particular group of women or a theory of how outreach would be best achieved. This, inevitably, reflected the reality of their organisation: they were an interdenominational group of women who had too few resources to establish missionary projects or institutions directly in India.

The lack of strategy or direction towards missionary work to the females of India would change in the 1850s. In Chapter Four, I explore how the SPFEE took the radical step of founding a school in India for mixed-race girls. This act was underpinned by policy and strategic thinking about who to target and how best to Christianise Indian society more generally. And I argued in this chapter that some of the constitutive elements of this decision were present in the case studies of Miss Mackay and Miss Craven. The narratives of both these early missionary women embody expectations of managing school institutions and performing public roles. In the case of Miss Mackay, the reclamation of 'Indianised' children became part of the role she was unable to fulfil. The policy that emerged in the 1850s would focus on 'Indianised' girls and the public roles imagined for them. Although the first two decades of the SPFEE's work showed no evidence of a clear missionary strategy for India, schools and 'Indianised' girls were incubating as ideas for more strategic work.

### Chapter Three: *The Female Missionary Intelligencer*

#### Introduction

In 1822, the *Missionary Register* reported on a speech by Lord Hastings, the Governor General of India, and then invited its readers to contemplate how ‘providential preparation will still further appear, from considering the use which Christians have already made of the power... possessed by Britain in India.’<sup>1</sup> The article invited

any reflecting reader [to] contemplate the institutions now in action or in preparation at or near the British Presidencies – and let him follow, on the Map of India, the course of Missionary Stations which are already occupied...from the south-east corner of Bengal all round and through the heart of Hindoostan – and he will find that there is no spot of this vast territory which may not soon be fertilized...<sup>2</sup>

Missionary magazines, unlike works of fiction or monographs, provided readers at home with a continuous account, often month by month, of how providence was facilitating the establishment and consolidation of missionary work in the non-European world. Magazines were a powerful witness to the visible workings of providence. They fed the British missionary public with stories of missionary heroism, conversion to Christianity, and a variety of experiments in missionary work from itinerating to schooling. As Stewart J. Brown has argued, the British missionary public saw themselves as elect, and ‘nowhere was the hand of providence more visible than in the establishment of British dominion over the vast subcontinent of India’.<sup>3</sup>

As I argued in Chapter Two, a missionary magazine like the *Missionary Register* had a limited role in establishing Indian women and girls as a privileged group for the SPFEE in the early 1830s; yet by the mid nineteenth century, the SPFEE’s own magazine, the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, was critical to the outreach of women and girls of India. Women’s missionary magazines were important to establishing India as a field of female missionary endeavour and for

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<sup>1</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1822, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1822, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Stewart J. Brown, *Providence and Empire: Religion, Politics and Society in the United Kingdom 1815-1914*, (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008), p. 196.

asserting the national presence of British women's missionary organisations. John Wilson, a missionary of the Free Church of Scotland in India had established the *Eastern Females' Friend* in 1844 to make visible the work of Free Church male and female missionaries among in India.<sup>4</sup> The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* was established in 1853 and was published monthly under the editorship of Miss Whately, a committee member. After some initial concerns about its circulation, it reached a distribution of 1500 copies per month in 1857 and this figure was more or less maintained over the next two decades.<sup>5</sup> As an interdenominational publication, it received and published accounts of missionary work from both men and women with some connection to or interest in the SPFEE. The breadth of this material enabled multiple, and often contradictory, perspectives on outreach to women in India. As individual denominations increasingly published their own magazines, the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* remained broad and varied in its coverage of missionary work from multiple denominational perspectives.

The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* served both representational and practical functions in establishing India for the SPFEE. As I argue in this chapter, it provided the female mission supporter at home with an account of a wide-ranging and ever-expanding encounter with Indian people. This continuous narrative of new groups being converted underscored the role of providence in the uplift of Indian females. At a practical level, the magazine facilitated a particular form of outreach to Indian girls. It actively enabled orphan sponsorship, although this was not the form of missionary work that the SPFEE were most committed to. The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* was also crucial to providing a counter-narrative to the stories of the uprising of 1857 which focused on the victimhood of white women. This was essential for maintaining, in both symbolic and practical terms, the project of women's missions to India by presenting it as intact. The magazine was also important for presenting missionary work in a number of different contexts: I argue

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<sup>4</sup> The *Eastern Females' Friend* was a small publication of eight pages with an erratic publication history during this period. The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* constituted the most substantial women's missionary publication in Britain in the mid nineteenth century. For a discussion of religious periodicals and the missionary press, see Chapter One.

<sup>5</sup> Church Missionary Society Archive (Marlborough, Wiltshire: Adam Matthew Publications, 1997) microfilm, Section II: Missions to Women, Part 1: Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East (or Female Education Society) 1834-1899, Reel 1, Administration AM2 AM 2883.

in a case study of how orphan work was represented that women encountered versions of orphan work that were integrated into the work of men and the interests of the colonial state. The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* functions, as I argued in Chapter One, as a 'site of contestation': it does not deliver univocal perspectives and often confronted its readers with uncomfortable realities about the nature of outreach in India.

### **Representing People: Indian females and the rhetoric of variety in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer***

Missionary rhetoric, it is argued, shifted away from a confrontational and aggressive representation of Hinduism in the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> The movement into more conciliatory discourses of fulfilment and the representation of other groups of interest to Protestant missionaries in India changed the tone of much missionary writing. Women, both as readers of missionary magazines at home and as writers about their missionary experiences in India, have not been included in discussions of this rhetorical shift. The exclusion of missionary women from a discussion of the more varied discourses emerging of Indian people is partly related to their representation of work. In Chapter Four, I discuss how the women missionaries of the SPFEE were complicit in representing their work in the magazine as more, not less, focused on the high-caste Hindu woman of the zenana, although this was a deliberate misrepresentation of the work they invested in and thought most meaningful for India. However, the *Female Missionary Register* clearly destabilised an exclusively Hinduised account of India, as it drew heavily on interdenominational sources and perspectives from both men and women. The magazine also offered an opportunity for women to contribute to new discourses of outreach in India and participate in a more varied and experimental rhetoric of the mid nineteenth-century encounter with India.

As an interdenominational magazine for women, the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* did, of course, include reductive narratives focused on the conversion

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<sup>6</sup> See Jeffrey L. Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 61-65. Also see Hayden Bellenoit, *Missionary Education in Late Colonial India, 1860-1920* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007), pp. 27-31.

of high-caste Hindu females, traditionally deemed the most fitting group for the attention of British female evangelists. The magazine regularly published articles by advocates of zenana work, like Hannah Mullens and Alexander Duff, as well as serialising the Reverend Edward Storrow's work, *The Eastern Lily Gathered*. Accounts of the degradation of high-caste Hindu women were not expunged by the advent of the magazine and they maintained a prominent position in missionary writing throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1859 the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* carried accounts of Hindu wives that were structured around the dual conceits of their power and their victimhood:

‘[i]n short, women in India are, both as it regards the number of worshippers, and the individual earnestness and ardour in worshipping, those who principally keep up and support idolatry, and hence form its real strength. For, although Brahmins, as the sacerdotal class, and for the sake of their own pecuniary interests, must show a kind of zeal for their religious system, for their gods, and idolatrous rites, whether they themselves believe in them or not; yet if they were not supported by the female portion of the Hindoos, they would soon sink rapidly down to a very low state...It is the ignorance and superstitious zeal of the women, and their powerful influence upon their families, that in reality constitute the stronghold of Hindoo idolatry.’<sup>7</sup>

Later, in an account of a Hindu zenana, the Reverend Ullman wrote that high-caste women ‘threaten to commit suicide, by either taking poison or throwing themselves into a well and which they not very seldom, in a fit of anger, really do; and to prevent this the husbands yield, and, having once felt their strength, the women repeat the threat more frequently, as a trick, to obtain their demands.’<sup>8</sup> The degraded Hindu woman retained its power as a trope of missionary writing, but the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* provided female readers at home with other narratives of outreach to Indian women and girls which were more connected to an expanding missionary encounter with different, and experimental people groups.

The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* reported on a variety of religious, ethnographic and social groups, as missionaries from various denominations who had some association with the SPFEE wrote of their encounters with the non-European world. In 1858, the London committee of the SPFEE published an

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<sup>7</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1859, p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1859, p. 59.

introductory paper at the beginning of August's edition of the magazine, which affirmed its apparently wide and varied experience of missionary work beyond Europe:

[t]he females under instruction are of all classes, from young Brahmin ladies to outcast Pariah girls; of all ages, from the infant left to perish by its heathen parents, to the infirm grandmother; of all shades of colour, from the swarthy African to the fair Levantine; professors of nearly every false system of religion, Buddhists, Mahometans, Hindoos, fetish and devil worshippers; Papists; Coptic, Greek, and Armenian Christians; some Jewesses, and many children of native converts.<sup>9</sup>

The article made a virtue of the society's global reach through its interdenominational connections. It also served as a reminder that the knowledge most valued about the encounter with non-Europeans was that derived from the field itself. Missionaries frequently used the idea of variety as a means of educating the metropolitan public at home out of their misconceptions of India. In 1859 the Reverend Ullman warned readers imagining a regionally homogenous country and people that '[w]hen speaking of the condition of natives in India, we must always remember that in such a large country, which, in its extent, is about equal to Europe...and with a population of 160 millions...the same descriptive statements of the natives of India are not equally applicable to every part of that extensive country.'<sup>10</sup>

Both male and female missionaries writing to the magazine from India utilised what is probably best described as an 'anecdotal-cum-scholarly ethnographic mode of enquiry', which often ignored gender in its construction of non-European people and groupings.<sup>11</sup> Missionaries contributed to and were influenced by the ethnographic and racial ideas underpinning colonial writing about India in the nineteenth century and this was clearly in evidence throughout the magazine. Females in India were not simply confined discursively to high-caste, Hindu zenanas but were frequently reported in keeping with an emerging missionary interest in tribal groups (adivasis), lower castes and other religious or social encounters.

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<sup>9</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 120.

<sup>10</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1859, pp. 55-56.

<sup>11</sup> Crispin Bates, 'Race, Caste and Tribe in Central India: the Early Origins of Indian Anthropometry,' in *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, ed. Peter Robb (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 233.



Missionaries writing to the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* frequently romanticised adivasis and in 1855, the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* carried accounts by women missionaries who had been sent out in the 1840s to help run orphan asylums for the BMS in Orissa. Tribal outreach confirmed that even women missionaries were privy to encounters at the imagined forefront of colonial knowledge. A Miss Derry, who ran an orphanage in Berhampore, wrote that her charges were the children of ‘those wild and barbarous descendants of our first parents – the Khonds – a race whose name does not appear in our geographies – whose country is not marked on our maps – and whose history is not written in any of our annals.’<sup>12</sup> In fact, as Crispin Bates argues, there was already an established colonial literature of ‘tribes’ in central India by the mid-nineteenth century, in which racialised ideas of difference were being negotiated.<sup>13</sup> But for Miss Derry, the point of representing her orphans as part of the frontier of colonial knowledge was to underscore the authority of her own encounter with India to metropolitan readers. In reality articles about ‘the Khonds,’ ‘Meriahs,’ and ‘Oriyas’ drew on second-hand hearsay about human sacrifice, infanticide, criminality and Kali worship.<sup>14</sup>

Encounters with adivasis were often idealised: missionaries constantly sought ‘people groups’ that were imagined as receptive to conversion, and groups perceived to be without caste were often described favourably. Miss Derry concluded her ethnographic account of the Khonds with the assertion that ‘the Gospel is the great restorer of the fallen and degraded humanity...The Khonds...have no temples, no Brahmins, no caste; hence they would be more ready to receive the truth than the inhabitants of the plains.’<sup>15</sup> Being well beyond the purview of Brahminical influence enabled Khonds and other adivasis to become privileged converts in some of the letters that appeared in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*. A Mrs Stubbins reported that a ‘healthy independence...distinguishes the Khund [sic] converts’ and later, ‘Rachel’, a Khond orphan, becomes an exemplary convert who vows to

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<sup>12</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1855, p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Bates, ‘Race, Caste and Tribe in Central India,’ pp. 229-236.

<sup>14</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1855, pp. 26-27. Miss Derry’s account covers these issues in relation to the Khonds and the Meriah. She evidently utilises colonial sources about the criminality of the Meriah and the use of the Hindu goddess Kali in various rites.

<sup>15</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1855, p. 28.

‘exhibit the Gospel to the barbarous Khunds [sic]’.<sup>16</sup> Momentarily, Khond girls become a special case: between the extracts of letters about this group, the editor writes that

[t]he correspondence of Mrs Buckley, Miss Collins, and their associates in the mission, supplies numerous proofs of the special blessing which has attended their efforts for the good of these children. Many of the girls, after receiving the truth in the love of it, have been married, and are settled in the native Christian villages which shine as bright spots in the dark deserts around.<sup>17</sup>

Missionaries were as complicit as colonial administrators in using the labile rhetoric of ethnography of nineteenth-century India, which was often a constitutive element to how Indian females were described. Nicholas Dirks argues that after the uprising of 1857 ‘anthropology supplanted history as the principal modality of knowledge and rule.’<sup>18</sup> He argues that colonial writing about Indians changed in the course of the nineteenth century to suit the needs of the colonial state: when extracting land revenue was central to the project of the permanent settlement, then constructing a physiocratic, ‘village India’ became important to understanding who the key economic players were in rural life.<sup>19</sup> After 1857, Dirks argues ‘political loyalty replaced landed status’ and there is some evidence in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* that missionaries, intermittently, recruited the rhetoric of ‘loyal’ Indian groups to evangelise.<sup>20</sup>

In 1859, the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* reviewed *The Parsees: their History, Manners, Customs, and Religion* by Dosabhoy Framjee who had been educated at the Elphinstone Institution, Bombay. The Parsees were described by the reviewer as a ‘race’ and Framjee had already visited London and addresses the North London Auxiliary of the SPFEE on the subject.<sup>21</sup> The reviewer is at pains to point out that ‘[t]his book contains particulars of much interest in many points of view of that people who have, even during the fearful season of the late mutiny, remained

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<sup>16</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1855, p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1855, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, pp. 43-51.

<sup>20</sup> Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, p. 43.

<sup>21</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1859, p. 44.

staunch and loyal to the British rule. On the subject of female education the writer dwells with much enthusiasm.<sup>22</sup> Loyalty to the British during the uprisings is central to the interest in this potential group of converts as is their cultural proximity to notions of white, Christian womanhood:

[t]he Parsee women occupy a much more honourable position than either their Hindoo or Mahometan sisters. The Parsees in general are good and affectionate husbands, and discharge faithfully their duties towards their wives, while the latter are not unconscious of theirs towards their lords, and hence most families lead a peaceable and very happy life. Although the Parsee ladies are not seen in society, it is not to be supposed that their life at home is spent in entire seclusion or in female company only, as is the case among the Hindoos and Mahometans. At home they mix freely in the family, join in the conversation, and take part in other affairs without reserve.<sup>23</sup>

Political loyalty to the colonial state and conjugal loyalty are axiomatic in this account of Parsi social practices. The treatment of women as an index of civilisation coincides with the fantasy that male power in the family can emulate that of the colonial state: discharged gently and accepted peacefully by its subjects. There is no rigorous ‘ethnographic’ insight underpinning this review, or much of the writing about adivasis that appeared in the magazine.

The *Missionary Register* had long established, through the work of missionaries like the Abbé Dubois, that India was refracted through ideas about ‘the caste system’, and much of the ethnographic writing about race, tribes and non-Hindu groups that appeared in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* simply reinforced caste’s centrality to the representation of India. However, unlike the limited number of texts that literary critics like Anna Johnston use to argue about the representation of Indian females in the nineteenth century, the magazine clearly published accounts of Indian females which drew on a variety of nineteenth-century ethnographic rhetorical traditions, particularly as missionaries sought to encounter groups outside the categories of ‘brahminical’, ‘high caste’ and ‘Hindu.’<sup>24</sup>

The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* may have utilised aspects of the ethnographic lexicon of nineteenth-century colonial writing, but the magazine

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<sup>22</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1859, p. 45.

<sup>23</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1859, p. 45.

<sup>24</sup> See Chapter One.

delivers little real insight into how both male and female missionaries conceptualised ‘difference’ between the groups they encountered, and how this inflected gender. Missionaries evidently subscribed to Biblical monogenesis but their ideas were still dominated by the centrality of caste and Hinduism in India, and how these degraded women.<sup>25</sup> Different groups may have been evaluated more or less favourably in terms of their proximity to Hinduism and caste, but fundamentally, only Christianity could uplift women. In January 1858, as the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* was fulsomely reporting the Indian uprisings, the editors reminded all Christians that ‘[e]very fallen religion degrades her. She becomes a mere slave; and the cruelties, which women have experienced, will make a fearful tale...But true religion gives to woman her proper station in society and the family.’<sup>26</sup>

The ‘variety’ of females reported in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* was less suggestive of ethnographic interest than the claim to the authenticity and validity of missionary experience, as providence had brought different groups into contact with them. Encountering a variety of people groups reflected not only the importance of reporting first-hand accounts of work in India but it evoked a more political point. In 1858, when Mary Weitbrecht wrote a book-length account of missionary work and history in North India, which also explored the causes of the 1857 uprising from a missionary perspective, the variety of people encountered by the Church Missionary Society was emphasized from the outset: ‘Within this range [of CMS stations] are contained classes of heathen of the most diverse character, from the highly-educated and acute native aristocracy of Calcutta, down to the degraded peasantry of the plains, and the lawless Santhal of the hills.’<sup>27</sup> Her account of the various mission fields of North India, the theatre of the 1857 uprisings, and of the different methods of evangelisation employed by missionaries suggested that only Protestant Christianity could penetrate so deeply into such varied cultural, religious and social terrain. There was the constant implication throughout *The Missionary Sketches* that the East India Company government had limited social penetration, and the missionary encounter with India was more diverse and

<sup>25</sup> See Crispin Bates’ discussion about competing theories of Biblical mono and polygenesis in Bates, ‘Race, Caste and Tribe,’ pp. 222-224.

<sup>26</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Mrs Weitbrecht, *Missionary Sketches in North India, with References to Recent Events* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1858), p. x.

knowledgeable. Weitbrecht, a scion of the SPFEE, was articulating a common missionary rationale for following in the wake of colonial expansion: providence facilitated encounters with a variety of non-Europeans.

Jeffrey Cox has described the centrality of providence to missionary thinking and writing about India as ‘geo-religious triumphalism’, which envisioned the successful establishment and expansion of missionary institutions across Asia.<sup>28</sup> The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* became an on-going ‘documentary record’ of the workings of providence in India and the expansion of the missionary project to India’s women. The magazine enabled missionaries and readers to believe in a continuous and progressive narrative of expansion into new and varied ethnographic terrain. This notion of variety and expansion, guided by providence, was central to the missionary mind set and provided a de facto justification for the presence of white, British women evangelists in India.

The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* enabled the woman reader at home to imagine an expanding missionary encounter in India which was implicitly underscored by providence. By representing groups of people who were not simply confined to a high-caste Hindu encounter, the magazine was acknowledging something of the social reality of missionary work in the mid nineteenth century and its limited success with high status converts.<sup>29</sup> I argue in Chapter Four that the SPFEE chose mixed-race girls as the group deemed crucial for the evangelisation of India and I also argue that their interest in high-caste outreach as a policy was limited. Missionary women were participants in writing about ‘diverse’ people groups and were integrated as both writers and readers into many aspects of male missionary work in India. The notion that missionary women in India could focus only on women of the zenana in order to justify their inclusion into a missionary project limits their role in widening discourses of missionary work, like that of

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<sup>28</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 26.

<sup>29</sup> See Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From the Beginnings to the Present*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Frykenberg argues that some high status converts had considerable public prominence, see Frykenberg, *Christianity in India*, pp. 380-418. Overall, he argues that there was more success in converting adivasis and members of the outcaste communities, pp. 9-11.

outreach to adivasis. Although I argue that missionary magazines were often not representative of the missionary work undertaken by either men or women in India, in one respect the aspirations of missionary women were reflected in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*: the SPFEE took up, not adivasis, but another marginal group for uplift and it sought to develop policies that were part of a more mainstream, and not exclusively female, missionary strategy.

### **Representing women's missionary work: the case of Indian orphans**

Mid nineteenth-century women's missionary work in India extended well beyond zenana visiting. The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* represented a range of missionary activities that women engaged in, from teaching in the bazaars of Calcutta to founding orphanages and boarding schools. By the late nineteenth century, the range of missionary work conducted by women in India expanded even further to reflect their growing professional opportunities at home. Rhonda Semple, Jeffrey Cox, Antoinette Burton and Esther Breitenbach, among others, have explored how the range of missionary activities open to women expanded with access to medical training and more rigorous teacher training.<sup>30</sup> The earlier period of women's missions under discussion is often characterised as amateurish, and as staking a claim for modes of missionary outreach that could only be delivered by women in order to justify women's inclusion in the foreign mission project. The representation of missionary work, by either men or women, is a central concern of this thesis and missionary writing was adept at distorting the impact of and motives for the missionary work it was describing. This section is a case study in how the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* both actively *enabled* and represented a type of missionary work that acquired a particular significance for women.

However, the highly feminised encounter that was represented between the female reader of the magazine and the Indian orphan was not the only context

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<sup>30</sup> Rhonda Anne Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 190-235; Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, pp. 153-170; Antoinette Burton, 'Contesting the Zenana: The Mission to Make Lady Doctors for India, 1874-1885,' in *Journal of British Studies* 35 (July 1996): pp. 368-397; Esther Breitenbach, *Empire and Scottish Society: The Impact of Foreign Missions at Home, c. 1790 to c.1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 114-5.

framing work with orphans. As I argued in Chapter One, magazines were not monographs with univocal perspectives. The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* derived its source material from both male and female missionary writers across the main Protestant denominations. This offered multiple perspectives on the missionary encounter in India and offered readers a 'site of contestation' and potential contradiction in the representation of work.<sup>31</sup> The encounter with orphans through the pages of the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* exemplifies this. The sanitised and sentimental accounts of orphans aimed at procuring sponsorship from women vie with more problematic examples of orphan work that derived, largely, from accounts of men's missionary work with orphans and intimations of relationships with the colonial state. However much women's orphan sponsorship was present as simplistic and morally unambiguous, accounts by other missionaries of orphans and orphanages challenged a uniform or coherent justification of this missionary form of outreach. The representation and practice of other modes of mid nineteenth-century women's missionary work, including zenana visiting and the education of girls, will be explored later in Chapters Four and Five.

### **Orphans as women's work**

Orphan outreach in India exemplifies how some types of missionary work were represented as particularly feminised, or suited to missionary women. Orphan outreach came to embody an almost uniquely Indian, rather than African or Chinese, phenomenon within the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* and the magazine encouraged and facilitated the practice of women readers sponsoring Indian orphans. The practice was such a given that in 1858, the Reverend John Pourie, a Free Church missionary in Calcutta since 1855, was quoted extensively in *The Eastern Females' Friend* arguing that Scottish ladies should not be encouraged to name Indian females in return for money, even though 'interesting it must be to a lady in Scotland, to think that one of India's daughters is being daily called by her own name.'<sup>32</sup> The practice of orphan sponsorship and orphan work was characterised as appropriate for Christian women, and the maternalism implicit in such work has become important

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>32</sup> *Eastern Females' Friend*, 1858, p. 53.



to the discourse of early imperial feminism. Clare Midgely argues that orphan outreach utilised ideas of 'Christian female privilege and providential imperialism' to enact a 'maternalist Christian-imperial mission to 'heathen' women', which was 'powerfully articulated around the surrogate mothering of the "heathen" girl.'<sup>33</sup> I would suggest that this is problematic: as I detail later, orphan outreach was also described in other, less comfortable contexts, as missionary men and women reported more ambiguously from a range of perspectives.

The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* was essential to the economic survival of many female missionaries in India, as it became the vehicle for tapping metropolitan purses for direct sponsorship. Women missionaries in India encouraged the sponsorship of orphans through the pages of the magazine, and orphan sponsorship became largely focused on India in the mid nineteenth century. The sponsorship of orphans in India, both by the individuals who supported the SPFEE and its auxiliaries, was well established as a practice before the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* was founded. The magazine exacerbated the trend towards sponsorship of different kinds. This trend, however, caused tension between the local economic power of the auxiliaries and the London committee who needed to attract centralised funding. Such was the popularity of sponsoring Indian orphans, in particular, through informal contacts among auxiliaries and individuals that one woman missionary in Africa lamented in 1840 that 'there are no destitute orphans here, as in India. Children are much thought of, and when a parent dies...they are soon adopted by another.'<sup>34</sup> Mrs Wilson, a pioneer of British women's missionary work in Calcutta, wrote to the SPFEE committee in 1840, 'objecting to the receipt of funds for the support of individual orphans at her Refuge.'<sup>35</sup> Her objections to such designated giving were insightful: the practice of direct sponsorship by the auxiliaries, bypassing the central funds of the SPFEE, led to periods of economic paralysis for the central committee. In 1861, for example, the SPFEE committee received seventy-six subscriptions for orphans at schools in India but did not have enough cash in the centralised, general funds to train and send out a missionary

<sup>33</sup> Clare Midgely, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 111.

<sup>34</sup> The Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East, *History of the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East* (London: Edward Suter, 1847), p. 169.

<sup>35</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM1 825.



teacher.<sup>36</sup> In 1862, an editorial in the magazine attempted to address this issue and suggested that readers should not devote ‘all their contributions to some special fund, as the support of an orphan...for our great difficulty at present is the deficiency in general funds.’<sup>37</sup> By the 1860s, the magazine had established a strong fundraising relationship between its readers and missionaries in India seeking sponsorship for their work, and this relationship centred largely on the figure of the Indian orphan.

Overt fundraising and sponsorship were critical to missionary magazines in general and by 1855 the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* had started reporting which of its auxiliaries had sent ‘boxes of work’, which were often composed of needlework parcels produced by auxiliary members to sell in bazaars and fundraising parties in India. Reciprocity in this economic encounter was established between the reader and the missionary by publishing thanks for these boxes, with the result that the philanthropic gesture was made visible and increasingly competitive. By 1862, child and orphan sponsorship was openly facilitated by the magazine and a tariff appeared for children across the missionary world served by the SPFEE: sponsoring a child in India cost £3 a year; whereas an African or Chinese orphan, a much rarer entity, would cost £6.<sup>38</sup> The economic encounter in the magazine between the sponsor at home and Indian female, whether orphan or young female convert, was often mediated by a sentimental fantasy of gratitude. In 1858, a missionary included an alleged message of thanks sent directly from a sponsored girl in South India to her benefactress in England:

[t]hrough your benevolent exertions, O ladies of the foreign Nation! The jungles of Travancore will one day be inhabited by women of knowledge and wisdom...I hope to see my benefactors in another world, enjoying the happiness of heaven.<sup>39</sup>

Encouraging the readers of the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* to imagine that the orphans and girls they sponsored in India were being reported in the pages of the magazine often resulted in highly visual and homogenised accounts of Indian females. Women missionaries in India started writing ‘sketches’ of girls, young

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<sup>36</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3497.

<sup>37</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1862, p. 141.

<sup>38</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1862, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 142.

native teachers, and orphans in order to encourage sponsorship, focusing on exemplary characters and agreeable physical qualities. A young Indian female is described as having a face that was ‘beautiful, every feature regular, and the expression remarkably sweet. Her form was perfect, and her movements elegant, so that she was an object of great admiration.’<sup>40</sup> The trend to encourage readers to visualise the girls and women was not confined to India. In 1861, the first illustrations of ‘heathen’ females appeared in the magazine and an editorial announced that ‘under its improved appearance, our little periodical may find many more readers than hitherto, and its circulation be thus greatly extended.’<sup>41</sup> The first illustration was of a group of Arab girls and the crude link between image and metropolitan purses was clearly foregrounded: it was hoped that ‘our friends at home will commiserate the case of these intelligence, but neglected Arab girls, and come forward to help them.’<sup>42</sup>

By using illustrations and accounts of girls and females that focused on the visual aspect of their appearance, the magazine established a counter trend in its reporting of Indian females. As established earlier, encountering and describing a ‘variety’ of Indian subjects was crucial to how missionaries established an authoritative sense of their own knowledge of India, particularly when confronted with a metropolitan audience. Yet when writing for sponsorship, missionaries often deracinated and homogenised Indian orphans, girls and young women to stimulate the sentiments of SPFEE supporters at home. The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* allowed its missionaries to use the magazine to plead for sponsorship and this practice often led to missionaries 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. In 1857, a woman missionary wrote from Bhagulpore to the women readers who had sent money to her school:

[w]e are really delighted that you can send us the money for four more children, for I assure you we find great difficulty in getting the means needed for all our orphans...I shall choose four of the healthiest of the orphans to bear the names you wish...Mary Scadding, Sophia Lea, Eliza Walker, and

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<sup>40</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1857, p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1861 pp. 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1861 pp. 1-2.

Emma; and next month...I will write to you again about them, and give you a description of each.<sup>43</sup>

The Anglicisation of Indian females through this naming practice in missionary magazines was inflected by a crude need for money. It has also been read as a crude form of cultural imperialism, underscored by evangelical beliefs in how the self could be effaced, remade and recast through Christian conversion, and how cultural and racial differences could, apparently, be erased. The much-quoted Reverend Pourie warned Scottish female missionary supporters who were sponsoring and naming Indian orphans that Indian Christians, particularly in large cities, were demonstrating ‘a very strong *Anglifying* tendency...which, if not carefully kept in check, may very much diminish their influence in favour of Christianity.’<sup>44</sup> He argued that Indian Christian girls eschewed Bengali for English and thus ‘unfit themselves for usefulness afterwards among the sunken heathen masses of their native heathen women.’<sup>45</sup> This phenomenon, he argued, was certainly encouraged by metropolitan practices and ‘it is because of this excessive *Anglifying* tendency that I think we should be cautious about doing anything...that might seem to countenance or favour it.’<sup>46</sup>

Whether the practice of orphan sponsorship and English names led, in reality, to Indian orphan girls being forced to adopt other culturally alien practices is uncertain. The SPFEE did not actively seek to establish orphanages and they were frustrated by the economics of orphan outreach, which, as stated earlier, undermined their own central funds. Yet orphan sponsorship and the concomitant naming of Indian girls does resonate with the treatment of mixed-race girls at the Landour School. I will explore how an aspirational rhetoric was ‘offered’ to describe girls of the mixed-race community in Chapter Four, where ‘anglicising’ practices were important to a community seeking to improve their social status. But to read the naming of orphan girls in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* as an egregious example of cultural imperialism, forced onto passive recipients, is to ignore Indian volition and advantage. Clare Midgely, although arguing against assumptions of Indian passivity,

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<sup>43</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 40.

<sup>44</sup> For a reference to this quote by Pourie, see Midgely, *Feminism and Empire*, p. 116; original quote from *Eastern Females’ Friend*, 1858, p. 53.

<sup>45</sup> *Eastern Females’ Friend*, 1858, p. 54.

<sup>46</sup> *Eastern Females’ Friend*, 1858, p. 54.

describes the practice as ‘cultural violence involved in the imposition of completely new identities on the girls’ and ‘the most intense forms of cultural imperialism, directed at the most powerless colonial subject groups, orphan girls’.<sup>47</sup> The Reverend Pourie suggests that Bengali girls were deliberately adopting Anglicised practices, and as Jeffrey Cox has argued, there was much conflict among European missionaries and Indian Christians later in the nineteenth century about the adoption of European cultural status markers which some Indian Christians were keen to preserve.<sup>48</sup> In reality, there is little concrete evidence about what cultural or non-Indian social practices were being encouraged in the missionary orphanages reported in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*.

There is, however, scholarship that points to clear attempts to reshape every aspect of the lives of Christian converts according to the prevailing religious ideologies of the relevant missionaries. Christopher Harding argues in his work on the meanings of conversion and uplift among marginal communities of nineteenth-century Punjab that Catholic Capuchin missionaries did seek to create model Christian villages and families out of orphaned children in keeping ‘with centuries of Catholic thinking on the ideal society’.<sup>49</sup> The most recent study of missionary cultural imperialism is Catherine Hall’s work on the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in nineteenth-century Jamaica. *Civilising Subjects* foregrounds how much early evangelical and missionary rhetoric attempted to efface ‘difference’. In the making of Christian ‘subjects’, Hall details how early BMS missionaries imagined effacing the social elements of ‘self’ and how ‘[t]he rebirth of the Christian man and woman, embedded in the Christian household, the finding of a new sense of self in Christ, was central to the evangelical project.’<sup>50</sup> Hall explores the ‘universal family of man’ idiom and the ideas that shaped so much missionary endeavour in relation to African slaves in Jamaica, and their subsequent ‘recasting’ as good, family-centred Christians after emancipation. Hall argues that, of course, when early nineteenth-century BMS missionaries denied the ‘temporal’ categories of race, gender and

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<sup>47</sup> Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*, p. 116.

<sup>48</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, pp. 91-2.

<sup>49</sup> Christopher Harding, *Religious Transformation in South Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) Online Edition, pp. 193.

<sup>50</sup> Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), p. 92.

culture in relation to black Jamaicans in the spirit of evangelical theology, they actually replaced these categories with white, middle-class, familial and gender ideologies.<sup>51</sup> Evangelical theology might have advanced a theory of the sameness of all Christian subjects, but in reality, missionaries often sought to transform their converts into social and cultural versions of themselves. Gender ideology is central to Hall's analysis of how Baptist missionaries reshaped Christian converts in Jamaica. However, the focus on how missionaries enacted their own gender ideologies in their missionary work can dominate the other social and political realities they were faced with.

I would argue that the business of sponsoring and naming Indian orphans in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* tells us little about the intentionality of the women missionaries in India, or to what extent these girls had their cultural identities violated. What it does tell us is that sponsorship was sustained by the magazine, and it presented the encounter with Indian orphans as sanitised, simplistic and morally unambiguous. The representation of deracinated orphan girls does not necessarily mean they were forced to speak English and wear European clothes: it does mean that in order to procure sponsorship, they were *represented* as amenable to renaming by missionary supporters at home and converting to Christianity. However, the magazine could not sustain a one-dimensional fantasy of orphan sponsorship because it incorporated other narratives of orphan work. Outreach to orphans was also men's work and the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* gave space to accounts by male and female missionaries who were engaged in a far more morally ambiguous rhetoric.

### **Orphans, parents and experimental discourses**

Arguing that the sponsorship of orphan girls in India through the pages of the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* is evidence of the simple imposition of mid nineteenth-century British gender ideologies ignores other contexts in which orphan outreach was undertaken and other ideological preoccupations shared by missionaries. The colonial state in India used missionary orphanages for a number of practical and experimental purposes in the nineteenth century. Both Christopher Harding and

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<sup>51</sup> Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 84-139.

Jeffrey Cox argue for the connection between the missionary orphanage and the colonial state, and Cox asserts that '[i]n the matter of orphans, the corruptions of imperial power appear on a broad screen and in Technicolor...The fact that government and mission were cooperating to put Hindu or Muslim children into Christian missions was not lost on Indian public opinion. I have found no evidence that a single missionary comprehended the moral implications of using famine as an opportunity for making Christians.'<sup>52</sup> This was not the only connection between the interests of the colonial state and missionaries running orphanages. In his study of the juvenile periphery of India, Satadru Sen explores how the colonial state and then Indian elites institutionalised Indian children and adolescents in reformatories and Chiefs' Colleges (in the princely states) from 1850 to 1945. Both the delinquent child and 'effete child of the decadent aristocracy' were part of an experiment by the colonial state to negotiate its own surrogacy in India and to reform children and childhood.<sup>53</sup> It is essential to understand the negotiation of the quasi parental relationship between missionary and orphan not only in terms of 'maternalist' justifications, or imperial feminism deriving from British metropolitan culture. And the magazine included accounts of orphan work that suggested other contexts.

Sen's study explores how the parent-child relationship was imagined by British 'experts' in India, and how certain practices and ideas led to the passing of the Reformatory Schools Act in 1876. Sen's focus, for my purposes, on the development of reformatory schools in India in the mid-nineteenth century informs why many of the letters and reports in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* were preoccupied with Indian orphans, orphanages, and conflicting accounts of the parent-child relationships. Sen argues that the missionary orphanages of this period 'represented a very rudimentary stage in the formation of a reformatory regime' and that most of the children had parents who were still alive.<sup>54</sup> Orphans were relegated to the juvenile periphery of India through a number of economic and circumstantial

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<sup>52</sup> Harding argues that Catholic orphanages in the Lahore diocese received official recognition from the Punjab government as they grew to meet the children orphaned in severe famines. See Harding, *Religious Transformation in Asia*, p. 190; Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 163.

<sup>53</sup> Quote from Satadru Sen, *Colonial Childhoods: The Juvenile Periphery of India, 1850-1945* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), p. 1; for a discussion of the colonial state and its experiment to reform children and childhood, see pp. 1-8.

<sup>54</sup> Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, p.35.

contexts, but that they often faced ‘aggressive missionaries seeking access to the Famine Relief Fund and other sources of government largesse.’<sup>55</sup> Sen cites the African Orphan Asylum in Karachi, run by the CMS, as characterising this proto-reformatory phenomenon: the institution effectively experimented with surrogate parenting and passed on information about the children to the colonial state.<sup>56</sup>

By the 1860s orphanages containing ‘famine orphans’ were frequently reported by both male and female missionaries in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*. An essay read at the Punjab Missionary Conference by a Reverend Javier lauded the ‘usefulness of female orphan schools’ and continued that when the ‘claims of different departments of missionary labour are being canvassed, let us declare the paramount of this’.<sup>57</sup> An earlier article by the Reverend C.G. Dauble of the Secundra Orphanage, North India, had also underscored the centrality of orphan institutions in the evangelisation of Indian females. Dauble invariably uses his account of the institution to encourage ‘the lively interest which their friends take in our orphans may be kept up and increased’ and to encourage the sponsorship of those orphans who were as yet ‘unclaimed’.<sup>58</sup> But the article also describes how embedded the orphanage had become for missionaries, and how ministering to the Indian orphan could rival other forms of missionary work, particularly itinerating and preaching. Dauble argues that for male missionaries:

Going about and preaching the Gospel to the heathen is what every missionary ought to consider his chief duty. This was my firm opinion a year ago, and looking back upon that time, I am still sometimes astonished that I find myself now engaged here in this large Orphanage, where many things take up attention and time which, I once thought, ought not to be done by a missionary. Yet I am not ashamed to confess that my opinion has, if not changed, nevertheless become greatly modified. It was with a decided disinclination that I followed the call to take charge of this Institution. But I soon found some redeeming points in my new occupation, which, after having had a few years’ turn at preaching, were the more appreciated.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, P.35.

<sup>56</sup> Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, p. 35-6.

<sup>57</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 185.

<sup>58</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 178-9.

<sup>59</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 179.



For Dauble, the rationale for foregrounding orphan institutions in missionary work to both Indian males and females is partly providential. Three hundred children had been ‘transplanted by the hand of the Lord, through the famine, to a perfectly new soil’ and famine could conveniently obfuscate the issue of whether children had living biological parents.<sup>60</sup> In Dauble’s account of the institution for famine orphans, the humanitarian motive negates all discussion of what happened to the parents, as readers are encouraged to imagine this category of Indian child as the most receptive to transformation: ‘[w]e can assure our friends that if they were to double their subscriptions for each child, it would be the easiest thing in the world to make, outwardly at least, ladies of our girls and gentlemen of our boys.’<sup>61</sup> The imagined absence of a biological parent made the famine orphan and orphanage a fantasy of physical and spiritual transformation through European influence and surrogacy: Dauble asks readers to imagine ‘these orphans when they arrive here, some, especially the smaller ones, having often no covering except dirt, others a few filthy rags, which are burnt as soon as the barber and bath have done their work’.<sup>62</sup> His final vignette of the children evokes ‘the long double line of our girls, in their simple but clean dresses, winding along slowly to our little church at the sound of the gong. But brightest of all is the scene when they are all bowed down before the throne of grace...also singing with a heartiness which is almost too much for European ears to bear..’<sup>63</sup>

Although Dauble’s account does incorporate a warning to readers that reformation of these children is gradual as they are of an age ‘when lying, deceit, dishonesty, dirty language etc. have become habitual’, it also suggests that the greater the institutional intervention in the life of the Indian child-orphan, the more prospect there is of reformation.<sup>64</sup> Dauble’s account foregrounds the rhetoric of the proto-reformatory: the child is habituated to deceit when received into the institution and ‘reformation’, or the ‘imparting to them of a high moral standard of right and wrong is a life-work’ for the missionary.<sup>65</sup> Embedded in Dauble’s account is the

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<sup>60</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 179.

<sup>61</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, pp. 181-2.

<sup>62</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 182.

<sup>63</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 183.

<sup>64</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 184.

<sup>65</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 184.



sense of the orphanage as an institutional experiment, another feature of the encounter with the juvenile periphery of India described by Sen.<sup>66</sup> The account concludes with:

[t]he past history of our orphans certainly teaches us to moderate our expectations; but there is some danger of falling into the opposite extreme, namely, that of lowering the standard too much, and expecting too little, if abler men have suffered great disappointment by seeing, after years of labour some of their most hopeful orphans turning out the most ungrateful and hardened subjects, what can I expect? <sup>67</sup>

Here, the orphanage becomes a laboratory in which to discern to what extent European intervention can reform the Indian child and young person, and this was also the basis of the experiment with the reformatory schools in India. Dauble's account shifts from the fantasy of transforming the famine orphan to acknowledging the experimental nature of the project. Whether the character of the Indian child was labile or delinquent and 'hardened', and what the optimal conditions were for reforming this character became questions that connected this particular missionary incursion into the juvenile periphery with that of the colonial state in the mid nineteenth century.

Accounts based on an overtly reforming and experimental aspiration vied with other representations of the orphanage in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*. One missionary utilised a far more familial idiom, typical of much missionary writing about schools and institutions, to deny the institutional nature of the orphanage in India:

[l]et me know sketch the principles and system on which the Orphanage is conducted and managed. I confess to a horror of everything that savours of the fixed life of monasticism, and to a strong bias in favour of the family life, as the most genial and humanizing in its influence on the young. It has, therefore, been our endeavour to assimilate our orphanage system as nearly to that of a well-conducted family as possible.<sup>68</sup>

The writer eschews any hint of the reformatory or over disciplined in his rendition of this orphan institution. The account continues to emphasise play in the lives of the

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<sup>66</sup> Sen, *Colonial Childhoods*, pp. 9-49.

<sup>67</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 183.

<sup>68</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 230.

orphans and a lack of isolation in the routines of daily life, which are superintended by two Indian Christians.<sup>69</sup> This account is highly sensitive to the charges of a punitive experience of childhood in a missionary orphanage: ‘but everything like mere routine, or irksome confinement, or isolated, cell-like existence, is carefully guarded against.’<sup>70</sup> Whether this example of an orphanage, with its emphasis on the familial nature of the institution, simply confirms that life in a mid nineteenth-century orphanage was more like the proto-reformatory of Dauble’s account is possible. Or, by using the familial idiom, the disciplinary and reformatory aspects of the institution are ‘naturalised’ and its power dynamics obscured by its claims of ‘parenting’.<sup>71</sup>

Catherine Hall has explored the parameters of the familial idiom among Baptist missionaries in the mid nineteenth century. Central to the how the Baptist missionary family was imagined was the patriarchalism of the male missionary. ‘The missionary’s role in the family enterprise was closely linked to his fatherhood – head of a household, father of the family, father of the congregation, father of the children in ‘his’ schools’.<sup>72</sup> However, to be the symbolic father (or mother) was very different from becoming the surrogate parent: the orphanage in India, and the figure of the orphan, was problematic for the missionary vision of familial power, and that problem lay in the notion of surrogacy.

The Indian orphan, whether truly without living parents or not, became the means by which missionaries writing for *the Female Missionary Intelligencer* explored the rhetoric of being *in loco parentis* in India. As the colonial state was formulating discourses, policies and institutions to reform young, Indian delinquents, missionaries were writing accounts of their own experiences of and rationales for supplanting parents in the Indian family. When missionary candidates were trained at the British and Foreign School Society, the handbook clearly stated the importance of the relationship between parent and child:

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<sup>69</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 230.

<sup>70</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 230.

<sup>71</sup> Catherine Hall argues that the family idiom was evoked by missionaries to naturalise the inferiority of black people: ‘[t]his assumed that black inferiority was encoded in the language of the family, naturalising relations as of parent and child.’ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 98.

<sup>72</sup> Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 95.

[p]arents are the natural guardians of their children; and, however they may occasionally be sunk in ignorance and vice, they seldom entirely lose the sense of their responsibility, or because altogether incapable of exercising authority to some good purpose...The British system respects this natural and important principle in various ways...Teachers are recommended to maintain a constant communication with parents, respecting the habits and principles of the scholars; by which means they may greatly improve the influence of parental authority...<sup>73</sup>

The British System implemented at the Borough Road School asserted the importance of character formation and moral rectitude over learning.<sup>74</sup> Key to the project of mass education for the poor at home and the heathen overseas was the centrality of the relationship between parent and child, irrespective of the moral condition of the parent. Although most missionaries who were writing in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* had not been trained by the BFSS, the ‘natural and important principle’ of the parent-child bond was a stated ideal.

An exploration of surrogacy became a concern in some representations of orphans in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* and the rhetoric of ‘surrogacy’ was as varied and suggestive as that of ‘the orphanage’. A Reverend W. Shoolbred wrote about a female orphanage in ‘Beawr’, Rajputana, making the absolute absence of living, biological parents a prolonged preamble to an account of the legal transfer of Indian female orphans by the deputy commissioner of Ajmere to the mission.<sup>75</sup> The letter ponders the baptismal register of the orphanage, commenting on the lists of both baptismal and Hindu names given to the children, but then it asserts that

...between these two columns is another, in which the father and mother’s name should be entered; but that is blank, or filled with the word ‘orphan,’ suggestive in its simplicity. But, saddest and most suggestive of all, are the entries in the two columns respectively headed ‘when born,’ ‘where born;’ one word sums up all that can be said on these important heads – the single word ‘unknown,’ ‘unknown,’ so it runs all the way down the column...Very sad seems to me that long list of blank ‘unknowns;’ a very sad and heart-stirring appeal I should think it to Christian fathers and mothers at home

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<sup>73</sup> British and Foreign School Society, *A Hand-Book to the Borough Road Schools; Explanatory of the Methods of Instruction Adopted by the British and Foreign School Society* (London: J & W Rider, 1856), p. 22.

<sup>74</sup> BFSS, *A Hand-Book*, p. 21.

<sup>75</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, pp. 223-233.

surrounded by their dear ones, whose names, with dates and places of birth, are all entered in a fair round hand in the 'big ha' Bible.<sup>76</sup>

This account imagines that an orphan can be 'suggestive in its simplicity' and constantly reiterates the absence of the children's parents who become 'the blank "unknowns"'. This effacement and simplification of all possible living, biological claims on the child and the fixing of this 'unknowing' in a baptismal database can be read as an example of how 'colonial knowledge' was presented in the nineteenth century by colonial administrators and missionaries alike.

Professing ignorance of the Indian child's parentage was crucial to this missionary's entitlement to act as a surrogate parent. Bernard S. Cohn's well-established thesis that colonial 'knowledge' of India was predicated on the need to control groups and conquer epistemological as well as physical territory applies as much in this case to the performance of 'ignorance' on the part of the missionary.<sup>77</sup> This ignorance of a child's origins comes embedded in the usual textual apparatus of colonial knowledge (the register, the columns, the organisation of data). Its purpose is to make a claim of ownership over an Indian child who might have living parents. The Reverend Shoolbred continues his account by revealing that in reality, nobody knows who has legitimate claims on these orphan girls:

some anxious weeks passed, in which we heard rumours of all manner of intrigue employed to keep the children from falling into the padre's hands. Wealthy *seths* made offers to receive them into their households, attempts were made to palm off false relatives and guardians, even the higher officials of the commissioner's court plotted for the same end, and sometimes we feared that the dark shadows of heathenism were about to close round these young lives once more. But the commissioner stood firm, and, having satisfied himself of their friendlessness, faithfully fulfilled his promise, and consigned them to our care.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, pp. 223-4.

<sup>77</sup> See Bernard S Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996). Cohn's work on colonial knowledge and its ideologies explores how British officials 'understood', classified and translated the languages they encountered in India. For my purposes, Cohn's discussion of how groups and elites were used in this project is useful. He argues that 'these texts signal the invasion of an epistemological space occupied by a great number of diverse Indian scholars, intellectuals, teachers, scribes. Priests, lawyers, officials, merchants, and bankers, whose knowledge as well as they themselves were to be converted into instruments of colonial rule.' Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, p. 25.

<sup>78</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 225.

The notion of ‘simplicity’ in the case of establishing who has the right to claim the orphans is undermined in the extract above, as Shoolbred admits to how many potential Indian surrogates make claims on the orphans. Tension between the colonial state and missionaries is underscored by criticism of how some colonial officials attempted to thwart this quasi adoption by missionaries. Few texts in the magazine admit to such controversy over who has claims over the Indian female orphan (and her male counterpart). Much of the writing in the magazine about the biological and surrogate claims of Indian parents attempted to sustain a moral simplification to license missionary ‘adoption’. Other missionaries simply acknowledged the existence of biological family but denied their moral claims on the grounds of heathenism. Mrs Mengè, a missionary in Lucknow, was frank in her desire to adopt the Indian child ‘Laetitia Sarah’ to her school, and although the girl’s parents were dead, she ‘tried to prevail on her grandmother, with whom she was living, to give her up to me. To this the woman objected, so I lost sight of the girl.’<sup>79</sup> No attempt was deemed necessary at a moral explanation or justification of the missionary’s claims over a family member. Other accounts sustained the same moral myopia by arguing that Indians had little interest in the surrogate parenting of orphans. In 1860, the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* carried an elaborate account of a girl, ‘The Orphan of Juggernaut’, who was adopted by a childless Baptist missionary couple, Dr and Mrs Sutton. The girl grew up as their daughter and married the celebrated Indian Christian, Reverend Behari Lal Sing.<sup>80</sup> The woman was made an orphan initially as her mother died of cholera on her way to the Juggernaut festival and no Indian parents could be found to act as surrogates:

[w]hat was then to become of the little one? It was a girl, too, and girls are always unwelcome additions to the heathen household. Could a heathen mother be found to tend it? Ah, no! The ‘dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty,’ not of love. A native doctor, who had been called to prescribe for the poor woman, was standing by and the missionary asked him what could be done for the infant. He shrugged his shoulders: ‘*Let it die too. What else?*’<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 222.

<sup>80</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1860, p. 93.

<sup>81</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1860, p. 94.

This account explicitly links gender to the refusal of even an Indian doctor to consider taking the female orphan. Indian female orphans were, perhaps, more morally straightforward for missionaries, as female infanticide and the Hindu degradation of girls could always be cited as reasons for not seriously encountering the prospect of finding willing adoptive Indian parents. Moral simplifications, however embedded they were in encountering and constructing India as a simplified system of emotional and familial relationships, were far more difficult to sustain when it came to ‘quasi-orphans’.

‘Quasi-orphans’ were rendered parentless through poverty, and it was these Indian children who frequently ended up in missionary orphanages. These orphans often had living biological parents who were forced to give them up, and it was this separation that caused missionaries writing to the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* problems with how to negotiate the breaking of the familial bond and its assumption by a white European. There was a body of writing that had grappled with similar issues in the early nineteenth century. Andrea Major, in her work on discourses of and responses to Indian slavery in the nineteenth century, argues that in accounts of sati, writers oscillated between ‘the image of the widow who deserts her child and the one who has her child torn from her [which] created an ambivalence that underpinned the common depictions of the widow as struggling between the ‘natural’ bond of maternal affection and the ‘false’ weight of superstition that perverted her nature.’<sup>82</sup>

The ‘natural’ feelings of the Indian mother which were ‘perverted’ by a range of largely Hindu social practices from female infanticide to sati (and the de facto abandonment of her children) was a common trope in much of the writing discussed by Major, and which is then contextualised in evangelical and anti-slavery discourses of forced parent-child separations.<sup>83</sup> Evangelical women like Hannah More had used the powerful image of the child forcibly separated from its mother to evoke the moral barbarity of the slave trade and its brutalising economic motives. Her poem *Slavery* argued that ‘[n]othing is more frequent than this cruel and stupid argument that they

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<sup>82</sup> Andrea Major, *Slavery, Empire and Abolitionism in India, 1772-1843* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), p. 282.

<sup>83</sup> Andrea Major, *Slavery, Empire and Abolitionism in India*, pp. 280-284.

[slaves] do not *feel* the miseries inflicted in them as Europeans would do' and her poetic point is made with

I see, by more than fancy's mirror shewn,  
The burning village, and the blazing town:  
See the dire victim torn from social life,  
The shrieking babe, the agonizing wife!  
She, wretch forlorn! Is dragg'd by hostile hands,  
To distant tyrants sold, in distant lands!  
Transmitted miseries, and successive chains,  
The sole sad heritage her child obtains!  
Ev'n this last wretched boon their foes deny,  
To weep together, or together die.  
By felon hands, by one relentless stroke,  
See the fond links of feeling Nature broke!  
The fibres twisting round a parent's heart,  
Torn from their grasp, and bleeding as they part.<sup>84</sup>

Representations of the moral violation of taking a child from its mother were familiar to evangelical women through the literature of anti-slavery in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For missionary writers, there was also a tradition of representing the Indian parent, and mother in particular, as brutalised by their religion, and evidently not feeling the miseries of the loss of a child, sometimes at their own hand.

But some representations of the mother-child relationship were also inflected by the bald social realities of the immediate context. In 1859 a sympathetic account appeared of a poor widow who gave birth to a daughter and was arrested after she contemplated murdering the child by abandoning her under a tree.<sup>85</sup> After the child had been delivered to a female boarding school in Masulipatam, Mrs Sharkey, the missionary who ran the school, commented:

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<sup>84</sup> For the quote from the introduction to the poem, see Hannah More, *Slavery, a Poem* (London: 1788), p. 7; poetry quoted from ll. 97-110.

<sup>85</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1859, p. 101.

[w]ho can tell the miseries of India's widows? Their cup is a bitter one indeed. The two curses of this country are caste and widowhood. We hear of the re-marriages of young widows in Calcutta; when shall we be able to report on such marriages *here*? Perhaps caste is nowhere so powerful as here, and woman is nowhere trodden under foot so much as she is here.<sup>86</sup>

There is no moral condemnation of the widow in this account as she becomes the victim of caste, India's defining feature, and the widowhood that renders women homeless and poverty-stricken. In 1859, the magazine reported another instance of a widow whose children ended up at the Church of Scotland Orphanage in Calcutta. Miss Hebron wrote that 'I am going to take the mother also, to act as a sort of matron to the children. She wants no remuneration, as is allowed a trifle from the Relief Fund; she only wishes to be near her children.'<sup>87</sup> The Indian mother now becomes the matron to her children in the missionary orphan institution.

The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* represented an ongoing encounter with orphans and orphanages in India. The magazine did not simply reflect a simplified and feminised economic encounter with orphans through sponsorship: by including a variety of material from different aspects of the missionary-orphan encounter women readers were also confronted with the moral ambiguity of such work. Some writing about orphans in the magazine attempted to license a missionary's entitlement to act as the institutional parent of Indian children who were the victims of poverty and who might have had living parents. Yet, the magazine could not offer a monolithic account of this work anymore than it could 'resolve' conflicting attitudes about Indian parent-child relationships, where were inflected by multiple perspectives and attitudes. What is significant about the *Female Missionary Intelligencer's* representation of orphans and orphan work is the undermining of a simply fundraising, or feminised perspective. I am not arguing that there was any attempt to confront the moral ambiguity or cultural imperialism of this form of outreach, but multiple perspectives were included, and some of the unpalatable social realities of orphan work suggested. The female reader's encounter with missionary work also, crucially, took on the perspectives and experiences of missionary men. As with the previous discussion of how the magazine represented people, the

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<sup>86</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1859, p. 101.

<sup>87</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1859, p. 108.



encounter with missionary work was not confined to women's accounts or women's experiences alone. The magazine, in the representation of people and work did not offer a separatist perspective, and this is important for understanding why, in Chapter Four, the women's committee of the SPFEE did not simply prosecute policies that separated them from the missionary strategies or aspirations of missionary men.

### **1857 and narratives of women in India<sup>88</sup>**

The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* served some practical function in terms of outreach to the women and girls of India. As I argued earlier in the chapter, orphan sponsorship was actively facilitated by the magazine even though the SPFEE itself was at best ambivalent about the practice. When the uprisings began in northern India in 1857, the British protestant missionary project in India was left both blamed and vulnerable. For a society sending out single women missionaries, the potential damage in terms of home support was significant and the magazine proved to be crucial for maintaining the symbolic presence of the British missionary woman and for retaining a focus on Indian Christian womanhood.

The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* provided a vital corrective to accounts of the 1857 uprisings that focused on the dangers to white womanhood in India. Much of the writing that followed the uprisings constructed 1857 as a gendered event, where white women were violated by Indian insurgents.<sup>89</sup> The magazine provided a crucial counter-narrative to the reports, stories and rumours that flooded back to the metropole in 1857 and 1858 because what was at stake was not merely the 'representation' of an event. In reality, the project of missions to Indian females was potentially jeopardised by alarmist reporting and fears that British women would no longer be sponsored to evangelise in such dangerous and violent territory. The

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<sup>88</sup> See also Caroline Lewis, 'Captive Women and Manly Missionaries: Narratives of Women's Work in India' in *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857, Volume 2 Britain and the Indian Uprising*, ed. Andrea Major and Crispin Bates, (New Delhi: Sage, 2013), pp. 95-109.

<sup>89</sup> Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 58-72.

magazine, in its coverage of 1857, established that the white British woman and her missionary project to Indian women and girls could remain intact.

Jeffrey Cox has argued that the uprisings of 1857 affected perceptions of India in Britain: however, by missionaries, it was ‘generally portrayed as a kind of natural disaster, like flood or famine, which threatened the progress of the church, and the killing of missionaries and Indian Christians alike treated as a huge misunderstanding.’<sup>90</sup> Much historical scholarship refers to 1857 as the moment when colonial rule becomes more explicitly ‘racialised’ and much of the aftermath of the event is represented through the iconic ‘violation’ of white women at Kanpur.<sup>91</sup> Although a memorandum drawn up in December 1857 to the Governor General, Lord Canning, into ‘the Alleged Dishonour of European Females At the Time of The Mutinies’ concluded that there was little evidence of actual rape having taken place, the violation of white womanhood by Indian insurgents was, as Jenny Sharpe has argued in *Allegories of Empire*, ‘a sign for the violation of colonialism’ and ‘a metonym for government that sees itself as the violated object of rebellion’.<sup>92</sup> Sharpe’s study of the English woman in key literary texts related to nineteenth-century India argues that Indian women were either absented or vilified in texts relating to 1857, and the focus on the rape and mutilation of the white woman deflected any sense that the body of the white male colonist could be seriously at risk.<sup>93</sup>

The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* provided little in terms of a unified response to the events of the Indian uprisings as they unfolded from 1857 to 1858. The magazine published seventeen letters from seven different missionaries, stationed across North India, beginning in September 1857 and finally ending in May

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<sup>90</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 31.

<sup>91</sup> For discussions of the racialisation of white rule, see Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.53 and Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire*, p. 6; for a discussion of the representation of the event through the violation of white women at Kanpur, see Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 160-165.

<sup>92</sup> W. Muir, ‘Memorandum, Drawn up at the Request of the Governor-General, of Enquiries into the Alleged Dishonour of European Females at The Time of the Mutinies’ in *Records of the Intelligence Department of the Government of the North-West Provinces of India During the Mutiny of 1857*, Vol. 1, ed. William Coldstream (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902), pp. 378-9; quotes from Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire*, p. 4, p. 7.

<sup>93</sup> For a discussion of the absence of Indian women, see Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire* p.1; she does, however, explore the vilification of the Rani of Jhansi, pp. 74-6; for a discussion of how the violation of the English woman deflected attention from the white male colonist, see pp. 67-8.

1858. The only male voice was that of the Reverend Hassell of Krishnagur, near Calcutta, whose account referred euphemistically to the rape of white women, and who was far more assertive than the female missionaries whose letters appeared in the magazine in presenting the apparent causes of the uprising. Hassell utilised contemporary accounts of how ‘the delicate and inoffensive English ladies [were] insulted and literally butchered by a crowd of heathen soldiers.’<sup>94</sup> He argued that the greased cartridge controversy was a mere pretext and, in reality, ‘[t]he movement is substantially Mussulman, and the head is the deposed King of Oude, whose relatives have been so foolishly and absurdly lionized by so many ignorant enthusiasts at home.’<sup>95</sup>

The key account of the uprising that was published in the magazine did not provide a narrative of political causation like Hassell’s but became an unwitting corrective to the emerging patterns of rumour and narrative about 1857. Jenny Sharpe argues that graphic and formulaic accounts emerged of the rape and torture of British women and she asserts that ‘[o]nly by considering the invented stories in terms of their effects do we see that a focus on the terrifying crimes against women displaces attention away from the image of English men being dismembered, since such a fragmentation of the male body would allocate the British men to the objectified space of the rape victim – a status that would negate colonial power at the precise moment that it needed reinforcing.’<sup>96</sup> Jane Goodenough’s letters, which recorded her experience of taking refuge in Agra Fort near Delhi, became the focus of a special ‘Mutiny in India’ section of the magazine that lasted until the May edition of 1858. Her letters, which often took on a journal format, were written from May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1857, to January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1858, and her account was serialised in seven separate and lengthy instalments in the magazine from September 1857 to May 1858. Goodenough’s account acted as a crucial, albeit unintentional, rejoinder to the gendering of the story of 1857: she asserted the female heroism of the white missionary woman; the victimhood of the white male missionary and soldier; and hinted at the heroic activities of Indian females. The importance of such an account cannot be overstated, given how damaging prevailing narratives of violated white

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<sup>94</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1857, p. 127.

<sup>95</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1857, p. 128.

<sup>96</sup> Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire*, p. 67.

women and vicious Indian females could be to the project of supporting continued missions to women in India. In 1857 an editorial appeared in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* which suggested that mission work in India would be closed indefinitely:

[n]ow, for a time, the opportunities we have wasted are lost to us. The field of mission labour at the seat of war is shut, as far as we are concerned, for the moment, and all that is left us is to command our brethren in Christ, whether native or European, to HIS mercy who first called out of darkness. But this is not all. The depth of our sorrow must not cause our hands to hang down in idleness. Other fields yet remain to us: besides those portions of Europe and even our own country which are virtually in a state little removed from heathen darkness, we have still regions left open for the work which is the subject of these pages. 'Ethiopia stretches out her hands unto God' – the extreme regions of the East, Malay Archipelago, and the seats of earliest Christianity still remain ready for our work...<sup>97</sup>

Goodenough's account enabled 'women', both Indian and European, to remain as discursive presences for the readers of the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*. The domination of her narrative of 1857 over all others in the magazine became an assertion of female heroics in India at the time, but one that left the white women 'intact', rather than mutilated symbols of anti-colonial insurrection. This wasn't simply about the politics of representation: remaining 'intact' was imperative in terms of maintaining the rationale for missions to Indian women and retaining its economic support, often stimulated by the magazine, in the metropole.

First-hand, eye-of-the-storm experience of the uprising was what enabled an unknown female missionary to dominate the accounts and versions of 1857 in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*. Jane Goodenough had been sponsored by the Dublin Auxiliary of the SPFEE to take up a post at a CMS mission station infant school at Secundra, near Agra, in North India. Miss Goodenough arrived in Agra in 1854 and the testimonials to her work by Mrs Hoernle, the missionary wife who had originally applied to the SPFEE for a female missionary for the school, were very positive. The arrival of Miss Goodenough's regular letters from India letters were noted, if not much discussed, in the London committee meetings of the SPFEE before the uprisings started. Her account of 1857 was foregrounded in the magazine

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<sup>97</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1857, p. 109.

because of her proximity to the action, rather than any pre-existing status she had as a missionary or correspondent. Unlike Mrs Willing, who was in many ways a far more experienced and august missionary attached to the society's flagship school at Mussoorie, in the Himalayas, it was Miss Goodenough's closeness to military activity, and the vividness of the lived experience that commanded such space and attention across the pages of the magazine.

As an immediate response to the unfolding of events near Delhi in 1857, Jane Goodenough's letters were very different from the more propagandist and organised narratives found later in Mary Weitbrecht's account of the uprisings of 1858, *Missionary Sketches in North India, with References to Recent Events*. Even though Goodenough's letters did engage with emerging narratives, rumours and discourses of 1857 from other sources, she argued initially that she was not an authority on the events unfolding around her, and readers in Britain with access to newspapers were more likely to be knowledgeable about the uprisings:

[a]s you are most likely better acquainted with the past and present state of this country than I am, shut up in this Fort, hearing nothing of what is going on around us, or, if a report spreads about any matter, afraid to believe it, if it be good, because we have been so frequently deceived.<sup>98</sup>

In her letter dated 20 October 1857, she retracted this position and argued that '[y]ou seem to think that the accounts given of the terrible mutinies in India are exaggerated. I, for one, could almost wish they were; but alas! They are all too true.'<sup>99</sup> The letters dated from October 1857 onwards began to emphasise Miss Goodenough's authority as a commentator on events in India. Rumour, reports from friends, suspect military intelligence and domestic anecdotes were integrated into her letters, providing her with source material with which to counter other reports that played down the scale and severity of the uprisings. She displayed little anxiety at this point about the veracity of her new sources, stating, for example, that '[w]e hear, on good authority, that servants set fire to their masters' houses and bungalows, carried off their property, and would, no doubt, have taken their lives.'<sup>100</sup> Goodenough quickly adopted a position of authenticity and authority over the events

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<sup>98</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, February, 1858, p. 20.

<sup>99</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, February, 1858, p. 26.

<sup>100</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, February, 1858, p. 26.

of 1857, which was crucial to the symbolic value of her narrative in countering versions of events where only white women were victims, and all Indian women were either effaced or vilified.

Goodenough's letters did not completely avoid the narrative set-pieces emerging about 1857. The vilification of servants, evident in the previous extract, was a particular feature of her letters and central to Goodenough's attempt to construct a story of blame. At one level, this feature of Goodenough's narration conformed to aspects of an emerging public discourse, or 'white response', to the uprising. Some accounts of 1857 became 'domesticated' and retold through the idiom of domestic drama.<sup>101</sup> The account of servant insurrection in the colonial home was, for example, also repeated by Mrs Willing, a missionary woman in Landour, Himalayas, who wrote letters for the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* detailing her fears of domestic rebellion rather than her actual experience.<sup>102</sup> Goodenough produced similar narratives of servants turning on masters, and of Indians violating the white family, using reports of servant 'insurrection' to enable her to cite 'authoritative' sources outside the confines of Agra Fort and to establish credibility as a commentator on the uprisings.

However, in Goodenough's version of 1857 as a domestic drama it is the British male and, more poignantly for her, the male missionary patriarch who is the particular victim of servant violation and disloyalty. She comments, '[h]ave I not heard the jests and seen the impudent laugh of the servants of the friends of mine when the family was in the deepest affliction, when the kind and tender-hearted master lay dying on his bed – a missionary too, one who had made his dealings with his servants a matter of conscience, as too many do not!'<sup>103</sup> By foregrounding the vulnerable male missionary, Goodenough was making the point that he was different

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<sup>101</sup> See Alison Blunt, 'Spatial Stories Under Siege: British Women Writing from Lucknow in 1857', in *Gender Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, Vol. 7, 3 (2000): pp. 229-246.

<sup>102</sup> Mrs Willing's letter of 29<sup>th</sup> December 1857 details her domestic paranoia following a report, spread in Mussoorie, that the missionaries were to be massacred on Christmas day. She claims that her head servant 'placed a curious, unknown dish before me of mince patties, swimming in tomato sauce, and told me that was 'the cook's present.' In vain I asked what they were. The children wished for some, and I followed the example at last, not without misgivings of treachery. Three days have since passed, and we are all well, through mercy.' *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 73.

<sup>103</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 27.

from other European men who often did not, in her view, treat servants appropriately. This early anecdote was prescient: as a narrator, Goodenough constantly veered away from establishing a univocal white, British perspective on the experience of 1857, however clichéd and derivative her narrative was in other respects. But more importantly, she was interested in reporting stories of alleged male suffering and victimhood. Reporting how the white male patriarch was mocked by Indians within his own home was, as Jenny Sharpe observed, an undermining of male authority at the moment when it needed reinforcing.

Goodenough's account also delivered a tacit critique of British colonial authority at the time when it was most vulnerable. In her letter of 1 September 1857, native Christians occupy a symbolically loaded position at the gates of Agra Fort, and are not permitted to enter, despite the efforts of missionaries, 'until the firing had begun in earnest'.<sup>104</sup> Goodenough reports that both Muslims and Hindus victimised them and '[m]any native Christians were murdered; it is said that even children, not Christians, but having Christian names, were butchered by those Mahometans, so great is their hatred of the Christian religion'.<sup>105</sup> In spite of identifying Muslims as the main persecutors of the native Christians, those who denied them entry into the fort, namely the British authorities, are symbolically vilified. She wrote bitterly that '[n]otwithstanding all that had been said, done and written by different missionaries...[t]he authorities would not listen. 'Nothing would happen;' 'No room at the Fort'.<sup>106</sup> The implied criticism of the British authorities is brief but profound: symbolically, they turned away the Christian 'holy family' like the innkeepers of Bethlehem in the Christian nativity story. This moment of distance from the white, colonial authorities, and the sense of the narrator as a Christian rather than a white, British subject is a rejection of a clearly racialised narrative of 1857. The 'victims' of her story are largely white men, not white women; its heroes are momentarily Indian Christians, mistreated by colonial masters at Agra Fort. Earlier in Goodenough's account, Indian female heroism is clearly asserted: in her first letter, dated May 17<sup>th</sup> 1857, before she took refuge in Agra Fort, she describes asking Indian Christian women whether they are afraid and comments '[h]ow cheering it

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<sup>104</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 22.

<sup>105</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 23.

<sup>106</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 22.



was to see their bright black eyes and happy faces as they said, “we are strong”.<sup>107</sup> Later in the account, far from either removing or vilifying the Indian woman, Goodenough accorded her a deeply symbolic role:

I had a long chat with them, and explained to them the reason why I left Secundra. They all pitied me very much, and said, ‘poor Missie Baba has come from a far country to teach our children; how kind! do not go away again. We women will sleep in your house every night by turns, until the danger is over, we will take care of you, don’t be afraid.’ ‘No,’ said I, ‘I am not afraid, I shall not go away from Secundra again, unless I am ordered away, and feel it my duty to go.’ The women told me that their heathen neighbours had derided them and mocked at them, and said as much as gave them to understand, that they expected to get possession of their little property soon.<sup>108</sup>

This narrative is more than the usual missionary testimonial to the strength of a convert’s Christianity. Accounts of converts on their death-beds, refusing to backslide and reaffirming their faith were as frequent in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* as other denominational missionary magazines. Proof of true conversion was often evidenced in how it stood up to adversity. Goodenough’s account, however, acknowledged and incorporated multiracial Christianity into her narrative and accorded Indian women a heroic role.

Later, Goodenough’s letters constructed a narrative of life at Agra Fort, which projected a sense of her own missionary heroism. Goodenough ministered to sick soldiers at the fort’s hospital, and her accounts of this work were published in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* in April 1858. Her new role as a missionary nurse echoed that of Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War. Indeed, Goodenough had evoked the ‘poor sufferers from the Crimea’ in her earlier critique of the Englishman in India, and towards the end of her letters, she seemed to rehearse the role of the battlefield nurse so celebrated by Nightingale.<sup>109</sup> Goodenough reflected that:

My work was to give the poor sufferers water or any little nourishment the medical men allowed them; to bathe their feverish heads with vinegar and

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<sup>107</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1857, p. 114.

<sup>108</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1857, pp. 114-5.

<sup>109</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 37.



water; and to keep their wounds wet with the latter; as also to keep away the flies, which swarmed there as in the time of the plague.<sup>110</sup>

Her account of her relationship with military masculinity, I would argue, was one that had been fashioned by reports about women as nurses during the Crimean War, where female heroism found a celebrated place on the battlefields of the 1850s. Here, an 'intact' white woman ministers to the physically wounded man, which presents a very different encounter from some popular narratives of 1857, where the physically mutilated, white woman is saved by the heroic soldier. When an Irish Private was brought to the hospital dying of cholera, Goodenough administered wine and the chance to obtain mercy: 'I begged him to pray to Christ alone, not to the Virgin Mary, nor to the saints, as they could not help him'.<sup>111</sup> Each soldier, however British and white, was subject to the deathbed treatment that typified conversion narratives in missionary texts. Dying soldiers were asked by Goodenough and other missionaries to consider the 'guilt and consequences of sin, and the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ'.<sup>112</sup> The narrative perspective on life within Agra Fort at the end of her account became more typical of missionary conversion narratives. The 'heathen' subjects at the close of her letters were often British soldiers, and Goodenough's attempts at their conversion restored the powerful sense of distance between her Christian self and these British 'others'.

Goodenough's account of 1857 in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* concluded with a self-dramatisation as a ministering angel to suffering men and a powerful reassertion of the missionary world view. The reference in the letters to the Crimea, and Goodenough's interest in the relationship between women and soldiers, suggests that she fashioned her account to develop a role appropriate to a mid nineteenth-century woman in battle. Heroic self-representation was certainly a feature of other female missionary writing of the period, but Goodenough's account is particularly interesting for its evocation of female autonomy in the business of women's work.<sup>113</sup> Significantly, however, this emerging, and rather triumphalist,

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<sup>110</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 49.

<sup>111</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 51.

<sup>112</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1858, p. 51.

<sup>113</sup> See Jane Rendall, 'The Condition of Women, Women's Writing and the Empire in Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, eds.

sense of female selfhood, however Christian and keen to save the souls of those she nursed, was problematic for Mary Weitbrecht. Her accounts of 1857 modified the self-dramatisation of Jane Goodenough, and reinscribed her into a story of 1857 that foregrounded missionary masculinity, emphasised narratives of female victimhood, and largely excluded Indian women from any kind of heroic role.

The importance of Goodenough's account of her experiences of 1857 lie in how different they were from Mrs Weitbrecht's version. Weitbrecht's *Missionary Sketches in North India, with References to Recent Events* was a history of Protestant missions in the region; a polemic about the politics and providence of the uprising; and an attempt to re-establish the importance of missionary masculinity and the rightful place of the missionary man within the foreign mission enterprise. Unlike Jane Goodenough's letters, it is almost certain that Mrs Weitbrecht had access to public accounts of the rape and violation of European women, and this focus on the vulnerability of white women was emotively written into one of her key chapters. Chapter Seven of the *Missionary Sketches* reported the effects of the uprisings on Calcutta. While careful to stress that missionaries were spared attack, the chapter assimilated reports and anecdotes about European women who escaped to Calcutta. She quoted directly from two letters that detailed the flight of women and children, and ends with an account of a British woman who fled violence to wander the jungle.<sup>114</sup> This British woman was rescued by Europeans but had apparently lost her mind and her memory. In spite of the fact that the account mentioned her husband's death, the suffering of the British female was foregrounded and constantly reiterated in Weitbrecht's retelling of British experiences in Calcutta.

Mrs Weitbrecht not only deliberately engaged with the emerging 'symbolic' narratives of 1857 as a violation of the white woman and her children, but she also refashioned Jane Goodenough's experiences at Agra Fort to 'restore' her to narratives of white, female suffering. Weitbrecht's rendition of Miss Goodenough's letters mentioned her work at the fort's hospital, but ended with a comment on Goodenough's failure to keep her mission school intact:

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Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 110.

Rendall discusses the 'heroic' element of women's missionary writing.

<sup>114</sup> Weitbrecht, *Missionary Sketches*, pp. 91-101.

Poor Miss Goodenough was most disconsolate: her health suffered. Her interesting charge had no place of meeting, no school, no instruction. She felt sad as she met them and received their salaams, and thought of the happy days at Secundra, when they surrounded her a smiling, happy group, contrasting it with present sad trials.<sup>115</sup>

Miss Goodenough was not rendered heroically as the lady with the lamp, ministering to sick soldiers, which was vital to her self-dramatisation in her letters, and the symbolic importance of her narrative that left the white woman intact. Instead, she was described as stranded at the fort, her physical health broken, and her missionary endeavours in ruins. This contrasted with the story of male missionaries inside Agra Fort. Unlike Miss Goodenough, we hear of the heroism of resourceful male missionaries who pitch tents, continue their work and provide ‘a beautiful specimen of real devotedness’.<sup>116</sup> Instances of male missionary heroism inside the fort precede the comments about ‘poor Miss Goodenough’, and exemplified the constant focus on manly missionary activity, competence and bravery.

The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* provided crucial discursive space to imagine that the missionary project to women and girls in India could remain intact and flourish after the events of 1857. Even a stalwart supporter of the SPFEE like Mrs Weitbrecht wrote about the uprisings in order to reaffirm the centrality of the missionary men and in doing so, the work of missionary women in India was presented as vulnerable and damaged. Miss Goodenough’s account in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, and the editorial decision to give it such visibility and status, was central to the magazine’s function of creating and retaining visibility for women’s work in India. The fact that Miss Goodenough survived her experience in Agra Fort was important to how missionaries and their supporters interpreted providence. The heroic narrative and the steadfastness of Indian Christian women functioned as a witness to the ‘rightfulness’ of outreach work to women and girls in India.

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<sup>115</sup> Weitbrecht, *Missionary Sketches*, pp. 460-461.

<sup>116</sup> Weitbrecht, *Missionary Sketches*, p. 460.

## Conclusion

The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* established India and outreach to Indian women and girls as a central concern to readers at home and overseas. It made women's missionary work in India visible and acted as a 'witness' to the expansion and survival of that work. At a crude level, it raised funds for orphan outreach to take place and therefore strengthened a mode of uplift that was not central to the SPFEE's missionary strategy towards India. It also served another crucial function in establishing India for women's missions in Britain: it told a heroic story of the survival of a woman missionary in Agra Fort during 1857. This narrative asserted that the women's missionary project in India could remain intact and that female Indian Christians remained loyal.

The magazine also represented missionary work, in this case orphan outreach, in a variety of contexts and perspectives. The sponsorship of orphans was presented as a feminised practice of adopting and naming, but there were also other problematic narratives of institutional life and uncomfortable surrogacy. Different discourses on orphan outreach co-existed through the pages of the magazine because the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* engaged with male missionaries and male experiences of work. The magazine established that women's outreach to India shared concerns with men. In Chapter Four, I argue that the SPFEE's policies towards the uplift of girls and women in India suggest that women sought inclusion in missionary strategies shared with men. The SPFEE did not seek a special or separate spheres mode of evangelisation. Instead, it involved itself in mainstream missionary preoccupations like institution building and vernacular education. As I argued in Chapter One, missionary texts need to be read, where possible, in the context of what missionaries did (and not just what missionaries said). The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* established one crucial characteristic of outreach to the women and girls of India: it was not a 'separate sphere' of work, either in rhetoric or reality.

## Chapter Four: Schooling Females in India

As I argued in Chapter One, zenana visiting has characterised accounts of women's missionary work in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Missionary texts by and about British women missionaries often foregrounded the importance of converting the high-caste Hindu woman of the zenana. These accounts, as I have already suggested, have been overstated by literary critics and historians and need to be recontextualised in other evidence of women's missionary work. This chapter recontextualises the SPFEE's claim to have foregrounded high-caste zenana work. By exploring the school it established in India for the uplift of mixed-race girls, it is evident that the SPFEE adopted a missionary strategy of formal institution building. The institution building strategy was central to the mid nineteenth century project of Protestant missions in India and the SPFEE sought participation in a form of missionary work that was shared by men. The SPFEE also sought inclusion in emerging discourses of colonial education in India, particularly through their interest in Wood's Educational Despatch. It is within this context that I explore, at the end of the chapter, the rhetoric of zenana work that emerged in the 1860s, particularly in accounts published in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*. By reading the narrative of zenana work in the context of the work that the SPFEE prosecuted and valued, it becomes clear that this work was being misrepresented for public consumption.

What characterised the SPFEE's outreach to the women and girls of India in the 1850s was an attempt to formulate coherent 'policies' and 'schemes' for their uplift. In doing so, the SPFEE identified two groups of women in India who were central to the wider project of evangelisation: mixed-race girls and young Indian widows. In founding a school and developing other schemes for uplift, the SPFEE shifted from a position of having no discernible policies towards India in the first two decades of its existence.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter One and the final section of Chapter Six.

## **‘Indo-Britons’**

In 1854 the SPFEE made a statement in the missionary press about the social group it believed to be the key to India’s evangelisation. The *Missionary Register* reported that:

the consideration of the Committee has been directed to a branch of female education in India, not entirely new to them, but one that has received no attention adequate to its importance. Among the various philanthropic efforts on behalf of India, the Indo-British community, now rapidly increasing in number, wealth and influence, has, to a great extent been passed by, and especially have they suffered from the want of superior female education.

Acting on the advice of friends, whose personal knowledge enables them to form a correct judgement, the Committee have therefore resolved to establish a superior Ladies’ School at the eligible Station of Mussoorie, on the Himalaya mountains, provided the friends on India are willing to take their share in the first unavoidable heavy outlay.<sup>2</sup>

In identifying girls from the Indo-British community, the SPFEE was foregrounding the importance of class and wealth in a group they imagined were ‘rapidly increasing in number, wealth and influence’. How the SPFEE conceptualised the racial provenance of the ‘Indo-British’ community from this extract is unclear; how the uplift of this group of females would enable Christianity to take hold of India was also absent in this first official pronouncement. The idea of converting high-caste Hindu women in their homes articulated a well-established belief in the domestic and spiritual power of women over the family.

The argument that through the conversion of high-caste women, missionaries could convert elites and even whole societies was already a well-worn and hackneyed missionary set piece. Yet how the transformation of India would be affected by girls who were probably the children of interracial couples, whose domestic roles might be complicated by becoming teachers, and whose fathers might have lived itinerant and socially marginal lives in the military, is also unclear. Yet this assertion of an emerging ‘policy’, with a defined group of females to uplift in India and a means of reaching them through hill schools, embedded two important features. As ever, a high value was placed on the knowledge of India derived from

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<sup>2</sup> *Missionary Register*, 1854, p. 123.

outside the metropole, from a network of ‘friends, whose personal knowledge enables them to form a correct judgement’. Secondly, this extract asserts that Indo-British females are part of a positive and progressive narrative in the SPFEE’s encounter with India, and ‘not entirely new to them.’

### **Early discourses of mixed-race girls**

Almost twenty years earlier, in an extract of correspondence published by the SPFEE in 1838, a Mrs Farrer of Nasik had written about the various experiments in schooling girls that might take place in India. It was imperative for her to ‘keep in view the training up [of] teachers and schoolmistresses’, and this might be most effectively achieved by ‘a school for Indo-British children.’<sup>3</sup> This is a crucial, early reference to Indo-Britons to appear in the publications of the society and it hints at a larger theory of how a group of females in India could affect evangelisation though becoming what was later termed ‘native teachers’. Later, through a brief and enigmatic description, it became clear that the earliest reference to this group was framed in terms of their apparent absence of caste: Mrs Farrer asserted that Indo-Britons were ‘united to Europeans by all those very prejudices by which the Hindoos are separated from us.’<sup>4</sup> Although these early references to mixed-race girls and schooling hardly constituted a coherent theory of uplift, they were clearly being identified and reported as a ‘social’ group with potential for evangelisation and impact.

Indo-British girls were also identified as an important group by the SPFEE in the late 1830s, largely through the society’s connection with Thomas Carr, the Bishop of Bombay. Carr wrote to the committee in London to solicit help in supporting a recently opened school in Pune (Poonah). His letter of 1839, which was published in the SPFEE’s *History* of 1847, described some of the females in the Bombay Presidency as ‘the daughters of Europeans and Indo-Britons who are clerks in public offices, warrant officers, or even in higher ranks of life, but who cannot afford to

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<sup>3</sup> Society for Promoting Female Education in the East, *Extracts of Correspondence*, May 1838, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> SPFEE, *Extracts of Correspondence*, May 1838, p. 2.

send them to England for education.’<sup>5</sup> He lamented the quality of education available to them, which he deemed ‘very superficial, and has tended rather to direct their attention to personal appearance and to a few accomplishments, than to anything really useful.’<sup>6</sup> Carr cited their lack of interest in Christianity or commitment to public worship as a feature of their lackadaisical education, which, although providing them with basic literacy, did not make them interested in or engaged with books or reading.<sup>7</sup> Carr concluded that their inattentiveness to Christian worship was partly the fault of their fathers who lived unsettled lives, moving between districts ‘where there is no opportunity for attending public worship’.<sup>8</sup> These girls were also deemed victims of ‘the circumstances of their mothers, many of whom are most ignorant, and their dress and customs a mixture of European and native.’<sup>9</sup> Carr believed that these girls were important as the future wives of men (‘respectable Europeans and Indo-Britons’) who might replace Indians in civil offices in the various districts of Bombay.<sup>10</sup> The influence of these girls is obviously as future mothers in Christian families but also ‘their example and influence among native females are calculated to do much good or much harm...they are the females, and theirs the families, who enjoy the most free intercourse with respectable natives. I consider the effect of their conduct upon native female to be a subject of some anxiety.’<sup>11</sup>

Building a theory about the strategic importance of Indo-British girls began, therefore, in the 1830s when Mrs Farrer imagined their becoming future teachers and securing a supply of Christian women for schools in India. Bishop Carr also saw a public role for this group of girls, through their access to Indian women, and through the growing professional opportunities that might be available to their future Indo-British husbands. Both Farrer and Carr evidently believed these females to be of

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<sup>5</sup> The Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East, *History of the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East* (London: Edward Suter, 1847), p. 135.

<sup>6</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 135.

<sup>7</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 135.

<sup>8</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 135.

<sup>9</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 136.

<sup>10</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 136.

<sup>11</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 136.



mixed-race and Carr opined, these families included mothers who were ‘ignorant’ and culturally hybrid, ‘their dress and customs a mixture of European and native.’<sup>12</sup>

In her study of the social perceptions of and official attitudes to interracial relationships in eighteenth-century India, Durba Ghosh explores the meanings of such hybridity, through using the wills and testimonials of mixed-race and Indian women.<sup>13</sup> In terms of religious practice, dress, food and furniture, these women exemplified how ‘it is apparent that there were no easily defined boundaries between British and Indian, Christian and non-Christian, or English-, Hindi-, or Bengali-speaking.’<sup>14</sup> Particularly in matters of religion, different practices and traditions co-existed within the family and religious conversion ‘was rarely a decisive event for an individual, but rather a gradual process by which individuals accepted one set of religious practices juxtaposed alongside others.’<sup>15</sup>

Mixed-race mothers, or Indian women married to British men, embodied, at best, a labile form of Christianity, which the likes of Bishop Carr did not want reproduced in the next generation of daughters. As Ghosh has described, the Indian mother was often removed from parenting her mixed-race children in families with a wealthy British father, on account of anxieties about how ‘racial background was performed in social practice’.<sup>16</sup> The social, religious and cultural manifestations of ‘whiteness’, or ‘Britishness’ in colonial India were often as important to its construction as skin colour.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the Indian mother or mother of Indian descent was often removed from the business of raising her children, particularly when those children could be absorbed in networks of family in Britain.<sup>18</sup> In these early discourses of mixed-race girls, there is, at times, a mixture of aspirational rhetoric and concern about mothering. Mrs Willing, who eventually became principal of the SPFEE’s

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<sup>12</sup> SPFEE, *History*, p. 136.

<sup>13</sup> Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Colonial Family: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 136-161.

<sup>14</sup> Ghosh, *Sex and the Colonial Family*, p. 145.

<sup>15</sup> Ghosh, *Sex and the Colonial Family*, p. 143.

<sup>16</sup> Ghosh, *Sex and the Colonial Family*, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> See Elizabeth Buettner’s discussion of the connection between ‘whiteness’ and social practices like where children were educated in late colonial India. Racial ambiguity could be conferred by limited or no contact with the metropole and sending children away to school in Britain was a means of reiterating racial status. See Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 72-109.

<sup>18</sup> Ghosh, *Sex and the Colonial Family*, pp. 101-105.

experiment in schooling mixed-race girls at Landour, was sent to Bombay in the early 1840s to superintend a military orphan asylum, largely made up of Indo-British children. In 1843 she wrote of the 154 girls under her charge that

I endeavour to act as a mother, because I feel that they are motherless, and many worse than motherless. I cannot look round upon them, and feel how they are situated, and to what they are exposed without the deepest feeling of love for, and sympathy towards them...<sup>19</sup>

In this example of the early rhetoric about mixed-race females, many girls are deemed 'worse than motherless', possibly because their biological mothers were not dead, but Indian, or of Indian descent. What the women of the SPFEE in London imagined they could affect in the case of mixed-race girls is uncertain: when Miss Mackay, as described in Chapter Two, was sent to Benares, one of the purposes was to reclaim her Indianised nieces who had had been left in the care of their Indian servants after the death of their mother. Mrs Willing also saw herself as acting like a mother, but what this meant and whether she sought to expunge the girls' racial ambiguity (and how she imagined she could do this) is unknown. Although, as Durba Ghosh has argued, the Indian mother was a problematic figure in the early mixed-race family, the early accounts of mixed-race girls emerging from the SPFEE's publication were attentive to the social potential of these girls. By the mid nineteenth century, when the SPFEE identified them as the most important group for uplift, the rhetoric had shifted to being uniformly positive and socially aspirational.

### **Aspirational rhetoric: mixed-race girls as the chosen ones**

The decision, therefore, to make an unprecedented economic and institutional investment in the girls of the Indo-British community through a hill school in 1854 was no *volte-face* for the SPFEE. Privileging this group of mixed-race females in the 1850s also clearly demonstrates how high-caste Hindu women were not considered the key to the evangelisation of India at this particular moment for the SPFEE. More crucially, it also suggests that missionary attitudes to mixed-race families might have

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<sup>19</sup> SPFEE, *History*, pp. 141-2.

been at some variance to official British attitudes to the mixed-race communities of nineteenth-century India.

Mixed-race families and children were not represented positively in nineteenth-century colonial discourses and this probably reflects long-term official discomfort about interracial relationships. Recent studies of mixed-race families, of various configurations, in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century India have challenged the narrative of 'progressive racialisation' in which an eighteenth-century world of 'wholesale interracial sexual exploration and surprisingly widespread cultural assimilation and hybridity' was replaced by hostility for '[m]en who showed too great an enthusiasm for Hinduism, for Indian practices or even for their Indian wives and Anglo-Indian children'.<sup>20</sup> Durba Ghosh's study has been a corrective to William Dalrymple's elegiac account of high-profile mixed-race liaisons. Where Dalrymple is keen to foreground how evangelical influences within the East India Company and the advent of missionary activity hardened attitudes towards mixed-race relationships (among other forms of 'Indianisation'), Durba Ghosh argues that '[e]ven before the East India Company managed to regulate and manage interracial arrangements and mixed-race offspring, commentators frequently remarked that interracial relationships should be viewed as irregular.'<sup>21</sup> Ghosh's analysis of the interracial family as 'endangering the whiteness of British rule, and potentially undermining its political authority' from the outset is important in recalibrating the classic blame narratives directed at evangelicals, missionaries and white women for breaking up the cosy *ménages* of '[a] collaborative Raj.'<sup>22</sup>

The SPFEE decided to uplift Indo-British girls in the mid nineteenth century and the rhetoric that framed the discussion of this social group was that of wealth and potential social prestige, rather than their immorality and racial threat to white rule.

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<sup>20</sup> For a key study that challenges the notion of progressive racialisation, see Ghosh, *Sex and the Family*, p. 1, p. 38. See also Ann Laura Stoler's account of how the entry of white women into colonial contexts, often at times of political crisis, created widening 'racialisation'. Stoler uses the example of the 1857 uprising as an example of this phenomenon in Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 32-34; quotes taken from William Dalrymple, *White Mughals: Love and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century India* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), p. 10, p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> Dalrymple, *White Mughals*, pp. 48-9; Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Colonial Family*, p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Colonial Family*, p. 1.

The rhetoric surrounding mixed-race girls is significant because it was socially aspirational and offered an affirmation of a group that, in reality, was deemed to be in economic and social decline.<sup>23</sup> The rhetoric that was consistently applied to this group of girls was also at odds with other colonial discourses which veered from the suspicious to the downright defamatory. And the SPFEE, I have argued in my discussion of Mrs Willings' account, long held an interest in mixed-race girls and women in India, and its public endorsement of this group in the form of the Landour School project constituted the heart of its policies as a mid nineteenth-century missionary organisation.

The SPFEE's discussion about the potential influence of the Indo-British community was consistent across private committee meetings in London, public sermons to endorse the establishment of a school, and articles in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*. In April 1853, when the Reverend Dawson of Landour, made the initial approach through letters to the SPFEE for a school at Mussoorie, the committee minuted that

after lengthened discussion on the importance of supplying Protestant education to that portion of the female population in India which not only possesses great individual influence on the condition of the native women, but is from the very class from which may be expected to supply the instruments of their highest benefit, it was resolved unanimously, that such an institution is eminently calculated to promote the Society's object and is worthy of the most strenuous effort for its accomplishment.<sup>24</sup>

The committee's private enthusiasm for 'that portion of the female population in India' was elaborated when the Reverend Dawson attended a committee meeting a month later and explained the importance of 'the education of the Indo-British community, both as regards their own rising wealth and numbers, and their influence on the native heathen.'<sup>25</sup> The rhetoric of 'a rising class' also inflected the public discussion of the school and how it could service the Indo-British family.

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<sup>23</sup> The key study about the decline of the mixed-race community in India from the end of eighteenth century onwards is Christopher Hawes, *Poor Relations: The Making of the Eurasian Community in British India 1773 -1833* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> Church Missionary Society Archive (Marlborough, Wiltshire: Adam Matthew Publications, 1997) microfilm, Section II: Missions to Women, Part 1: Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East (or Female Education Society) 1834-1899, Reel 1, Administration AM2 2280.

<sup>25</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2287.

Sometimes described as ‘of Indo-European extraction’, this group was imagined and described in terms of a new and rising socio-economic power that could exert considerable influence on the rest of the Indian population.<sup>26</sup>

It is uncertain what basis there was for the SPFEE to use the rhetoric of ‘a rising class’ for the Indo-British community in the middle of the nineteenth century. There is some evidence that the community they were referring to might have included ‘the country born’, or domiciled, white Europeans who were not part of the transient European population with more socially prestigious connections with the metropole.<sup>27</sup> The Reverend Dawson described the girls who might wish for a place at any future school run by the SPFEE as from ‘respectable Europeans and half-caste families’, and in the farewell sermon, printed in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, Archdeacon Philpot, the Rector of Great Cresingham, described this group as ‘Anglo-Indians and East Indians.’<sup>28</sup> Philpot’s sermon is the most revealing in terms of establishing a greater sense of why the SPFEE imagined this ‘group’ to have economic and social potential in India. He explains that

[t]here are scattered over India a great number of persons with small incomes, who desire to give their children a good education, but yet are ill able to afford the expense of sending them to England.<sup>29</sup>

He elaborated on the economic status of this group by asserting that many of these fathers would be in covenanted employment in the East India Company or be among the ‘numbers of highly respectable uncovenanted servants of the government who know not how to get their daughters educated.’<sup>30</sup> However the ‘racial’ composition of the school was imagined, and whether Anglo-Indians, meaning less affluent domiciled Europeans, were incorporated into the plans for the school, ‘Indo-Britons’ connoted mixed-race girls, and this demographic remained the group at the centre of the SPFEE’s experiment for uplift.

In 1865 a Reverend Love wrote to the committee in London praising the success of the school and stating that a similar venture was to be established at Monzhyr, a

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<sup>26</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1853, p. 16.

<sup>27</sup> See Buettner, *Empire Families*, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1853, p. 16; p. 64.

<sup>29</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1853, p. 64.

<sup>30</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1853, p. 64.

hill station in Bengal. More crucially, he argued ‘that between Calcutta and Bengal, there is not a single school to which a Protestant father can send his daughter.’<sup>31</sup> The reference to the ‘Protestant father’, and the strategic omission of the mother, suggest that mixed-race families were and continued to be the bread and butter of such hill station schools run on the SPFEE’s Landour School model. It is also crucial to establish that these girls were deemed important because of the ‘rising class’ they belonged to and not because they were simply to be educated as teachers who could access high-caste women of the zenana. Although their impact on the local Indian population was frequently cited as crucial, no mention was made of accessing high-caste women, and the social prestige embodied in the rhetoric of mixed-race girls derived from the imagined social and economic status of their families.

There is limited evidence that the Indo-British community of the mid-nineteenth century would have been described as a ‘rising class’ in other discourses, which suggests that this rhetoric was peculiar to sections of the missionary population in India who sought their uplift. Although Hawes’ study notionally ends in 1833, his account of the professional fortunes of what he terms the Eurasian community charts the exclusion of mixed-race men in 1791 from the higher salaries offered by covenanted service within the East India Company to their struggle to maintain their stronghold in the ‘narrow clerical and governmental base’ of uncovenanted service in the 1820s against the growing threat of Indian men with Western-style educations.<sup>32</sup> Hawes is also clear about class divisions within the Indo-British community: there were profound distinctions between the poorer Indo-Britons who would have been the mixed-race children of rank and file soldiers and educated Indo-Britons in government service who wished for a superior education for their sons in particular. Yet he also argues that by the 1830s there were few Indo-Britons of serious capital in the presidency towns of Calcutta, Madras or Bombay, even though the community made largely futile attempts to improve its professional, educational and legal position by the mid nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4399.

<sup>32</sup> For a discussion of the exclusion of mixed-race men from higher salaries in covenanted service, see Hawes, *Poor Relations*, pp. 37-51; for a discussion of how mixed-race men attempted to maintain their position in uncovenanted service in the 1820s, see p. 113, pp. 112-131.

<sup>33</sup> Hawes, *Poor Relations*, pp. 39-43, pp. 112-153.

Hawes argues that improvements in schooling were sought for a rapidly expanding population of mixed-race boys to compete with a growing-class of English-speaking Indians but that the mixed-race community was hampered by its status anxiety and its refusal to compromise notions of gentility or gentlemanly standing.<sup>34</sup> Hawes' study clearly situates the mixed-race community of the 1830s as the demographic in need of indigenous schooling and no longer able to afford to send their sons and daughters back to the metropole.<sup>35</sup> Although Hawes' discussion is mainly focused on mixed-race men and their professional struggles, he noted that mixed-race girls were disinclined to lose social status by earning a livelihood.<sup>36</sup> An early curricular controversy at the Landour School and the fees they charged suggest that this portion of the genteel, but economically struggling, mixed-race community almost certainly made up the group who sent their daughters to the school. On the one hand there was evidently pressure to introduce an element of social gentility into the early curriculum, which was stridently attacked by the London committee. In 1854, the London committee received a prospectus of the school 'in which dancing had been added to the branches of education to be taught in the school. Resolved, that the Committee request that dancing be immediately erased from the list of accomplishments taught in the school, which they desire to be conducted on Christian principles.'<sup>37</sup> However, in June 1859, Mrs Willing, the principal of the school, sent a letter to announce that she had 'engaged a competent matron, and secured a master for music and drawing'.<sup>38</sup> These additions were uncontested, and in the light of recruitment problems after the 1857 uprising, they suggest that the committee accepted the 'finishing school' aspirations of a mixed-race group of girls.

The fees charged at the inception of the school also suggest a genteel but economically ailing mixed-race class. At a public meeting in Mussoorie about the school in 1853, it was resolved that it should be established 'for affording, on the moderate terms, an education of the highest order, both Religious and secular, to the female children of Protestant and other Christians of all conditions, without

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<sup>34</sup> For his discussion of improvements in schooling see Hawes, *Poor Relations*, pp. 113-132; for a discussion of status anxiety see Hawes, *Poor Relations*, p. 122.

<sup>35</sup> Hawes, *Poor Relations*, p. 122.

<sup>36</sup> Hawes, *Poor Relations*, p. 122.

<sup>37</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2437.

<sup>38</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3155.



distinction and without exclusion except on moral grounds.<sup>39</sup> They proposed a charge of Rs 30 a month for boarding and education and argued that ‘the fees for all extra branches, should be as moderate as possible.’<sup>40</sup> The relatively modest charges for the school and the incursion of dancing and music into the curriculum suggest that the Landour School experiment was designed for the daughters of the mixed-race community as described by Hawes around the 1830s.

The rhetoric of ‘Indo-Britons’ as a wealthy, rising class, was at odds with the mid nineteenth-century experience of mixed-race communities in India. Equally at odds with contemporary attitudes was the rhetoric of potential influence and exemplarity used to frame how mixed-race girls could showcase Christian womanhood in their encounters with Indian women. Mixed-race women were often considered morally and sexually transgressive.<sup>41</sup> Lionel Caplan has argued that in India there was a continuous discourse of moral and sexual negativity directed against mixed-race women, although much of the argument rests on a small number of literary texts in relation to the nineteenth century.<sup>42</sup> Ann Stoler’s hypothesises that the uprisings of 1857 created a ‘gendered’ response: in the aftermath of such a political and social crisis white, British women arrived in India to create stronger ‘boundaries’ around notions of whiteness, and in order to facilitate some imagined ‘political stabilization’.<sup>43</sup> Stoler argues that in India, the arrival of white women after 1857 *was* an attempt at stabilisation, meaning ‘further segregation from contacts with local Indian groups.’<sup>44</sup>

This inevitably, according to Elizabeth Buettner, impacted on anxieties about contact with the mixed-race communities of India. Buettner’s study of British families in late imperial India explores how racial anxieties affected their attitudes to schooling, childcare arrangements and contact with the metropole. Although her study focuses on the late nineteenth century onwards, she does explore some of the racial anxieties expressed towards the Indo-British community in the mid nineteenth

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<sup>39</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2338, resolution 1.

<sup>40</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2338, resolution 2.

<sup>41</sup> Buettner, *Empire Families*, p. 102.

<sup>42</sup> Lionel Caplan, ‘Iconographies of Anglo-Indian Women: Gender Constructs and Contrasts in a Changing Society’, *Modern Asian Studies*, No 4, (2000): pp. 863-892.

<sup>43</sup> Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, p. 33.



century and the need of some Britons in India to assert their 'whiteness' through social and parenting practices that dissociated them clearly from the communities of the 'country born' and mixed race. Buettner argues that concern about being labelled as 'racially ambiguous' in the second half of the nineteenth century might have put people in the same classificatory range as poor whites and domiciled Europeans.<sup>45</sup> The merging of racial and class anxieties among colonising groups is well documented in the Stoler's work, and Buettner argues that disassociating one's family from mixed-race communities (among other marginal communities in British India like the 'country-born' and 'poor whites') was crucial for a clear sense of racial and social 'whiteness'.<sup>46</sup> Whiteness becomes expressed through both class and social practices as well as imagined 'racial' markers of identity. Buettner's account of the attitudes towards the mixed-race community, particularly after the uprisings of 1857, suggest little evidence of 'a rising class' narrative among colonising groups in India.

Missionaries and evangelicals associated with the Landour School's experiment in schooling mixed-race girls did not engage with, or replicate, the rhetoric of moral or social transgression about these females, which was directed at them in some of the contexts described above. Mrs Willing, who was the principal of the Landour school during the 1857 uprisings, argued that, in fact, it was the behaviour of some *white* Europeans that led to exposure of the British to their enemies: 'but I do fear there is a most dreadful amount of infidelity and daily actual sin among Europeans in this country, which may lead our heavenly Father to us up for a time to the vengeance of our enemies.'<sup>47</sup> Even after 1857, the potential exemplarity and influence of mixed-race girls was maintained. Archbishop Pratt of Calcutta, writing to the committee in London in 1864 argued:

the great benefit Miss Hart's school has been, and is; and to the kindness of the society for Promoting Female Education in the East, in bringing it into existence, and maintaining it till it became self-supporting. Although the

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<sup>45</sup> Buettner, *Empire Families*, pp. 25-71, pp. 72-109.

<sup>46</sup> See in particular, Ann Laura Stoler, 'Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia', in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 198-237.

<sup>47</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1857, p. 125.

work may not appear to be directly missionary, it is so indirectly, in an eminent degree. For the better example the girls there set before the heathen when they go out into life, and the missionary zeal for their conversion, which it is hoped Miss Hart is the means of instilling into the minds of some, must have a most important bearing upon the great work which the Society has set before it.<sup>48</sup>

Mixed-race girls might have needed the white, missionary woman, like Miss Hart above, to replace the influence of the Indian mother, but their potential for ‘missionary zeal’ and exemplarity was integral to their imagined impact from the 1830s, to well after 1857. Their role as examples to ‘set before the heathen’ was in direct contrast much of the official and literary rhetoric about the communities from which they came, and to which they would return as teachers, wives and mothers.

The SPFEE devised a policy of outreach in the mid nineteenth century that focused on a marginal group. At one level, this adoption of a non-elite group reflected strategies being developed by some male Protestant foreign missions in India. Nineteenth-century Indian Christianity was founded on the conversion of stigmatised or marginal people groups, and groups seeking social mobility. The high-caste Hindu convert was a symbolic and overrepresented figure in the story of how nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries facilitated conversion, but it was the adivasi, or dalit who provided the bulk of conversions.<sup>49</sup> There is no evidence to suggest why mixed-race girls attended the Landour School and others that were developed on its model: whether they were seeking to identify as ‘British’, or more ‘white’ by attending the school is impossible to establish. It is also difficult to establish what the women of the SPFEE thought schooling these girls would do: the nature of ‘conversion’, or ‘uplift’ is opaque in this encounter.

No claims can be made that the SPFEE sought to transform these mixed-race girls into British women, or remove all cultural or social markers of Indian descent. Whether the women missionaries at the school wished to foster a more Indian sense of Christianity is a possibility, if unlikely. However, what the aspirational rhetoric of mixed-race girls does suggest is how women missionaries sought to offer the rhetoric

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<sup>48</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4093.

<sup>49</sup> Jeffrey L. Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 116-151.

of social importance to some stigmatised and marginal groups. This was a reality of a nineteenth-century missionary strategy in India and marginal groups both responded and actively sought conversion to Christianity for social advantage, among many other motives. It would be highly reductive to argue that social uplift was all that Indian Christians sought from conversion in the nineteenth century, and many stigmatized groups converted to Christianity as a result of missionary encounters and experienced little by way of social ‘advantage’. Social advantage has been a factor identified by Jeffrey Cox and Eliza Kent in their scholarship on mass movements and village Christianity in India. Cox argues that

a survey of the enormous variety of religious views to be found among those who converted to Christianity in South Asia over several centuries indicated that more than theological considerations are involved in conversion, and that the theological dimensions involve more than doctrinal convergence.<sup>50</sup>

Much scholarship on the conversion of marginal groups in India focuses on the dynamics of mass conversion and the conversion of caste groups, which cannot apply to the mixed-race communities under discussion here.<sup>51</sup> However, by offering a dignified rhetoric of social aspiration, and maintaining that discourse across printed and private sources, the SPFEE engaged with a strategy for uplift that became more common among missionaries towards the end of the nineteenth century.

### **The Landour School: experiments and visibility**

By the 1850s, the SPFEE sought institutional visibility for their work in India. As Protestant foreign missions became more focused on a strategy of building Christian institutions in the mid to late nineteenth century, Jeffrey Cox has argued that

[t]he notion that the physical presence of a Christian institution was a ‘witness in itself,’ an alternative form of proclamation to set beside the preaching of the Word and the printing and distribution of the Word, was deeply entrenched in the mentality of nineteenth century clergymen and church women.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 132.

<sup>51</sup> Eliza Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 27, p. 45.

<sup>52</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 70.

Building institutions such as schools asserted a permanence and visibility about missionary work in India that had often been controversial among male foreign missions. Miron Winslow, a missionary from the American Board of Missions, asserted quite bluntly that '[i]n examining this form of operation, we must bear in mind that great diversity of opinion exists regarding them even among missionaries, and still greater among their most intelligent supporters.'<sup>53</sup> Winslow stated quite openly that there was, among missionaries in India,

[w]hat might be called the *school question* ... whether schools can be properly used among the heathen as CONVERTING AGENCIES; whether the English language, and western science should be taught with that view under any circumstances; whether English is needed by any class of native ministers; whether heathen children should be taught Christianity, even in the vernaculars, or high schools in English, or boarding schools, either for boys or girls.<sup>54</sup>

However, schools, as public institutions requiring financial investment, personnel with salaries, the leasing or buying of buildings and the development of curricula became the central missionary strategy among Protestant foreign missions in India, displacing the earlier focus on translating, producing tracts and public preaching. Schools as institutions asserted a permanence and visibility about missionary work in the mid nineteenth century, and the SPFEE sought to participate in the institution building endeavour.

Visibility is a crucial characteristic of the Landour School experiment: it underpinned a missionary strategy shared with men and it was important to the roles that mixed-race girls would play in their communities and families. The women of the SPFEE engaged in a costly and risky institution-building project with limited resources in India because the physical presence of Christian schools for girls became an assertion of 'strategy' and 'policy' that engaged with wider and more mainstream missionary thinking. The SPFEE were prepared to co-operate with all-male committees in India in order to facilitate the running of the school and they forged connections with a number of male institutions in the process. This venture

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<sup>53</sup> Miron Winslow, *Hints on Missions to India: with notices of some proceedings of a deputation from the American Board, and of Reports to it from the missions by Miron Winslow, Missionary at Madras* (New York, M.W. Dodd, 1856) p. 125.

<sup>54</sup> Miron Winslow, *Hints on Missions to India*, p. (iv).

was an assertion of their integration into mainstream missionary strategies and debates in India.

A Protestant missionary strategy of schools and institution building in mid nineteenth-century India was based on theories of outreach and a sense of practical necessity. A key imperative in the mid nineteenth century for embarking on a costly, long-distance experiment with schooling Indo-British girls was the Protestant perception of the Catholic threat to the education of girls in India. Robert Eric Frykenberg, in his study of Christianity in India, argues that the nineteenth century saw a revival of Catholic Christianity in India under measures taken by Popes Gregory XVI and Pius IX.<sup>55</sup> Although the fortunes of mid nineteenth-century Catholic India were largely consolidated in Southern India, missionary initiatives spread north and Catholic orders, like the Sisters of Loreto, were sent from Ireland to establish schools in Calcutta and Darjeeling.<sup>56</sup> In 1845, a girls' convent school was established in Waverly, Mussoorie, by the Religious Sisters of Jesus and March and Catholic girls' school education was reported as a serious threat by protestant missionaries, including Alexander Duff.<sup>57</sup> The establishment of Catholic schools for girls, particularly in hill stations, motivated the Reverend Dawson, the Anglican Chaplain at Landour, to seek help from the SPFEE in London. Indo-Britons were already a favoured group of females in India for the SPFEE, but the necessity for counter-acting Catholic initiatives for such potentially influential Christians was important for founding a Protestant school, and maintaining it in the face of huge financial, administrative and personnel difficulties.

The Reverend Dawson referred to the Waverly convent school in an early communication with the SPFEE, and it was reported that he was 'very anxious that Protestant ladies should establish a school there to counteract the proselytising efforts of the nuns from a convent in the neighbourhood.'<sup>58</sup> In 1853, a letter was published in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* from the Reverend Dawson and his wife in which the centrality of Indo-British girls as a group who would have 'an

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<sup>55</sup> Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From the Beginnings to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 350-379.

<sup>56</sup> Frykenberg, *Christianity in India*, p. 375.

<sup>57</sup> Alexander Duff was the first missionary to India for the Church of Scotland's foreign in 1829. For his attack on Catholic schooling, see Chapter Six.

<sup>58</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2268.

immense influence upon the future of India' was clearly stated and reiterated. He was also emphatic that Catholic girls' schools were opening up in other hill stations and targeting these females of 'Indo-European extraction'.<sup>59</sup>

We have resided many years in India beholding and bewailing the little progress made in the education of females, whether of pure native or of Indo-European extraction; the latter belong to a class which is increasing in wealth and in importance, and which will, at no great distance of time, exercise a very powerful influence in India. Yet for the education, secular or spiritual, of the females of this class, no facilities are provided of a public character, *except by the Romanists*. To our knowledge they have convents at Darjeeling, at Agra, at Mussoorie, and at other places, in each of which are many Protestant children, almost all of whom have become perverts [sic]. When we have remonstrated with parents on the subject of sending their children to such places, the constant answer has been, 'What can we do? Must our children be without education? Why do not our Protestant ministers urge upon the gentry of our own communion to establish some Protestant institution, to which we would gladly send our children on the same terms, and for the same advantages?' We are deeply convinced, that an Institution on a large and liberal scale for the education for respectable European and half-caste females would have an immense influence upon the future of India, and that it is, in fact, one of its crying and most pressing wants. It would not only secure the rising generation from the fangs of Romanism, but would pre-eminently subserve the objects of your Society, by spreading throughout the country a number of young persons competent to promote, and taught as a solemn duty of desire, the enlightenment of the native female population at large.<sup>60</sup>

'The fangs of Romanism' was not simply a rhetorical flourish to loosen the purses of the magazine's readers at home. In 1859, when the Landour school had become an enormous economic and administrative burden to the committee in London, and when attempts were being made to place it into the hands of other agencies, the threat of a Catholic education to the twenty-two girls who remained there if the school were to close was too catastrophic to contemplate and a new principal and teacher were sent out to ensure its continuation.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1853, p. 16.

<sup>60</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1853, p. 17.

<sup>61</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3176.

Representationally, the Landour School did not have the presence in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* that might be expected up to 1870, and the argument for its significance as the first, serious ‘executive policy’ by the SPFEE towards the uplift of females in India is based on other indicators of its importance. The centrality and significance of the Landour School was played out in the archive of private meetings and committee papers: the story of the school experiment, which was beset by various problems with the missionary teachers sent to run it, would have been relatively insignificant if evidenced only through its presence in print.

One key indication of its significance was the role played by the SPFEE’s most celebrated missionary, Mary Weitbrecht, in both endorsing the project and being posited as the school’s first principal. Mary Weitbrecht was a celebrated authority on India and whose expertise outranked metropolitan debates about Indian women in the early decades of the society. In a committee meeting on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1853 Mary Weitbrecht backed the views of the Reverend and Mrs Dawson, as laid out in their letter to the committee, in a ‘personal testimony’ that carried deep significance for the SPFEE.<sup>62</sup> When the committee decided to adopt the school project and to build a new institution for the first time in their history, they realised that they needed to ‘enlist the interest of influential persons’, and in the same minute, they recorded the first person of influence they wished to solicit:

[t]he qualifications of Mrs Weitbrecht, her wide India connection, and the confidence her name inspires in India and in England, point her out as the very one to whom they would desire to commit the important undertaking as its Superintendent.<sup>63</sup>

Although Mary Weitbrecht was unable to accept the position, her stature as the most recognised female missionary in England, particularly during the 1850s, was well established.<sup>64</sup> Between 1856 and 1857, Mary Weitbrecht toured England while on furlough from India in order to promote the SPFEE and set up new auxiliaries.<sup>65</sup> By November 1856, she had allegedly travelled 1140 miles, set up seven new auxiliary associations, attended twenty-nine meetings and met ‘1001 ladies’.<sup>66</sup> After

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<sup>62</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2280.

<sup>63</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2287.

<sup>64</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2301.

<sup>65</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2674.

<sup>66</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2762.



1857, she wrote a monograph in response to the uprisings, which was discussed in Chapter Three, and her contemporary public status as a missionary commentator on India vied with that of Alexander Duff. Her imprimatur for the project and the request that she be the first principal suggest the significance attached to the new institution and the aspiration to have it promoted and run by a national missionary celebrity.

Most significantly, the SPFEE made the greatest economic investment in the Landour School that the society would make in any venture in the mid nineteenth century. Interpreting the income or outgoings of the society as a basis for interpreting what causes were deemed significant, or who made the greatest contributions, is extremely unreliable. Yet the sheer scale of the economic commitment to the Landour School and the effect that this had on the SPFEE's ability to sponsor agents and other missionary ventures indicate its importance as a policy experiment. The straitened economic context for this investment in the school is also significant. Central funds were always problematic for the SPFEE, partly as a result of the culture of designated giving that led to auxiliaries and individuals directing their money to specific schools and individuals. The 1850s were particularly difficult financially, which makes the SPFEE's financial commitment to the Landour school project even more significant. In 1855, the committee decided that their central funds were such that they could barely cover their existing outgoings and no more agents could be sponsored.<sup>67</sup> Mrs Willing, the second principal of the Landour School, had to bail the project out with a loan of £200 to the SPFEE in order to send out the required agents, and the London committee had to agree to the prospect of applying for a government grant-in-aid in 1858 in order to restore the school's resources after the disruption of the 1857 uprisings.<sup>68</sup> Propping up the Landour School with a potential government grant was a clear indication of how expensive the project was and how committed the SPFEE remained to it. The London committee insisted, however, that any government aid would be predicated

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<sup>67</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2620.

<sup>68</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2622; AM2 2970, 2971.



on the understanding that ‘no principle will be compromised, and no interference exercised with regard to religious instruction...’<sup>69</sup>

The initial outlay for the school in 1853 was estimated to be £2010, with the SPFEE responsible for raising half this sum.<sup>70</sup> The decision to commit to this economic undertaking was nearly unanimous as

it was resolved, with one dissention, that this Committee are willing to take the whole responsibility, on condition, of half the outlay for the first two years, calculated by Mrs Dawson at £1005, being raised independently of the Society, in England or India; that to prevent this undertaking from crippling the efforts of the Society in other directions, exertions be made to raise the other half in specific contributions and to this end an appeal which shall have been submitted to Mrs Dawson shall be printed without delay.<sup>71</sup>

But the intimation at the meeting that the school could be ‘crippling the efforts of the society’ was insightful. In 1856, the SPFEE wrote to the local organising committee in Mussoorie that ‘[i]n consideration of the large expenditure of the Society for this school, its claim for the repayment on the first surplus profits be recognised by the local committee.’<sup>72</sup> Yet in private, the committee had already noted that ‘the outlay of our society on account of the Mussoorie School has been out of proportion to the claims of one station.’<sup>73</sup> In 1858 the committee almost conceded defeat with a project of such magnitude:

after nearly five years of almost constant anxiety, disappointment, and heavy expense, they feel that they cannot in justice to their other stations, continue their connection with a work which required instrumentality beyond their own to carry on effectively.<sup>74</sup>

Although the SPFEE did not abandon the Landour School, it was quite clearly an unprecedented economic undertaking for them and a far cry from the limited economic encounters they had experienced as sponsors of agents and schools with no responsibility for the frontier work of missionary institution building.

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<sup>69</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2971.

<sup>70</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2280.

<sup>71</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2280.

<sup>72</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2650.

<sup>73</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2603.

<sup>74</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3002.

Commitment to the Landour School project also required the building of new and complex transnational networks, which were a commonplace phenomenon for male-run denominational foreign mission societies that were experienced at institution building overseas, but a new departure for the nondenominational SPFEE. To establish, *ab initio*, a school in the hill station of Mussoorie, in the Himalayas, required the setting up of a sub-committee within the SPFEE, an auxiliary in Cheltenham that would sponsor the venture from Britain, and a committee in Mussoorie, involving local male Anglican and military elites.<sup>75</sup> The SPFEE, as I argued earlier, became far more directly involved and reliant on men's social and missionary networks in India through the establishment of the school. The local board set up in Mussoorie in 1853 was all-male and had the power to appoint visitors to inspect the school and demand that 'communications between the society and the ladies conducting the school, should be made through the medium of the local committee'.

This demand was a condition the local board came to regret.<sup>76</sup> As problems arose among the female teachers at the school, the local committee 'declined to judge between them, but await the decision of the [SPFEE] committee.'<sup>77</sup> Negotiating the initial and persistent tensions and problems among the ill-chosen female staff sent from Britain was evidently unpalatable for the male committee based in Mussoorie who recommended that the principal should 'be entrusted with full power to dismiss her Assistants and to enforce their fulfilment of their agreements with the Society.'<sup>78</sup> The SPFEE in London made it clear that unless 'some body, as local representatives of the Parent Society' remained, the school would have to be closed.<sup>79</sup> The SPFEE argued that no single woman should be entrusted with so much responsibility for the school and that

past experience has proved it to be a necessity that the powers of the local board should be more ample and explicit, and that it be distinctly understood that this Committee empower that board to dismiss the teachers in the

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<sup>75</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2353; AM2 2349; AM2 2323. The local committee involved Rev. Henry Smith, Major Heeth and Colonel Smith (Commanding at Landour), a Colonel Blackford and Major Bryant, as well as Rev Dawson. CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2338.

<sup>76</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2338 (5).

<sup>77</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2602.

<sup>78</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2634.

<sup>79</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2634 (2).

Mussoorie School summarily when necessary, to enforce the fulfilment of their engagement with the Society and to control the finances of the institution.<sup>80</sup>

Insisting on the executive powers of the all-male board was a clear indication of how integrated men were in this educational experiment and how the SPFEE sought to privilege their authority. Missionary institution building was not a separatist venture: even the most 'feminised' of the early British women's missions sought the significant involvement of men in order to enact a common missionary strategy.

At one level, the school was not a success and arguably the relative lack of coverage in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* was attributable to the problems of personnel that the school experienced almost continuously. It was the institutional and very 'public' nature of the school, not its outreach to Indo-British girls, which led to its most serious problems. Managing the disputes among the female teachers became the greatest burden for the SPFEE's experiment in transnational administration. Crucially, the network of committees in Mussoorie, London and Cheltenham that supported the Landour School left the SPFEE exposed to greater criticism and scrutiny when the venture was floundering. This became a reality when tension broke out almost immediately between Mrs Bignall, the first principal of the school, and her assistants, the Misses Birch and Ayrton. Mrs Bignall opened the school in March 1854 with seventeen girls on the roll, four of them having transferred from local convents.<sup>81</sup> By September, the committee received a private letter from Miss Birch, one of the assistant teachers sent out by the SPFEE, 'detailing several painful occurrences at Mussoorie, which were under investigation by the local Committee'.<sup>82</sup>

Mrs Bignall was encouraged to resign, to be replaced by the committee's 'long tried and valued friend,' Mrs Willing.<sup>83</sup> But the public dimension of the breakdown of relationships between missionaries at the Landour School also included the colonial press: in February 1855, dirty linen was being washed in public as the local committee published a statement in the *Agra Messenger* and 'a letter from a

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<sup>80</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2634 (3).

<sup>81</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2437.

<sup>82</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2463.

<sup>83</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2463.

Correspondent of that paper, bearing testimony to the correct deportment of Miss Ayrton and Miss Birch on their voyage.’<sup>84</sup> Later in 1855, Miss Birch would write to the SPFEE in London that ‘I scarcely need remind you that nothing can compensate me for the injury my character has suffered since the trying events of last year.’<sup>85</sup> The importance of ‘public character’ in the women missionaries of the Landour School, and the sense that the SPFEE located the problems emanating from the school very much within the ‘characters’ of the women chosen to teach there, was confirmed much later, in 1867, when the committee in London reviewed recruitment to the school:

[a]s past experience has proved the vital importance of the utmost caution being used in the selection of teachers for the Landour school, the Committee urge upon Miss Freer the absolute necessity of not accepting the services of any lady whatever who will not feel a real interest in the spiritual welfare of the pupils...She must insist upon the school being, in every respect a Christian institution, and she must not, therefore, allow anyone in the house to enter into the gay and worldly society found at such stations as Landour.<sup>86</sup>

As I have just shown, the Landour School experiment was fraught with personnel problems from the outset, and at various junctures in the 1850s and 1860s the SPFEE sought to offload the venture onto the Colonial Church and School Society and then the Calcutta Diocesan Board of Education.<sup>87</sup> As suggested in Chapter Two, the exemplary behaviour expected of missionaries in general, and white women missionaries in particular, was often difficult to deliver. The Landour project was also focused on mixed-race girls who were expected to showcase Christian womanhood to the females of India in their extended social worlds. Many of the white, missionary women who taught at the Landour School in the mid nineteenth century fell far short of exemplary Christian womanhood themselves. Exemplary Protestant womanhood was not to be trusted to women who were themselves lured into the ‘gay and worldly society’ of hill station life.

The Landour School, in spite of its expense, problematic teachers and vulnerability to scrutiny, was reaffirmed as a vital school experiment to females in

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<sup>84</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2504.

<sup>85</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2603.

<sup>86</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4753.

<sup>87</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3058; CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM2 4174.

India after the uprisings of 1857. Much of the literature of missionary outreach to Indian females stresses 1857 as a key moment when ideologies of uplift through the Indian family were reaffirmed and schools, as institutions for the evangelisation of Indian women, were abandoned.<sup>88</sup> Yet the Landour School achieved a model-school status for the education of girls in India after 1857, and the SPFEE remained committed to its continuation and permanence, in spite of the financial and practical challenges the school presented. In the immediate aftermath of the uprisings, the Reverend Woodside wrote from Mussoorie that ‘it appears more desirable than ever to maintain the Protestant Girls’ School on account of the strenuous efforts of the Romanists to extend education of their own principles.’<sup>89</sup> The SPFEE considered, briefly, allowing the Colonial Church and School Society to take over the school in 1859, and tempting though the prospect of relief from the personnel difficulties and expense might be, the London committee decided that ‘no guarantee whatever being given for the permanence of the Landour School, it was resolved, that the terms therein offered be declined.’<sup>90</sup>

The SPFEE’s commitment to the Landour School was underscored economically when in 1859, Mrs Willing, the principal of the school who had protected the venture during the uprisings, wrote ‘shewing [sic] the increasing importance of the Landour School’ and her request for a new teacher to be sent to India was agreed.<sup>91</sup> The SPFEE’s motives for the continued economic commitment to the school and the refusal to offload it to any society that might compromise its permanence were stated at a meeting in 1859 when

[t]he subject of the continuance of the Landour School was then Considered, and opinions expressed of the heavy responsibility that would be incurred by giving it up, and thus permitting the twenty-two Pupils now under Christian instruction to pass into the hand of the Papists.<sup>92</sup>

There can be no doubt, however, that schooling, as a means of educating females in India and reaching more of the indigenous female population, became reaffirmed by the Landour School experiment.

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<sup>88</sup> For a discussion of this, see the final section of Chapter Six.

<sup>89</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3001.

<sup>90</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3091.

<sup>91</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3092.

<sup>92</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3176.

In the 1860s there was more, not less, pressure to maintain the school and to open others that served the mixed-race communities of India. In 1863, the Reverend D'Aguilar brought the school to the notice of the Bishop of Calcutta and wrote to the SPFEE that its importance was recognised to such an extent that measures 'might be taken to secure the permanence of the school, and greatly extend its operations.'<sup>93</sup> Later in the same year, a Mrs Claughton wrote from Colombo that she would be using the 'rules laid down for the Landour School...for a similar school in Jaffna.'<sup>94</sup> The Calcutta Diocesan Board of Education decided it would open a similar school in Mussoorie, in February 1865, 'to be conducted on the same principles, in the same terms, and with a mutual friendly understanding.'<sup>95</sup> A Reverend Love wrote to the committee in London that that 'the Society's School at Landour...has, he considers, been the means of breaking the sway of the convent schools in India, and stating that a similar school is to be established at Monzhyr.'<sup>96</sup> Crucially, his letter suggests that the Landour School's demographic remained largely mixed-race and these hill schools for girls were still ostensibly serving the 'Indo-British' community. The SPFEE agreed to keep supporting the venture and offered to send out a 'lady' as a Principal, when the school was established.<sup>97</sup>

Ironically, the final testimony to the school's exemplarity and strategic importance in imagining how the females of India were to be evangelised came in a discussion about closing it down in May, 1867. Miss Doney, the Principal, decided that there were too few students for the school to be financially self-supporting and after she wrote to the SPFEE, the committee decided that even if the school were to close, 'they cannot regret that they were induced to make the experiment: and if, through the multiplication of similar schools, this original one is no longer needed, the committee will consider that it has done its work in providing the blessings of Scriptural instruction for many who would otherwise have been entirely neglected, or brought up in Popery.'<sup>98</sup> There is little sense of demographic change in the school, or, 'mission drift', by 1867. Its status as a model institution was confirmed when the

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<sup>93</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 3945.

<sup>94</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4011.

<sup>95</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM3 4093.

<sup>96</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4399.

<sup>97</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4399.

<sup>98</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4711.

Reverend Woodside of Dehra Dun wrote to the SPFEE in London imploring them ‘to let their little flag continue to wave over Woodstock.’<sup>99</sup>

The SPFEE established a school in India to educate mixed-race girls for a complex set of reasons. Missionaries had to respond to the social realities of outreach in India, and Catholic expansion into girls’ schooling in the mid nineteenth century is an important, and considerably under researched, context. The ‘Indo-British’ community sought improvement for their daughters and, at a practical level, Protestant missionaries of both sexes wished to ensure that Catholics did not make major incursions into this socially vulnerable community. To argue that mid nineteenth-century women missionaries believed that their role lay in reaching the high-caste Hindu women of the zenana in order to enact a transformation in gender ideologies and behaviour ignores an immediate social context that required institutional intervention.

However, the women of the SPFEE committee in London also engaged in this project because it offered them an experience of institution building and integration into a common mid nineteenth-century missionary endeavour. From simply raising funds, training women missionaries and offering sponsorship, the SPFEE shifted into more mainstream missionary terrain with the Landor School experiment and outreach to mixed-race girls. Far from pursuing a more discrete and invisible form of outreach through zenana teaching and visiting, the SPFEE founded and maintained an institution where they were faced with the realities of public exposure inherent in complicated social networks and internecine conflict.

### **Schemes, Policies and Zenanas**

The SPFEE had, as a national women’s missionary organisation, asserted a ‘policy’ for the evangelisation of Indian females, which derived from its executive centre in London and which was underpinned by wider missionary strategies in mid nineteenth-century India for building Christian institutions. The Landour School

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<sup>99</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4751.

also marked a clear departure from the more random, opportunistic and personal sponsorship described in Chapter Two. The SPFEE continued in the 1850s to seek involvement in mainstream missionary and colonial discourses of education and outreach in India. The committee in London sought to develop policies in response to national debates about Indian education, rather than separate or marginalise itself by prosecuting all-female zenana work. However, how the SPFEE presented its work was problematic for arguing that it sought more mainstream integration with the work and ideas of missionary men. The SPFEE deliberately distorted a story of its work to argue that it had, in fact, been committed to a mode of outreach that was, in reality, thoroughly marginal to its interests.

A significant policy debate took place with the House of Commons Select Committee inquiry into education in India and then the published Despatch by Sir Charles Wood, in 1854. The Despatch was, among many things, an attempt to ‘place the superintendence and direction of education upon a more systematic footing’ in India, and this rhetoric of schematisation and ‘national’ direction was the product of ‘ample experience of the past, and the most competent advice for the future’.<sup>100</sup> More centralised educational policies across India were part of the colonial government’s rhetoric of this period. Centralisation also meant restructuring the local boards and councils of education in the presidency towns and creating an education department deemed more ‘national’:

[w]e now proceed to sketch out the general scheme of the measures which we propose to adopt. We have endeavoured to avail ourselves of the knowledge which has been gained from the various experiments which have been made in different parts of India for the encouragement of education; and we hope, by the more general adoption of those plans which have been carried into successful execution in particular districts, as well as by the introduction of other measures which appear to be wanting, to establish such a system as will prove generally applicable throughout India, and thus to impart to the educational efforts of our different Presidencies a greater degree of uniformity and method than at present exists.’<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> ‘A Copy “of a Despatch to the Government of India, on the Subject of General Education in India”’, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online*, vol. XLVII 1854, Paper 393, (ProQuest, 2005), p. 4; p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Despatch’, p. 5.



The sense that education in India needed more systematic thinking and less parochial organisation also influenced the SPFEE. During the 1850s and early 1860s, there was a growing sense of a debate taking place among missionaries about the strategic importance of female education. The SPFEE noted that a missionary conference held in Calcutta in 1855 had evinced ‘the sense of importance of female education, as an essential branch of missionary work’.<sup>102</sup> The Scottish missionary John Fordyce was asked to deliver a lecture on Female Education in India in March 1857 on behalf of the society, which suggests an increasing sense of the society’s need to present a schematised and coherent argument about evangelising women in India when public opportunities offered themselves on the national stage.<sup>103</sup> In 1860, the SPFEE asserted that it should be present at a national missionary conference to be held in Liverpool, where female education would be a topic under discussion.<sup>104</sup> Although the SPFEE had not engaged directly with official ‘debates’ or ‘policies’ at any level which involved India, it clearly became indirectly involved in the debate, at a national level, which was taking place among Protestant foreign missions in Britain, and which emanated from the boost to vernacular education in India by Charles Wood’s ‘Despatch’ of 1854.

The ‘Despatch to the Government of India, on the Subject of General Education in India’, popularly known as Wood’s ‘Despatch’ of 1854 argued for expanding vernacular education in India in order to teach the ‘far larger class who are ignorant of, or imperfectly acquainted with English.’<sup>105</sup> At one level it conceded that the earlier aspirations of the colonial government in ‘providing the means of acquiring a very high degree of education for a small number of natives of India...from what we should here call the higher classes,’ were too limited.<sup>106</sup> It proposed a grants-in-aid system, based on the English model, to aid all classes of schools, including indigenous schools and those providing a more elementary education.<sup>107</sup> By scrutinising education for ‘the masses’, the Despatch also argued for a greater emphasis on training ‘native’ teachers as ‘[t]his deficiency has been the more

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<sup>102</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2679.

<sup>103</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2806.

<sup>104</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3265.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Despatch,’ p. 3.

<sup>106</sup> ‘Despatch,’ p. 8.

<sup>107</sup> ‘Despatch,’ p. 9.

palpably felt in India, as the difficulty of finding persons properly educated for the work of tuition is greater [than in England]'.<sup>108</sup> It proposed to encourage the establishment of more 'normal schools', or teacher training institutions, to enable a better-educated class of Indian school teacher to deliver improved elementary education that would, in turn, 'filter up' talent through the system. Parna Sengupta, in her study of missionary education in nineteenth-century Bengal, argues that early evangelicals and missionaries in Bengal had supported vernacular schooling for the educational uplift of 'ordinary villagers'.<sup>109</sup> She also argues that Wood's Despatch, with its promise of grants-in-aid to different types of school, strengthened a vernacular school culture which 'reinforced, rather than weakened the place of religion and religious identity in the development of Indian modernity'.<sup>110</sup> Vernacular schooling (and the promise of grants-in-aid to deliver it) became reinforced as a missionary strategy in mid nineteenth-century India and the SPFEE attempted to adopt it as a policy.

For the SPFEE, the opportunity to engage with an educational 'policy' towards India was compelling. Wood's Despatch did mention the education of women in India, albeit in paragraph eighty-three of one hundred. Its perfunctory rationale for educating Indian females was that through women, 'a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men'.<sup>111</sup> What brought the Despatch to the notice of the SPFEE was a letter in 1859 from Henry Carre Tucker, the Secretary of the Christian Vernacular Education Society for India.<sup>112</sup> The London committee responded to the overtures of the CVES with a ten-point scheme for the training of young Indian widows as native teachers in a variety of schools run by their agents, from Bengal to Tinnevely in the south. It enthusiastically endorsed the principles of vernacular education, claiming that the committee 'fully recognise the importance of vernacular instruction for the

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<sup>108</sup> 'Despatch,' p. 12.

<sup>109</sup> Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion: Missionary Education and the Self-Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* (California: University of California Press, 2011) Online edition, pp. 23-27.

<sup>110</sup> Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion*, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup> 'Despatch', p. 16.

<sup>112</sup> On the controversies between missionaries in India and the Christian Vernacular Education Society, see Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion*, pp. 42-57. There was resistance in Bengal to material produced by the society, and local missionaries refused to use vernacular books published by the CVES, preferring instead to favour local texts.

natives of India, above that of English Education.’<sup>113</sup> The SPFEE also agreed to circulate the CVES’ controversial educational texts, but most crucially, the London committee responded to the call for training native teachers for elementary and vernacular schools by suggesting the employment of young widows:

[t]hat as the custom of early marriage, prevalent in India, presents serious obstacles to the employment of native girls as teachers, it being almost impossible to depend upon their continuance in the schools for any length of time, the committee strongly recommend that, whenever practicable, young widows shall be preferred for training as teachers.<sup>114</sup>

As a scheme for identifying a ‘class’ of Indian female in young widows and providing training opportunities in the missionary stations associated with the SPFEE across India, this plan was relatively insightful. Parna Sengupta details how the Dhaka Normal School, established in 1862 by the Department of Public Instruction, attempted to train *Bairagi* women to teach the daughters of local *bhadra* society.<sup>115</sup> Sengupta argues that this initiative by the colonial state into teacher training backfired, as the middle-class, urban *bhadralok* saw the lower-caste, mobile and mendicant status of the *Bairagi* teacher as a threat to the sexual propriety of their daughters.<sup>116</sup> However, the SPFEE was also devising plans for teacher training, although it was focused on Indian widows, as early as 1859.

In practical terms, the response to the SPFEE’s scheme to train Indian widows as teachers was ambivalent. The women missionaries who had been sponsored by the SPFEE, and whom it considered to be obliged to help enact its scheme, were not necessarily compliant: a Miss Packer in Alipore wrote that ‘at present the practicability of native day schools for girls in or near Alipore is not apparent, nor does she see how the Committee’s wish respecting the training of native

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<sup>113</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3087.

<sup>114</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3087. Also see Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion*, pp. 42-57.

<sup>115</sup> See Parna Sengupta, ‘Teaching Gender in the Colony: The Education of “Outsider” Teachers in Late-Nineteenth-Century Bengal,’ *Journal of Women’s History* 4 (2005): pp. 32-55.

<sup>116</sup> For the seminal discussion of this class in Bengal and the importance of culture and education, see Tithi Bhattacharya, *The Sentinels of Culture: Class, Education and the Colonial Intellectual in Bengal, 1848-85* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For an incisive discussion of how to define the ‘bhadralok’ in the nineteenth century, see Bhattacharya, *Sentinels of Culture*, pp. 2-32; for a discussion of the social status of *Bairagi* teachers see, Sengupta, ‘Teaching Gender in the Colony’, pp. 37-39.

schoolmistresses can be carried out.’<sup>117</sup> A more promising response came from Mrs Blumhardt, of Krishnagur, who had already secured sponsorship from a Miss Marriott in England to support eight young widows for training at her school. The minute that records this success in securing funding for their plan is also telling in its rhetoric: ‘the Committee thankfully accepts this proposal, and rejoice in being thus enabled to commence a systematic effort to improve the condition of this most wretched class of children, as well as to provide a class of teachers who are likely to be permanent helpers in the mission work.’<sup>118</sup> The notion of a ‘systematic effort’ and the rhetoric of strategy, with a focus on a particular group of Indian women, was clearly linked to a wider set of policies being debated by other foreign missions and the colonial government. The minute also embodies the notion of ‘permanent helpers’, as if the years of experience in the mission field with a variety of different groups had yielded a solution to the issue of the uplift of Indian women.

What underscored this scheme to train native widows was an opportunity to engage with a ‘national’ debate about education in India, and engage with mainstream strategies for missionary education. The SPFEE’s support for the Christian Vernacular Education Society for India also suggested that they had little investment in ‘filtration theory’. Gauri Viswanathan has argued that some missionaries and colonial administrators subscribed to a theory that ‘was predicated on the notion that cultural values percolate downward from a position of power and by enlisting the cooperation of intermediate classes representing the native elite.’<sup>119</sup> This ‘filtration theory’ is often ascribed to Macaulay’s infamous minute on education of 1835 and Wood’s Despatch is seen as a challenge to the idea of cultural and social transformation only being facilitated from the top of society downwards.<sup>120</sup> In focusing on building a school institution in Mussoorie, and in devising schemes in response to Wood’s Despatch, the SPFEE was prosecuting mainstream missionary strategies.

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<sup>117</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3183.

<sup>118</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3388.

<sup>119</sup> Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 35.

<sup>120</sup> Parna Sengupta argues that Wood’s Despatch ‘criticized the official government policy of downward filtration inherent in Macaulay’s Anglicist position,’ see Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion*, p. 31.

In the 1860s, the SPFEE argued through the pages of the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* that it had consistently implemented a strategy for the uplift of Indian women, through zenana education. I discuss this claim and its relation to missionary practice in the next section.

## Zenanas

Although the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* carried frequent articles on zenanas and zenana work, educating high-caste Hindu women in the home had never been a systematic ‘policy’ or a well-resourced commitment, unlike the schooling of mixed-race girls in Landour or even the scheme for the training of Indian widows. But the context for female missionary work was changing in the 1860s, as two denominational British foreign missions, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and the Baptist Missionary Society, established their own denominational women’s missions focused on India.

Before the 1860s, the SPFEE constituted the only ‘English’ missionary society to dedicate itself to sending women missionaries abroad in their own right and it was largely in ‘friendly cooperation’ with the two women’s missionaries societies connected with the Free Church of Scotland and the Church of Scotland. However, another women’s missionary organisation based in Calcutta was changing the centre of gravity for women’s mission work in India. The Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society (IFNSIS) was established as a school in Calcutta in the 1850s and subsequently became a society with non-denominational aspirations and with a plan to establish normal schools across India.<sup>121</sup> The IFNSIS criticised the efforts of the SPFEE and the Scottish women’s foreign missions on the grounds that they lacked economic resources.<sup>122</sup> It also attacked the SPFEE for not being exclusively focused on India itself.<sup>123</sup> In November 1862, the SPFEE responded to a minute from the IFNSIS by asserting that:

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<sup>121</sup> See Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society, ‘Its Principles and Objects: Being an Appeal for £10,000 Read at a meeting on behalf of the society held April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1878, at Lord Kinnaird’s, 2 Pall Mall East, for a Pall Mall Auxiliary’, (1878).

<sup>122</sup> IFNSIS, ‘Its Principles and Objects,’ pp. 1-2.

<sup>123</sup> IFNSIS, ‘Its Principles and Objects,’ p. 2.

it be distinctly stated in the Publications of the Society that while the Society for female education in the East embraces the whole of Eastern lands in its operations, the Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society confines its efforts to India only, and that its specific labours are Training Teachers in India; Zenana visiting, and Female Bible readers.<sup>124</sup>

The committee argued that this new society, with its expertise and operations focusing on India, was a limited enterprise with a limited range of strategies for outreach. A month later, there was another, terse assertion of the limitations of the IFNSIS: '[f]urther discussion shewed that, to prevent confusion between the two Societies, it may be fairly considered that the distinctive features of the Indian Normal School and Instruction Society are first, its field of operation being limited to India, and secondly, the employment of Bible Women.'<sup>125</sup>

The tension between the two societies derived largely from what type of 'work' they did to uplift women in India. The SPFEE implied in the November meeting that teacher training, visiting zenanas and using bible women were limited activities compared, perhaps, to their own varied experiments in schooling.<sup>126</sup> More significantly, the IFNSIS seemed to be privileging zenana visiting and requesting that the SPFEE 'should resign all Zenana work into the hand of that society, and transmit all grants for the purpose'.<sup>127</sup> The SPFEE responded negatively to the request to renounce its zenana work, which was negligible in any case, and asserted instead that

it would be in violation of the principles of their own Society were they wholly to give up their work in the Zenanas. The older members of the Committee and especially the Chairwoman who was present at the foundation of the Society bore strong testimony to the facts that the education of women in the higher classes was one grand object intended and distinctly set forth in all the early papers of the society.<sup>128</sup>

As British women's missions to India became more numerous and competitive, zenana work became part of the foundation myth of the SPFEE. In 1869, when under pressure to keep up with 'those who have subsequently entered the field, they

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<sup>124</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3866.

<sup>125</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3876.

<sup>126</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3866.

<sup>127</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3876.

<sup>128</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3876.

[the SPFEE] do not feel called upon to relinquish a position of their own in it, being well assured that there is room for as many labourers as can be sent forth.’<sup>129</sup> Again the SPFEE asserted that it was the fact of ‘zenana seclusion that first stirred the sympathies of the founders of the society’.<sup>130</sup>

Whatever zenana work came to mean to British missionary women in the 1860s, it became a badge of honour for women’s missionary societies in an increasingly competitive environment. From the mid-1860s the SPFEE made frequent public assertions about its commitment to zenana work in both the official magazine and its annual reports. In 1863 the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* carried an article, written around the time of the INFSIS’s request for the SPFEE to renounce its zenana work to them in Calcutta, detailing its allegedly long and continuous commitment to high-caste uplift in India. The article on ‘Our Zenana Work before the Mutiny’ was an eleven-page defence of the society’s commitment to evangelisation in both zenana and harem.<sup>131</sup> The article historicised zenana outreach by presenting long, textual extracts from letters and committee minutes that made any reference to high-caste work, and claimed that in 1842, the SPFEE began ‘direct zenana teaching in Bombay... Similar work had been commenced by them in Egypt six years previously, their agent, Miss Holliday... having obtained access to the harem of the Pasha...’<sup>132</sup>

Asserting the importance and centrality of zenana work also inflected the SPFEE’s annual reports. Each report on India from 1864 would start with an account of the zenana work conducted in Calcutta, even though this constituted a very limited aspect of the SPFEE’s work. The preamble to the SPFEE’s report in 1868 asserts that ‘[i]t is almost needless to expatiate upon the subject now, for the ladies connected with every mission in India are actively engaged in Zenana teaching, and so much is said and written upon it, that it is no longer needful to enter into explanation of what it means.’<sup>133</sup> This very public account of the committee’s work restated that zenana outreach, with its ideological commitment to high-caste

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<sup>129</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM2 5132.

<sup>130</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM2 5132.

<sup>131</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1863, pp. 130-141.

<sup>132</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1863, p. 133.

<sup>133</sup> SPFEE, *The Thirty-Eighth Annual Report of the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East* (London: Suter and Alexander, 1864), p. 13.



evangelisation and the downward filtration model of social transformation, had been part of the committee's experience of work in India since 1835.<sup>134</sup> In reality, the statistical information in the report of 1868 confirmed that of the eleven missionaries sent out by the society to India, five were still associated with the society's flagship project, the Landour School in the Himalayas.<sup>135</sup> Mrs Murray, the designated 'zenana teacher' in Calcutta whose work was foregrounded in annual reports and articles for the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, was simply one of forty-six school teachers in India assisted financially in the previous year.<sup>136</sup> Other statistical information revealed that twenty-three out of sixty-nine of the schools in India being financially assisted by the SPFEE were designated 'vernacular female day schools under native mistresses.'<sup>137</sup> In reality, vernacular schools and the Landour School were the most resourced areas of outreach, in terms of either numbers of schools, or numbers of missionaries assigned to them.

However much the SPFEE presented a public commitment, through their publications, to high-caste outreach and zenana work from the mid-1860s onwards, they never adopted it as a strategic policy or were prepared to finance and resource it as they had the Landour School. In many instances, they treated zenana work as a practical solution to economic problems emerging in India's coastal cities, and sometimes it became the default work option for difficult missionary women who could not be placed in schools. The SPFEE were, however, latitudinarian about sponsorship and prepared to assist individuals who had a strong, ideological commitment to targeting high-caste females. Hannah Mullens and Mrs Murray were two missionary women based in Calcutta who pioneered zenana schooling and were amply supported by the SPFEE in terms of sponsorship and publicity. The Torquay Auxiliary of the SPFEE sponsored the school for Hindu girls she was about to establish in Calcutta in 1852 and in 1858 an anonymous donation to the SPFEE, which was gifted specifically for female education in Bengal, enabled her to receive £25 a year for three years.<sup>138</sup> However, in May 1861, her request from Calcutta 'respecting the sphere of labour which she finds opening before her in the zenanas to

<sup>134</sup> SPFEE, *The Thirty-Eighth Annual Report*, p. 13.

<sup>135</sup> SPFEE, *The Thirty-Eighth Annual Report*, p. 36.

<sup>136</sup> SPFEE, *The Thirty-Eighth Annual Report*, p. 37.

<sup>137</sup> SPFEE, *The Thirty-Eighth Annual Report*, p. 36.

<sup>138</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 2180; AM2 2916.



which she is very anxious to devote herself” was refused.<sup>139</sup> She asked the committee to adopt as a missionary and pay the salary of a Miss Cowan who was to continue Mrs Mullens’ zenana work in Calcutta, but the committee felt that they could not ‘adopt as an Agent any one whom they have not themselves selected and sent out’, although they acknowledged the ‘deep importance’ of her work.<sup>140</sup>

Hannah Mullens died in November 1861 and although she had written articles for the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* about her work among the higher classes in Calcutta, her ideological commitment to zenana teaching and high-caste outreach was never competition for the SPFEE’s ‘centralised’ policies towards mixed race girls, or even schemes for young widows in vernacular schools.<sup>141</sup> Mrs Murray, the woman missionary who continued work focused solely on zenanas in Calcutta in the 1860s, was given much symbolic space by the SPFEE for her work, if little substantial remuneration. As described earlier, reports of her zenana efforts in Calcutta were foregrounded in the society’s annual reports in the 1860s. Although she was less prolific than Hannah Mullens, a polemic by her about ‘The Zenanas of Calcutta’, appeared in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* in 1865.<sup>142</sup>

Despite her symbolic value in the society’s publications, in reality, Mrs Murray received limited financial support for her work. In February 1863, she made her first request to the society for money and received £20.<sup>143</sup> Later in the year, she requested money for a magic lantern to take to the zenanas, but by 1864, her correspondence with the society involved increasingly desperate pleas for money in order to keep her zenana work going.<sup>144</sup> In spite of her requests for financial assistance and personnel, the SPFEE were sympathetic but not quick to remedy the situation: in November 1864, Mrs Murray wrote again to the committee in London, ‘describing the extension of her zenana work, and her want of a helper. Resolved, that the Committee will send her an Assistant, as soon as a suitable person shall present herself, and the funds allow of her being sent out.’<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3473.

<sup>140</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3473.

<sup>141</sup> For example, see *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1859, pp. 133-137.

<sup>142</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1865, pp. 130-133.

<sup>143</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 1, AM2 3910.

<sup>144</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 3976; AM3 4092.

<sup>145</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4192.

It took a direct encounter with the committee in London in July 1865 to deliver the promised money and zenana missionary for Mrs Murray. However, the committee noted that the adoption of an agent for the zenanas of Calutta was an affective, rather than an ideological act:

[a]fter full consideration of the subject, bearing in mind that Mrs Murray's zenana work was an object of deepest interest to their departed friend, Miss Emma Leycester, who had just before her last illness, intended bringing before them her own wishes with regard to its extension, it was resolved, that, as a tribute of affection to the memory of Miss Leycester, the Committee will grant the salary for the Assistant they will send to Mrs Murray...<sup>146</sup>

The resourcing of a zenana missionary by the SPFEE was couched in affective and gestural rhetoric, which focused on the memorialisation of a late committee member. Mrs Murray eventually gave up her zenana work in Calcutta in 1868, leaving the SPFEE with no visible connection to zenana teaching.<sup>147</sup>

The SPFEE were aware of the growing rhetorical status of zenana work in the 1860s and its ideological significance for some missionaries. The *Female Missionary Intelligencer* had reprinted an article from the notionally Christian, *Friend of India*, in 1864, where female education was framed in terms of an 'Appeal to English Ladies'.<sup>148</sup> The article described how Sir Bartle Frere proposed the extension of 'ladies visiting Zenanas' into Punjab, having been already trialled in Bombay by Lady Frere and already considered 'successful on a limited scale in Calcutta.'<sup>149</sup> The plan is described clearly in terms of filtration theory as, 'beginning with the upper classes, the stream of female education will gradually permeate through the several strata of native society.'<sup>150</sup> The SPFEE gave discursive room to zenana visiting, its female exponents, and, occasionally, its ideological rationale; however, the private sentiments in committee minutes, and the lack of serious economic resourcing for zenana work and its key missionary women suggest that there was a distinct gap between the public rhetoric and the reality of high-caste mission work.

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<sup>146</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4342.

<sup>147</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4866.

<sup>148</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, pp. 75-79.

<sup>149</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 76.

<sup>150</sup> *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, 1864, p. 77.

In July 1863, the London committee learned that Miss Brooke, an agent in Bombay had arrived at her station expecting to teach in a boarding school for girls. On arrival, it appeared that the boarding school market was full, and it had been suggested to her to do zenana work instead. Letters of recrimination followed and the sponsor of Miss Brooke's missionary work appeared in London to explain to the committee that he 'sympathized with Miss Brooke on her disappointment...He was further informed that the proposal for Miss Brooke's being engaged in Zenana work did not emanate from this Committee but from friends in Bombay.'<sup>151</sup> Miss Brooke's case is particularly important because it exemplifies a prosaic and fundamentally economic reason why zenana work became more obvious in the 1860s. It became clear that there were limited markets for setting up girls' schools in colonial cities in India. The cost of living was soaring in the coastal cities at the beginning of the 1860s and missionaries had problems maintaining the running costs of their schools.<sup>152</sup> The unfortunate Miss Brooke had problems again in Bombay in 1863 when 'a letter was read...giving further particulars respecting the breaking up of the orphanage under Miss Brooke's care, and of the circumstances, especially the very high rents of houses in Bombay, which, she considers, will render it impracticable to carry on a similar institution there at present. She earnestly appeals for help towards a Girls' Day School which she is anxious to establish...'<sup>153</sup> Similarly, in June 1864, a Mrs Claughton in Colombo was writing to the SPFEE to complain that 'the high prices on the island have rendered it necessary to charge £3 [for the daughters of native gentlemen]'.<sup>154</sup> Single women missionaries had few low-cost options in missionary work. Male missionaries could itinerate, or open cheaper bazaar schools, but zenana work was the lowest cost alternative for women who would otherwise need school premises.

Zenana work was often construed as a default option if a woman missionary simply was ill suited to school teaching. In 1865 the committee decided that 'reference to Miss Jerrom's own letters having shewn that it is not probable that her health will be equal to continuous school-work, it was resolved to propose to her to

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<sup>151</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 3968.

<sup>152</sup> I address this issue in relation to Scottish missionaries in Chapter Six.

<sup>153</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4029.

<sup>154</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4148.

engage in zenana work.’<sup>155</sup> The committee minutes were quite open about the match between a missionary woman’s physical constitution and the type of work she undertook in India. However, there were also occasional references to a woman’s moral or temperamental ability to cope with work in the exposed and public world of schools. I would argue that the experiment with the Landour School had proved how hard it was to genuinely ‘know’ the character of a missionary women until she had actually arrived in India and been properly tested. The zenana was not simply a metaphor for the dark enslavement of Indian women; it could also be a useful space in which to place white, British women who risked the censure of the public world surrounding schools. When a Miss Bryndum was declared unsuitable for the school at Landour, with all its risks of exposure among local and international missionary networks, it was declared that she ‘does not possess the temper and self-control which are indispensable in one holding such an important position as Principal of the Landour School...At the same time, they do not consider her disqualified for other post, less trying in some respects, and therefore they will offer her the zenana work in Calcutta.’<sup>156</sup>

For some individuals associated with the SPFEE zenana work was of ideological significance and crucial to a strategy of uplifting those deemed at the centre of Indian society. For the SPFEE, however, it recognised the symbolic importance being attached to the work without genuinely adopting it. It used the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* and its annual reports to give discursive space to zenana work in India, while pursuing other systematic policies focused on schools, young widows, mixed-race girls and vernacular education. These tentative ‘policies’ had substantial economic resourcing and were often predicated, as in the case of vernacular education and the scheme to train young widows, on emerging ‘national’ discourses of Indian education.

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<sup>155</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4252.

<sup>156</sup> CMS, section II, part 1, reel 2, AM3 4426.

## Conclusion

The 1850s represented a decisive shift in how the SPFEE organised outreach to the women and girls of India. There had been no discernible policy in the first two decades of the SPFEE's existence about whom among the females of India might be the most viable for uplift and little explicit consideration was given to how women in India might best be reached. The establishment, however, of the Landour School in Mussoorie for mixed-race girls represented a clear strategy for uplift based on the group's imagined social impact. Later, the SPFEE's interest in developing schemes and policies took the form of engaging with Wood's Despatch and attempting to organise a scheme to train Indian widows. Both the Landour School experiment and the scheme for training Indian widows suggest how the SPFEE sought integration into mainstream missionary strategies for India. Institution building and vernacular education became central to men's missionary work in India, and the SPFEE gravitated towards missionary strategies shared with men. In presenting itself as a society focused on zenana work, the SPFEE were not representing the reality of the work they resourced or valued. As I will argue in Chapter Six, zenana work, for various reasons, often came to characterise the missionary work of women. The SPFEE, however, deliberately misrepresented their commitment to zenana work through their publications by seeking to over represent its importance. I have argued that this was partly due to the field of women's missions in India becoming more competitive in the 1860s, and zenana work was accorded a special status. Yet the separatism embedded in zenana visiting and its relative invisibility for the missionary woman made it a marginal endeavour for the SPFEE.

## Chapter Five: Scottish Women, Scottish Contexts and Early Scottish Missions to India

### Introduction

The first women's missionary society in Britain to be established within a national, denominational Protestant foreign mission belonged to the Church of Scotland. The Scottish Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India (SLA) was established in 1837, eight years after the Church of Scotland sent Alexander Duff, its first missionary, to Calcutta. Being the first national women's missionary organisation formed by a religious denomination suggests an ideological and practical commitment by the Church of Scotland to the uplift of Indian women through education. British women missionaries were not given denominational autonomy within Protestant foreign mission societies until the 1880s.<sup>1</sup>

There were two Scottish missionary societies that established missions in India in the 1820s. The first was the non-denominational Scottish Missionary Society (SMS) that initially focused its work on Russia and then established a mission to Bombay in 1823. In 1829 the Church of Scotland entered foreign mission work and sent Alexander Duff to Calcutta. By the mid-1830s, the SMS missionaries in Bombay joined the Church of Scotland's foreign mission in India, making the Church of Scotland's mission the only Scottish foreign mission in India until 1843.

Scottish missionaries are credited with a particular commitment to high-caste female outreach by 'inventing' zenana work. Esther Breitenbach, in her study of Scottish missions and national identity-formation suggests that zenana education was effectively a Scottish invention of the 1840s by the Church of Scotland missionary, Dr Thomas Smith.<sup>2</sup> Although there was a small, non-denominational women's foreign mission in Glasgow for promoting missions to Kaffraria, the early

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of how single women entered denominational missionary work in the late nineteenth century, see Rhonda Anne Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 2-57.

<sup>2</sup> Esther Breitenbach, *Empire and Scottish Society: The Impact of Foreign Missions at Home, c. 1790 to c.1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 107; see also Lesley A. Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland, 1830-1930* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2000), p. 118.

emergence, by two decades, of a denominational women's mission to India, and an early interest in zenana work, suggest a privileging of Indian women within the Scottish missionary context that did not happen as emphatically in the early nineteenth-century English context.<sup>3</sup>

But this picture of Scottish missionaries privileging the cause of Indian women from the outset and developing modes of evangelising to the elites is problematic. Scottish and Indian women were largely excluded from early accounts and justifications of missionary work in India. Instead, Scottish women's early educational work to Indian women and girls was eclipsed by the representation of Scottish missions as an almost exclusively homosocial endeavour which, in the case of the Church of Scotland, focused on high-caste outreach to men within elite educational institutions.

The foundation narratives that both the Scottish Missionary Society (SMS) and the Church of Scotland's foreign mission told to justify new missions to India ignored the humanitarian plight of Indian women and largely excluded them from all accounts of early missionary work. Such was the marginalisation of both Scottish and Indian women from the early missionary endeavour that the founding of the SLA in 1837 has not been interpreted as a testimony to the univocal support of the Church of Scotland for women's missions to India but as evidence of the continuous struggle Scottish women faced against a patriarchal and obstructive authority.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter focuses on the early Scottish missionary press and argues that establishing India as a mission field for Scottish women had a complicated provenance. Missionary magazines were the means by which Scottish women were defining and expressing the importance of missionary philanthropy and missionary organisations; yet they were also the means by which early Scottish missions excluded both Indian and Scottish women in homosocial accounts of work. As I have argued from the outset, the establishment of British women's missions to India was not simply propelled by metropolitan ideas of humanitarian uplift as circulated in the missionary press. There were other, competing, contexts in which Scottish

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<sup>3</sup> See Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission*, p. 113. The Glasgow Ladies Association for promoting female education in Kaffraria was non-denominational and formed in 1839.

<sup>4</sup> See my discussion of this in Chapter Six.

women's interest in overseas mission work need to be understood. Missionary discourses of national loyalty became crucial to Scottish women, and this derives from a distinctive Scottish context for missions.

### **The early denominational context**

The Scottish missionary context in which women and men negotiated outreach to India was distinctive and 'distinctiveness' was important to its early self-representation. At a practical level, the Scots were relative latecomers to India. Esther Breitenbach has argued that the relative lateness of the Church of Scotland into the denominational foreign mission picture was related to two factors: first, the Church of Scotland was concerned about supporting the independent Glasgow and the Edinburgh (soon to become the Scottish) Missionary Societies, both of which were established in 1796, for fear of allying themselves with organisations that could, like anti-slavery societies, be construed as political; secondly, Breitenbach, like Andrew Porter, argues that the Church of Scotland subscribed to a model of establishing missions only where a form of 'civilisation' existed before Christianity could be introduced.<sup>5</sup>

For Scottish women this meant that there was no distinctively Scottish missionary society in the early nineteenth-century to support and fundraise for in India. Another aspect of the Scottish context that differs from the context into which the SPFEE emerged is the link between missions and national, meaning Scottish, identity. The growth of scholarship on the Scottish experience of empire has underscored its importance to identity formation.<sup>6</sup> Even though missionaries from a distinctively Scottish mission (SMS) did not arrive in India until the mid-1820s, there were already well-established networks of Scots inflecting military, financial

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<sup>5</sup> See Breitenbach, *Empire and Scottish Society*, p. 55; on eighteenth-century Scottish theories of mission and civilisation, see Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 35-6.

<sup>6</sup> See 'Introduction' by John M. MacKenzie and T.M. Devine pp. 1-29, *Scotland and the British Empire, Oxford History of the British Empire, Companion Series*, edited by John M. MacKenzie and T.M. Devine, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); see also T.M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire: the Origins of the Global Diaspora* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), pp. 346-360.



and administrative institutions.<sup>7</sup> These links to India and empire were crucial in shaping Scottish identities, and when Scottish missionary work was established in India, the distinctive religious and educational components to Scottish identity found expression.<sup>8</sup> This idea of missions being linked to a sense of national expression is an unexplored aspect of what made Scottish women appropriate India as a mission field.

The denominational context of Scottish women's missions is also complicated by internal religious politics. As an established church, the Church of Scotland experienced a religious schism that impacted on its foreign missions in the mid nineteenth century and that also created anxiety about its status as a national church. Callum G. Brown, in his study of the relationship between religion and Scottish society, argues that Scotland always had, in fact, a pluralistic religious culture. The Church of Scotland before the split, or Disruption of 1843, represented itself as the national church, but in reality, there was much regional and religious variation in the support base of the church.<sup>9</sup> The Disruption itself will be explored in the next chapter, but the tensions between the moderate and evangelical factions of the Church of Scotland were present from the late eighteenth century, as evangelicalism took root in rapidly industrialising Scottish cities. The period from 1834 to 1843 is described as the 'Ten Years' Conflict' between the two factions, and this was particularly focused on issues of appointing ministers and patronage.<sup>10</sup> Brown argues that the evangelical faction stayed within the Church of Scotland by 'urging the moderate-dominated general assembly to pursue conversion through foreign missions and church extension and missionary activity at home.'<sup>11</sup> Urban expansion

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<sup>7</sup> For the impact of Scots on military life, administrative institutions and trade in India, see Martha McLaren, *British India and British Scotland, 1780-1830: Career Building, Empire Building and a Scottish School of Thought on Indian Governance*, (Akron, Ohio: The University of Akron Press, 2001); T.M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire*, pp. 250-270; Andrew Mackillop, 'Locality, Nation, and Empire: Scots and the Empire in Asia, c.1695-c.1813', in *Scotland and the British Empire*, pp. 54-83. For a study of the links between a Scottish family and empire in the eighteenth century which covers connections with India, see Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> The seminal study is Breitenbach, *Empire and Scottish Society*. See also T.M. Devine, *To the End of the Earth: Scotland's Global Diaspora, 1750-2010*, (London: Penguin Books, 2012), pp. 188-208.

<sup>9</sup> See Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 17; pp. 46-7.

<sup>10</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 20.

meant a greater support base for the evangelicals in the Church of Scotland and they secured control of the General Assembly in 1834.<sup>12</sup>

Foreign missions, therefore, were part of a conflict-ridden denominational picture for the Church of Scotland in the 1830s. They required an evangelical support base who were willing to finance such ventures and who supported the need for evangelisation overseas. As the Church of Scotland was rupturing at home in the 1830s, its foreign missions to India took on the rhetoric of a 'national' endeavour, requiring support and financial loyalty. I argue that inclusion in a 'national' mission was important to Scottish women and central to their adopting India as their key field.

### **Scottish Women and Missions in the early Scottish Missionary Press**

The exclusion of Scottish and Indian women from early accounts of missionary work in India by Scottish missionaries did not necessarily reflect their absence. When looking at the presence of Scottish women in the early missionary press, which is the focus of this section, it is evident that they were active participants in and shapers of a philanthropic culture with missionary aspirations at home in the early to mid nineteenth century. Studies of Scottish philanthropic and associational culture suggest that the early to mid nineteenth century was a time of transition in terms of the growing participation of women. The early to mid nineteenth century falls within a gap in the literature of women's participation in Scottish philanthropic life: it bridges the eighteenth-century, homosocial world of Scottish associations and clubs described by Rosalind Carr, and the varied and rich philanthropic lives lived by late nineteenth-century Scottish women as described by Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair.<sup>13</sup> This growing participation in a philanthropic missionary culture at home was

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<sup>12</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> See Rosalind Carr, *Gender and Enlightenment Culture in Eighteenth-century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013). For a study of how middle-class Glaswegian women of the second half of the nineteenth century actively participated in associational and philanthropic life, see Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 223-228. For an account of Scottish women's philanthropic activity in the second half of the nineteenth century see also Linda Mahood, 'Family Ties: Lady Child-Savers and Girls of the Street 1850-1925', pp. 42-64, in *Out of Bounds: Women and Scottish Society 1800-1945*, eds. Esther Breitenbach and Eleanor Gordon

well represented in the early Scottish missionary press and challenges the absence of accounts related to women's missionary activity in India.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, the missionary press was crucial to British women's foreign missions. The *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, as I detailed in Chapter Three, facilitated a form of orphan sponsorship for missionary women in India and kept the missionary project to women in India visible and discursively 'intact' during the 1857 uprisings. However, the missionary press was never wholly reliable in *representing* the work of missionaries, either male or female: the SPFEE distorted its involvement in zenana work and never gave mixed-race girls the presence in print that they were accorded in policy. For Scottish women, the early Scottish missionary press followed a similar pattern: their philanthropic presence at home was made highly visible, but the Scottish case for women's missionary work in India was a significant absence.

*The Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, which was founded in 1820, was particularly central to the missionary aspirations of Scottish women. Missionary 'work' for Scottish women in the 1820s took place, I will argue, through active engagement with societies that often focused on the heathen at home and that enabled evangelical women to formulate ideas about missionary philanthropy which would later be applied to the uplift of Indian females. *The Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* also provided accounts of early national women's missionary organisations abroad and extensive accounts of women's missionary work among the British protestant denominations in India. By showcasing the possibilities of organised and feminised missionary endeavour in India, the magazine was a popular corrective to the more homosocial representations of the missionary encounter that the first Scottish missionary societies had with India.

From its inception, the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* recorded women's philanthropic activity in Scotland and offered women the opportunity to argue for its necessity. Much of the material that argued for the importance of

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(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992). The two seminal studies of the Scottish antislavery movement integrate the work of individual women campaigners and women's societies into their accounts. See Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1833*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006) and C. Duncan Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists 1833-1861*, (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981).

women to philanthropic endeavour was written by women belonging to English voluntary organisations in the 1820s, particularly those related to the auxiliaries of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The inclusion of this material in the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* was often at the behest of Scottish women philanthropists wishing to argue for the importance of active female benevolence beyond the home. Alison Twells' study of an early nineteenth-century 'missionary philanthropic movement' in England, which encompassed the moral reform and Christian uplift of the 'heathen' at home and overseas, describes how middle-class women in England belonging to the Bible Society's local auxiliaries were crucial in defending and theorising the importance of domestic visits to the poor.<sup>14</sup> These visits were precursors to the contact and the face-to-face collections of financial contributions that were practised by auxiliary missionary societies later.<sup>15</sup>

In the Scottish context, the reclamation of the heathen at home in the rapidly urbanising nineteenth century prompted the establishment of a Bible Society in 1805 by David Dale of Glasgow and the Church of Scotland's extension movement in the 1830s.<sup>16</sup> City missions to the urban poor were established in the 1820s, and missions to the Gaelic-speaking Highlands were already well-established by the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.<sup>17</sup> For Scottish women, Bible Societies were crucial in terms of defining and defending women's philanthropic endeavour, which was being practised on a domestic scale at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but whose ideas would be applied to women's foreign mission work later on. Women of the Bible Society's auxiliaries in England believed, according to Twells, that domestic visits to sell Bibles could be a 'valuable strategy for reform' of the working-class household: the influence of the middle-class, Christian woman could shape 'an abstract Christian subject with similar attributes of

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<sup>14</sup> *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle-Class, 1792-1850: the 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Twells, *Civilising Mission*, p. 70.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of the establishment of the Bible Societies, see Olive Checkland, *Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland: Social Welfare and the Voluntary Principle* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1980), p.40. For a discussion of the Church of Scotland's extension movement, see Checkland, pp. 32-33. For a discussion of the evangelical programme of philanthropy in nineteenth-century Scotland see Checkland, pp. 30-63.

<sup>17</sup> For the establishment of city missions, see Checkland, *Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland*, pp. 66-71; for missions to the Highlands, see pp. 73-77.

behaviour and belief, regardless of cultural conditions, material environment, or pre-existing religious beliefs.’<sup>18</sup>

As a laboratory of ideas about Christianising ‘heathen’ women, the reports and articles by English women of the Bible Society’s auxiliaries were crucial to asserting and defining the importance of a feminised missionary-philanthropic culture. As early as 1820, the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* carried reports from, for example, the Ladies’ Branch of the Plymouth and Stonehouse Auxiliary Bible Society affirming the social benefits of women visiting the poor. This early report stated quite categorically that ‘habits of decency and cleanliness’ were inculcated by contact with middle-class women philanthropists as well as recording that 400 women were employed as active agents and that the thirst for education among the poor had increased in the desire to read the Bible.<sup>19</sup>

More significantly, in 1821 the Scottish women of the Edinburgh Bible Society requested that an extract from the third report of the Ladies’ Branch of the Manchester and Salford Auxiliary Bible Society be reprinted in the magazine. The preamble to the extract asserted that the arguments in the report ‘be laid fully before the public’ and I would argue that the report constitutes an extraordinary defence of women’s active philanthropy.<sup>20</sup> It is a rejoinder to implied criticism about women visiting the houses of the heathen poor and it utilises practical, moral and philosophical arguments about the importance of women’s philanthropy. It argues that the indelicacy of contact with working-class homes is not demeaning but beneficial to young women: ‘[i]f not expanded by benevolence, [the individual character] will contract into selfishness, and if not trained to exertion...will repose itself in listless indolence, or indulge in unrestrained gratification.’<sup>21</sup> The report argues against narrow domesticity and constrained Christian womanhood by claiming that

the sickly refinement, fastidious delicacy, and helpless dependence of females, which was the idol of former years, has if they mistake not, been exploded by the better taste and sense of the present age; and if genuine

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<sup>18</sup> Twells, *Civilising Mission*, p.71.

<sup>19</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1820, p.161; 162.

<sup>20</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1821, p.10.

<sup>21</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1821, p.11.

sensibility and tenderness of feeling, be the only real source of that propriety, modesty, and retirement of behaviour, which all admit to be essential to the perfection of the female character, that nothing is to be feared on this account, for those whose benevolence may lead them to the cottages of the poor...<sup>22</sup>

Scottish women deliberately imported an article which argued for the moral and philosophical bases of women's active philanthropy and which asserted that perhaps there was more damage done to a woman's Christian character from the atrophying of her benevolence at home than from contact with the heathen outside it. The article was equally determined in its account of the benefits to the heathen poor of contact with such middle-class women of active philanthropy. Apart from domestic uplift in terms of 'comfort, cleanliness, and respectability', 'an intercourse with their superiors is calculated, at once to soften and humanize the manners and sentiments of the lower orders.'<sup>23</sup> Compellingly, the report argued that 'the peaceful influence of the Bible Society' could act as a corrective to working-class radicalism and political sedition: 'driven almost to desperation by the distresses which, they have been made to believe, were wantonly entailed upon them by the great; revenge for imaginary wrongs and what they proudly called their injured rights, has appeared, in too many instances, to usurp the place of better principles.'<sup>24</sup> This report argued vociferously for women's active philanthropy in terms of its domestic and political benefits to the working-classes. It also asserted that Christian female benevolence could be protected from the stultifying effects of inactivity by interactions with the 'heathen'.

The ideas being popularised by this early polemic about women's Christian characters and active philanthropy were extended to encompass the support of foreign missions in later articles imported from a French female missionary society. In 1828 the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* included a report on the Paris Female Missionary Society and devoted substantial space to an obituary of Mademoiselle Cuvier, a French woman supporter of the Bible Society and also of foreign missions. These articles continued to argue for and theorise women's involvement in an expanding missionary-philanthropic milieu, even though they

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<sup>22</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1821, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1821, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1821, p. 12.

were not directly related to Scottish women or their philanthropic-missionary activity. The Paris Female Missionary Society set itself up as a model of a women's organisation supporting foreign missions. Not only did it assert its importance through the patronage of Madam de Staël's daughter, the Duchess of Broglie, 'a lady illustrious herself for her many deeds of piety and charity', but it argued that those who do not support the work of foreign missions, or who doubt 'that they can lead gross savages to the purity of the Gospel' do not themselves 'believe in the power of that Gospel to change the heart'.<sup>25</sup> In arguing for the correlation between having faith in the efficacy of foreign missions (by organising societies to support them) and having faith itself, the report built on ideas of women's active philanthropy being a reflection of their moral and spiritual mettle. The article concludes with a clear invocation for women to labour in active missionary philanthropy, citing the Biblical examples of 'Phebe' [sic] and 'Priscilla' as 'women who contributed to the propagation of Christianity' as well as questioning confining evangelical women to a domestic sphere 'in which the soul languishes, often idle in the midst of occupations which have not the power to fill it wholly?'<sup>26</sup>

This early Scottish missionary magazine became a means of using philanthropic and missionary activity to 'heathen' women in order to argue for access to a world beyond the domestic. As Nair and Gordon note in their work on the varied and public dimensions of Scottish women's lives in the nineteenth century, 'religious discourse cannot be interpreted merely as part of the armoury of conservative ideologues or as a discursive system which shackled women to a narrow and passive, if morally exalted, role in society.'<sup>27</sup> This early Scottish missionary magazine provided a discursive space for feminised arguments about missions and philanthropy which foregrounded the moral arguments for women's missions.

*The Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* not only enabled women to argue for the moral (and even political) benefits of their activity in a Scottish missionary-philanthropic milieu, but the magazine also afforded women's missionary auxiliary organisations significant visibility and representation. The

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<sup>25</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1828, p. 125; p. 126.

<sup>26</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1828, p. 128.

<sup>27</sup> Gordon and Nair, *Public Lives*, p. 4.



presence of Scottish women's missionary auxiliaries, set up to support the SMS, throughout the 1820s was a clear indication that missionary work, at home and overseas, constituted an aspiration for Scottish women. The growth of women's missionary auxiliaries during the 1820s and their economic success is a vital context for reading accounts of early Scottish missions to India. Scottish women clearly sought involvement in the foreign mission movement, even though the rhetoric of early reports from India appeared to exclude them.

The Scottish Missionary Society (SMS) was evidently dependent on congregational collections in the early 1820s but relied increasingly for financial support on local auxiliaries set up throughout Scotland to support them.<sup>28</sup> The more prosperous auxiliaries of the SMS had reports published in the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, and the Kirriemuir Auxiliary (run by men) was, for example, fulsomely lauded as a model of successful fundraising (they raised £66.15.s.10d in little over one year from nearly 300 members).<sup>29</sup> Significantly, the Kirriemuir Auxiliary recorded the importance of circulating the magazine 'through the town and parish with great care' in order to 'prepare the people in general for the appeal which was about to be made to them.'<sup>30</sup> I would argue that circulating the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* had, perhaps, an unintended consequence. In 1820 the magazine published an appeal related to educating the women of India that had also appeared in the *Missionary Register*.<sup>31</sup> It is likely that that 'On the present state of Female Society in British India', in conjunction with reports of sati and other humanitarian atrocities which appeared regularly in the magazine in the early 1820s, led to the formation in Kirriemuir of the first British female auxiliary dedicated exclusively to the education of females in India.

The few female missionary auxiliaries august enough to be reported in the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* reveal a range of support for home and foreign religious and missionary organisations. The Peebles Auxiliary Female

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<sup>28</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1820, p.15. It claimed that L3588.2s.9d had been raised in the previous 16 months through congregational collections. It added that 'We hope there is no reason to apprehend that the zeal evidenced in the support of Missionary exertions at that time is declining amongst us.' p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1822, p. 402.

<sup>30</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1822, p. 402. For a discussion of the early missionary press in Scotland, see Breitenbach, *Empire and Scottish Society* pp. 92-3.

<sup>31</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1820, pp. 378-380.



Missionary Society, formed in 1820 in the textile town of the Scottish Borders some twenty-three miles from Edinburgh, is a case study in how some Scottish female missionary societies supported a variety of missionary causes. Their first meeting saw £20 transmitted to the SMS, ‘cherishing the warmest admiration and respect for an institution whose pure and disinterested benevolence (not confining its operations within the narrow limits of its own country,) has for its object the evangelizing of the heathen lands...’.<sup>32</sup> In 1823, £43 was raised by the Peebles Auxiliary Female Missionary Society, including a congregational collection, and £30 was voted to the SMS: £5 each was allotted to the Jewish Society and Moravian Missions.<sup>33</sup> Significantly, perhaps, the third annual report mentioned the local connections between two of the SMS missionaries, Mr Brunton and Mr Crawford in India, and ‘it must gladden their hearts, amidst their many privations, to reflect, that though absent, they are not forgotten; but that the companions of their childhood and youth...are associated together for the purpose of providing for their support...’.<sup>34</sup> This underscores the importance of the personal connection, as outlined in Chapter Two, to the business of sponsorship. Interestingly, the donation to the SMS is contextualised in terms of this personal, missionary connection with Peebleshire, rather than a sense of responsibility to India or a broader civilising mission.

In its seventh year, the Peebles Auxiliary Female Missionary Society reported a diminution in its funds, and of its annual income from subscriptions and donations, which totalled only £21. 16s. 11d: only £7 went to the SMS, with £3 being donated to the Moravians; £4 to the Edinburgh Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews; £2 to the Pictou Institutions and £5 to the General Assembly’s fund for Promoting Religious Instruction in the Highlands and Islands.<sup>35</sup> This case study does not suggest that Scottish women’s missionary auxiliaries had limited commitment to the SMS, but it does demonstrate the diversity of missionary causes sponsored by economically successful auxiliaries, with funds being disbursed to both home and foreign missions. I would also argue that channelling the considerable fundraising energies of Scottish women into the *national* project of the Church of

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<sup>32</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1820, p. 437.

<sup>33</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1823, p. 438.

<sup>34</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1823, pp. 438-9.

<sup>35</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1827, p. 448.

Scotland's first foreign mission to India meant that foregrounding national loyalties in the representation of missionary work became important.

The presence of Scottish women as missionary enthusiasts, in both theory and practice, in the early Scottish missionary press is an important context against which to read reports of the SMS and Church of Scotland's early missions to India. Both Scottish and Indian women are striking exclusions; this cannot be read as reflecting the apathy of Scottish women and men towards outreach to Indian women and girls. These narratives need to be read in the context of Scottish women actively expanding their claims to engage in missionary work and organising fundraising and auxiliaries at home.

### **Early Scottish Missions to India: foundation myths, men's work and the exclusion of women**

Although India was an established field for British foreign missions by 1820, both the SMS and the Church of Scotland published justifications for establishing missions to India in the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, partly because they came late to India as a field of missionary work. Justifications by missionary societies for the expansion of their work were commonly published in the missionary press. An earlier humanitarian society rehearsed its argument in the missionary press for British intervention in India. The British India Society, 'an association to promote the intellectual and moral improvement of the Natives of British India', provided a foundation narrative for humanitarian work in India in 1821.<sup>36</sup> Focused on schooling and educational uplift as a means of delivering 'the education of the native youth of India in the English and Oriental languages, and in the literature and science of Europe and Asia', the prospective society foregrounded the argument of political responsibility and 'national obligation, inseparable from every legitimate and just government, to promote, by all practical means, the welfare of the people subjected to its authority.'<sup>37</sup> Civilising mission and political responsibility were its first, foundational aims, and the alleged deficiencies of Indian

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<sup>36</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1821, p. 178.

<sup>37</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1821, p. 178.

schools were to be addressed by the society as ‘the deplorable ignorance, superstition, vice, and misery, in which the great body of the people, and particularly the female sex, are at present involved, [derives from] from the want of a more liberal system education...’.<sup>38</sup> This article was unremarkable for its use of a letter by the celebrated Baptist missionary, William Ward, as a source of information: the article was also typical for using female victimhood and degradation as a justification for humanitarian intervention.

A year later in 1822, the SMS announced its intention of enlarging its operations to India. It was evident that its mission to what was known as ‘Russian Tartary’ was struggling and that India was well established as a field of British and American Protestant missionary work.<sup>39</sup> The foundation story of the first explicitly Scottish mission to India couched its brief rationale in the familiar tropes of political responsibility and civilising mission:

[t]he natives of India, as being subjects of Great Britain, manifestly possess a peculiar claim to the good offices of this country. And that political union, which, even the men of the world regard as special ground for the interchange of mutual acts of kindness and support, will be recognized in the generous estimate of the Christian, as demanding for India the communication of those blessings, of which none but Christians know the value.<sup>40</sup>

However, for the SMS, civilising mission and the uplift of Indian women were not axiomatic. No mention of female education as an aspiration appears in the existing committee minutes of the 1820s and early 1830s, and in 1826 an extract from a letter by four Scottish missionaries stationed in ‘Severndroog’ and ‘Bancoot’, outside Bombay, appeared in the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* arguing that there was no possibility, as yet, of being able to establish schools for girls in such a place:

[t]he people in and near Calcutta, where female schools have most prospered, have been a long time under British government, and have had much

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<sup>38</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1821, p. 179.

<sup>39</sup> In 1825 the SMS committee privately acknowledge the failure of the mission to Russia: ‘the unpromising aspect of the Society’s operations in Russian Tartary, however much it is to be lamented furnishes no ground of discouragement with the respect of the grand object of Missionary exertions.’ National Library of Scotland (NLS), Foreign Mission Records of the Church of Scotland MSS. 7530-8072: Minute Book Series Dep. 298/200, Minute Book of the Scottish Missionary Society (SMS), 31 May 1825.

<sup>40</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1822, p. 216.

intercourse with Europeans, which must in some degree have weakened their prejudices against female education, and have prepared them for the reception of schools; but here circumstances are quite the reverse.<sup>41</sup>

Citing Calcutta as the only fertile field for establishing female education was ironic given the exclusion of women from the Church of Scotland's foundation narratives of mission. The Church of Scotland launched its first foreign mission scheme to India in 1829 with no reference, in any form, to the uplift of Indian females or to their humanitarian plight. This is particularly significant, as it was members of the Church of Scotland who formed the first national women's missionary society in Britain associated with a religious denomination.

The exclusion of women in the story of the Church of Scotland's first mission to India is particularly significant because this exclusion persisted in later accounts of work. Establishing a unitary 'foundation myth' for the Church of Scotland foreign mission is problematic: it became a significant player in the world of nineteenth-century Protestant missions to India, and the 'origins' and histories of both the society and its first celebrated missionary, Alexander Duff, were rewritten throughout the nineteenth century. There was much defensive early justification in the Scottish missionary press for deciding to establish a foreign mission and focus on Calcutta: the Church of Scotland had, as Esther Breitenbach argues, upheld a philosophical position about the need for a certain level of civilisation to obtain in a country before it could be receptive to Christianity.<sup>42</sup> John Inglis, the Convenor of the General Assembly asserted in 1829 that 'till we should commence our operations in India, especially after a delay so long and unexpected...we could not enjoy all the public confidence, which is necessary for a rapid increase in our funds.'<sup>43</sup> The sense that it was an expectation of the Scottish public to establish missions to India was also implied in the reiteration of the status of the Church of Scotland as a *national* church.<sup>44</sup> Much time and rhetoric was expended, however, on arguing that India was both ready for Scottish missions as 'the more influential natives' were 'in a state of mind which admits of their listening to the claims of a more rational faith' and

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<sup>41</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1826, p. 482.

<sup>42</sup> Esther Breitenbach, *Empire and Scottish Society*, p. 55.

<sup>43</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1829, p. 348.

<sup>44</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1829, p. 351.

retracting the notion of civilisation before Christianisation as an ill-proven theory attributed to Moravian missionaries.<sup>45</sup>

In 1831 there were still arguments published in the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* to counter the criticism that ‘the religious prejudices of the natives of India are too strong as to render any attempt to make them Christian altogether hopeless’.<sup>46</sup> The rejoinder to these criticisms was embedded in endless accounts of Duff’s success in establishing the General Assembly’s School in Calcutta, the favourable turnout from the children of the local *bhadrolok*, and the trickle of high-caste converts that followed. The importance of the arrival of the Church of Scotland as a national, rather than a merely denominational, mission in India was implicit in the mission’s foundation stories. Much significance was made of Duff’s early reception in Calcutta by the Governor General and his sister ‘who were pleased to express, not only a strong interest in his pious and benevolent understanding, but a corresponding confidence in our National Church, from which he [Duff] had derived his appointment.’<sup>47</sup>

The foundation myth focused on the importance of a national church establishing foreign missions, not just in India, but specifically in Calcutta, the seat of colonial power and a place that Duff would later describe in the following terms:

[o]ut of Scotland, the city in which it is most important to strengthen the Free Church cause is London. But, out of the British isles, it may truly be said, without disparagement to other places, that the city in which it is most important to strengthen the same blessed cause is Calcutta. Here is the seat of the Supreme Government of this immense Indian empire, the government of which, in point of power, influence, and resource, is by far the mightiest in Asia. Here is the seat of the Legislative Council, whose laws are binding on a multitudinous host, five times as numerous as that which occupies Great Britain... Here are the great offices of State, with their goodly staff of high functionaries. Here are the supreme courts of law, which exercise a controlling influence over the administration of justice throughout the subordinate provinces. Here is the grandest emporium of the commerce of

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1829, p. 350; for the retraction of the idea of civilisation before Christianisation, see the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1829, p. 437.

<sup>46</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1831, p. 152.

<sup>47</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1831, pp. 151-2.

Asia. Here, in a word, is the centre of the most multifarious influences that animate all around – directly affecting the doctrines of scores of millions...<sup>48</sup>

The importance of a *national* Church of Scotland in Calcutta and the timeliness of the establishment of the Duff's General Assembly School were foregrounded elements of this story of the mission's origins. There was no recourse to the rhetoric of the humanitarian plight of Indian women and the ideological imperative to educate them as a means of preventing sati or infanticide.

One could argue that foregrounding a national rhetoric for the Church of Scotland's mission to India was more important than rehearsing arguments about the uplift of women. The Church of Scotland had a competitor for national loyalties in the SMS, who had a powerful network of missionaries in Bombay. Religious politics at home also meant that linking missions and national loyalty could serve the evangelical faction well. However, the Church of Scotland's first foreign mission to India continued to exclude references to Scottish and Indian women in accounts of its work in the 1830s. It would be easy, then, to argue that the Church of Scotland established a homosocial mission in which the work of women had no place. As I argued earlier, the Church of Scotland's attitude to women's missions has been construed as obstructive and patriarchal, which makes the establishment of the SLA in 1837 difficult to account for. However, I argue, that these early homosocial narratives of work did not suggest the wilful exclusion of women, but suggested anxiety about the representations of Scottish missionary men and masculinity.

### **Men's work? Representing early Scottish missionary work in India**

The exclusion of Indian women from the foundation stories of the early missions of the SMS and the Church of Scotland does not, I would argue, suggest that their uplift was ignored, or that the women who accompanied early Scottish missionaries to India were excluded from active mission work. However, the exclusion of the humanitarian cause of Indian women in the construction of these early mission stories reiterates how their *ideological* significance has been exaggerated. As I argued in Chapter Two, the humanitarian claims of the Indian woman in the

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<sup>48</sup> *The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Free Church of Scotland*, 1847, p. 48.

*Missionary Register* were voluble; yet their claims did not translate Indian women and girls into a clearly privileged group when the SPFEE founded its missionary society in London. But reading the exclusion of outreach to Indian women and girls as a social reality of early mission work, or an ‘ideological position’ held by early Scottish missionaries, is to disengage these texts from their rhetorical conventions and immediate historical contexts.

In arguing for a stronger understanding of the denominational context of missions, Jeffrey Cox suggests that

[i]n his stories of western religion abroad, and in the stories of other pioneer missionaries as well, ordained male missionaries appear to be operating in a kind of vacuum, interacting with each other but not with other people – many of them female Europeans and female and male Indians – who were known to be on the scene.<sup>49</sup>

The near exclusion of women as *visible* actors in the establishment of new missions, or as a group for uplift, is arguably a function of men having to construct public narratives of missionary work as a frontier enterprise. This was certainly the case for both the SMS and the Church of Scotland. Both these Scottish foreign missions needed to assert the *uniqueness* of their early work in an Indian context in which they were relative latecomers, and which was already populated by other Protestant societies.

Even in 1905, a Scottish missionary woman was compelled to write of her husband’s early career with the Church of Scotland in the late 1830s in the following terms:

[h]e was full of fire, and purpose, and enthusiasm. He rode over great tracts of country, attended the melas, or festivals, preaching from the back of his pony, talking, chaffing, yet deeply sympathising, and full of untiring interest in the people – especially in the fine manly race who inhabit the Mharatta country.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Jeffrey L. Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Mrs Murray Mitchell, *Sixty Years Ago*, (Edinburgh: Macniven and Wallace, 1905), pp. viii-ix. Her husband, Dr Murray Mitchell was appointed to the Church of Scotland mission in Bombay in 1838. Mrs Murray Mitchell had arrived in Bombay in 1842 to join him.



The irony of Mrs Murray Mitchell's memoir of her work in India is that it both maintains the conceit of her husband as a frontier man, while elaborating on the work and missionary life they shared as a husband and wife team with many others at busy, settled stations. The *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* also provided perspectives on Scottish men's missionary work in India during the 1820s and 1830s which tentatively allowed for the inclusion of women. In spite of the rhetoric of missionary work being an exclusively homosocial experience for Scottish men, Scottish and Indian women made limited incursions into the story of early Scottish missions in India.

The first missionaries sent to India by the SMS established what would become a distinctive South Indian mission. In many ways the mission to Bombay and its environs replicated the frontier spirit and masculine adventurism of the early Scottish missions to Russia. Bombay was chosen by the SMS precisely because it was relatively uncharted missionary territory with the 'circumstances of the ground being here less occupied.'<sup>51</sup> The first mission station established by the SMS in India was at 'Bancoot', or Fort Victoria, some seventy miles from Bombay and described as something of a wild frontier by the Reverend Mitchell: '[w]e were not a little struck with the romantic scenery of the place, its rugged and uncultivated appearance; but far more interested in beholding the number of inhabitants, their superstitions and wretchedness.'<sup>52</sup> By 1824 the first Scottish missionary sent out by the SMS was already dead but his three successors, the Reverends Crawford, Cooper and James Mitchell continued the frontier work of founding new missions in the Southern Concan among the villages of 'Severndroog'.<sup>53</sup> Although these Scottish missionaries had wives in tow, their early mission work was partly conceptualised around a notion of 'village India' and male itinerating and mobility. When reporting back to the Corresponding Committee in Bombay on their two-week tour of 'Severndroog', some thirteen miles 'below Bancoot' at the end of 1823, they enthused about the location because they hoped 'to go round about the villages preaching the glad tidings of salvation; and at least three of the above named places

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<sup>51</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1822, p.217.

<sup>52</sup> For the mission's location see the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1823, p. 394; quote from the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1824, p. 341.

<sup>53</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1825, p. 5. He had died in November 1823.



can...be visited from Bancoot and Severndroog, by taking the tent along with us.’<sup>54</sup> Bancoot, Severndroog and their environs were hardly Calcutta with its (albeit attenuated) mobility for the urban missionary woman.

Yet the frontier rhetoric gave way to a far less monolithic presentation of SMS missionary work over time. Unlike Alexander Duff and the early Church of Scotland mission in India, the SMS missionaries in Bombay tacitly acknowledged that their policies were experimental and their ideas about how and where to conduct missionary work were labile. First, the frontier geography was replaced by an urban space as the mission transferred to Bombay by 1828 on account of ‘its immense population, the different bodies of which that population is composed, its intercourse with all parts of the surrounding country, and with different unbelieving nations, -- the diminution of the prejudices of caste, by the long intercourse which has been maintained by Europeans’.<sup>55</sup> But the SMS mission in Bombay also accommodated conflict and dissent among its own missionaries, which reflected, perhaps, more of the social reality of experimental mission work.

The Reverend John Stevenson, for example, who arrived in 1823 came to believe in 1827 that ‘the charge of the schools had an injurious effect on his mind and to interfere essentially with the great duty to which he wished wholly to devote himself, the preaching of the everlasting gospel.’<sup>56</sup> By the end of the 1820s schooling as a form of missionary work was controversial for the SMS missionaries, and although much of this controversy was rehearsed in private committee minutes, it became a public grievance when the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* reported in 1830 that:

Mr Mitchell has adopted an opinion that a missionary ought to employ himself simply in preaching the gospel, and that the superintendence of schools in no part of his duty and is even incompatible with its right performance.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1824, p. 485.

<sup>55</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1830, p. 199.

<sup>56</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/200, Minute Book of the Scottish Missionary Society (SMS), 11 December 1827.

<sup>57</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1830, p. 199.

Mission schools in the 'Bankote' [sic] division had been closed and itinerating and preaching were foregrounded.<sup>58</sup> John Wilson recorded his new initiative of preaching in Mahratta inside 'native houses' and also to Bombay's Jewish population.<sup>59</sup> The Reverend Stevenson wrote enthusiastically of itinerating for 200 miles with the CMS missionary Mr Farrer and then preaching at the bazaar twice a week in Pune, commenting that he also preached to 'Protestant Christian, particularly Indo-Britons and European soldiers. I hope some more of these are beginning to think seriously on Divine things.'<sup>60</sup>

In their representations of missionary work, the early SMS missionaries of Bombay incorporated some of the social realities of missionary work in an Indian context into their written accounts. They included their conflicts and divisions about what constituted the rightful work of missionary men, as well as acknowledging the experimental nature of such a fledgling project. Once the mission moved away from its foundation narratives and frontier rhetoric, some of the written accounts of their endeavours included the educational work of Scottish women. Even though the early village environment and uncharted nature of the early Bancoot and Severndroog missions suggested a place more amenable to the aspirations of itinerating men, the SMS missionaries' early experiment with schools and vernacular education established a mode of evangelisation open to the woman missionary in the early to mid-nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup> The SMS missionaries not only represented their work as experimental, but the rhetoric did reflect a reality that enabled women's participation.

The Reverends Cooper, Crawford and James Mitchell were committed to reforming the village schools, or *pathshalas*, they inherited from the Rev D. Mitchell in Bancoot and its villages. They probably had some training in the Lancastrian system of education, with its emphasis on monitors and class organisation, at London's Borough Road School, which trained teachers for the BFSS. The Scottish

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<sup>58</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1830, p. 199.

<sup>59</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1830, p. 487.

<sup>60</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1831, p. 532.

<sup>61</sup> Mrs Mitchell had probably given birth just after arriving in India. *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1824, p. 241.

missionaries both built a network of village schools and asserted the centrality of schooling for mission work in the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*:

[w]e consider these schools of the most importance, as auxiliaries to our most important work, especially as they are conducted upon Christian principles. They thus strike at the root of those evils, which have so long degraded this interesting portion of our fellow subjects...<sup>62</sup>

The privileging of schooling over itinerating reinforced an idea of outreach that was open to women. Village school education also implied little interest in work among the higher castes, which would characterise Alexander Duff's mission to Calcutta for the Church of Scotland. The 'purwarees' of Bancoot, 'a people who are thus considered the off-scourings of all things, and who otherwise are shut out from every species of improvement' became, in a letter from the Reverend James Mitchell, a group 'not inferior in mind to the other Hindoos; our school amongst them has produced several good readers, and is amongst them that I have the largest assembly of people to hear that truth which is able to make them wise unto salvation.'<sup>63</sup>

The belief that 'the heathen' needed a certain level of education to receive Christianity, which underpinned Duff's enterprise at the General Assembly school, was absent among the early SMS missionaries. Given there was no ideological bar to educating the Indian girls most likely to attend a village school, reports of female schools began to trickle in to published accounts of missionary work. The initial girls' schools were run by two missionary wives, Mrs Cooper and Mrs Stevenson, in Hurnee and Murood, part of the villages around Bancoot. By April 1826 the schools had a total of eighty-six village girls and were superintended by a local teacher, with visits from the two missionary wives twice a day.<sup>64</sup> Although positive reports about these female schools continued into 1828, by 1830 a letter from the Reverends Cooper, Mitchell, Stevenson and Nesbit reported that 'the progress of the girls so very small and discouraging, that the greater number of the schools have been discontinued.'<sup>65</sup> Mrs Wilson, the wife of the Scottish missionary stationed in

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<sup>62</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1825, p. 8.

<sup>63</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1825, p. 59; p. 433.

<sup>64</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* 1825, p. 433.

<sup>65</sup> For the positive reports of girls' schools, see the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1828, p. 6; for the quote from the letter, see the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1830, p. 199.

Bombay had also established three female schools, but a letter from her husband in 1830 stated that the 'progress of the pupils is not encouraging; much patience, attention, and consideration will be required to bring them into such a state as will warrant the hope that they will be useful auxiliaries in the mission.'<sup>66</sup>

The work and the representation of work carried out by these early SMS missionaries accommodated outreach to Indian women and girls. The experimental nature of this early Scottish encounter between missionaries and India was acknowledged through admissions of both conflict and failure. There was little interest in the humanitarian rhetoric of women's uplift, although it was cited once, in 1827, when extracts from the journal of the Reverend John Stevenson in 'Severndroog' made a claim that he had intervened unsuccessfully in a 'suttee', he claimed that '[i]t is the education of the females which is likely to prove most effectual in rooting out this barbarous custom, and I am happy to say that a beginning has been made here in this work.'<sup>67</sup> Early accounts of outreach to Indian women and girls by the SMS missionaries were couched, like the representation of much of their other work, in practical terms. The education of Indian girls was incorporated into a picture of Scottish missionary outreach in the early nineteenth century because SMS missionaries represented their work as undoctinaire, experimental and subject to failures of projects of these kinds. The rhetoric of missionary work by the SMS in the 1820s and 1830s moved beyond the exclusionary narratives of frontier life and homosociality, reflecting more of the social reality of early missionary work.

The missionaries of the SMS had, at various stages, embraced the idea and practice of vernacular schooling for lower caste children of both sexes, which was a model of outreach that could, in theory, embrace the work of women and female education. However, when the Church of Scotland sent its first missionary to India in 1829, the institution established by Alexander Duff in Calcutta gave little scope for female equivalents. Even though Calcutta was hardly the wild frontier of 'Bancoot', the General Assembly's institution was also framed in terms of an 'elite' and homosocial experiment on an educational and social frontier. In his account of his first years in India, Duff wrote in the following terms about the school he

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<sup>66</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1830, p. 487.

<sup>67</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1827, p. 117.

established, in this instance about the impression the school made on important European visitors after a public examination:

[i]n a word, to the no small delight and surprise of the founder, the general impression then produced, at once dragged the infant seminary from a humble obscurity, and thrust it forth into public favour and notoriety...amid the full blaze of a sudden popularity, which ushered it back amongst them with a new status assigned to it, as well as a commanding frontier-position among the educational Institutions of the metropolis.<sup>68</sup>

‘A commanding frontier-position’ has characterised the General Assembly Institution in Calcutta that was shaped by the ideas of Duff and his supporters, and made notorious through the ‘Orientalist-Anglicist debate’ in the 1830s. The impact of this ‘frontier-position’ institution and Duff’s involvement in English-language education has subsumed questions about its highly gendered rhetoric or the possibility that outreach to Indian women and girls also took place.

The exclusion of women is hardly surprising. Duff and his early institution are central to the educational debates surrounding Macaulay’s notorious Despatch in 1834 stating the intention that ‘we must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, --a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.’<sup>69</sup> Recent scholarship on colonial education in India has suggested that the debate has more rhetorical than educational significance. Parna Sengupta has recontextualised the ‘Orientalist-Anglicist’ debate and focused on the evolution of vernacular education in Bengal and the influence of missionaries and their schools. Symbolic though the debate was, Sengupta argues that privileging it historically can ‘reproduce the colonial government’s own diffidence towards the development of vernacular education, a field that involved a great many more Indian actors.’<sup>70</sup> Bengal was unique educationally in that, according to Sengupta, it had a ‘relatively dynamic system of Bengali-language schooling’ emanating from both missionary

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<sup>68</sup> Alexander Duff, *India, & Indian Missions: Including Sketches of the Gigantic System of Hinduism, Both in Theory and Practice; Also Notices of Some of the Principal Agencies Employed in Conducting the Process of Indian Evangelization* (Edinburgh: John Johnstone), p. 580

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Babington Macaulay, ‘Minute on Education in India (1835)’ in *Politics and Empire in Victorian Britain: A Reader*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 20.

<sup>70</sup> Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion: Missionary Education and the Self-Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* (California: University of California Press, 2011) Online edition, p. 14.

and upper-caste Hindu educational endeavours and a relative lack of state competition that enabled ‘evangelicals to dominate the field of formal vernacular education in the first half of the nineteenth century.’<sup>71</sup> Sengupta argues persuasively that ‘the pedagogic pretensions of an imperial discourse’ need to be understood within the economic reality of a colonial state that was not prepared to deliver economic resources and which left schools in Bengal substantially underfunded.<sup>72</sup> The importance of the debate itself has been exaggerated, as has the impact of English-language education as imagined by Duff. But the educational controversies of the mid 1830s have reinforced an image of Duff and the early Church of Scotland mission as involved only in high-minded discourses of education for elite young Bengali men.

The General Assembly Institution in Calcutta had been, according to Duff, an aspiration of the Church of Scotland’s from the moment that foreign missions were countenanced and its unique, frontier characteristics were central to its representation:

it was purposed from the very commencement, to institute and support seminaries for educations of various grades, -- as grand auxiliary instruments in removing deep-rooted prejudices; in preparing the mind more attentively to listen to, and more intelligently to comprehend the sublime discoveries of Christianity; and, above all, in rearing a body of well-qualified natives, who, as teachers and preacher of the Word of Life, might engage in the mighty work of emancipating their countrymen.

In order to give coherence efficiency and unity to the whole system, and bring to maturity the more vigorous shoots that might have sprung from the preparatory culture in elementary and other schools, it was also from the first, resolved that a central or collegiate Institution should be established for communicating a knowledge of the higher branches of literature, science and Christian theology. – So much, indeed, did the establishment of such a seminary enter into the original designs of the General Assembly, as fully appears from their printed records, -- that it was intended, *if possible*, to be *the first*.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion*, p. 13; p. 14.

<sup>72</sup> Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion*, p. 15.

<sup>73</sup> Duff, *India and Indian Missions*, pp. 479-80.

From the outset, establishing an institution to communicate ‘a knowledge of the higher branches of literature, science and Christian theology’ embodied an ideal of Church of Scotland missionary education that would be difficult to ‘feminise’. Village schools and vernacular education on the early SMS model in the Bombay Presidency had female equivalents in theory and practice.<sup>74</sup> But the aspirations of an institution that sought to reach out to ‘to well-educated young men in the higher ranks of society’ in order to cultivate the knowledge that made them receptive to ‘the principal doctrines of natural and revealed religion, and ... the evidences of the Christian faith’ required male missionary endeavour based on being both highly educated and able to deliver an ambitious intellectual programme to young Bengali men.<sup>75</sup>

It was not simply that the rhetoric of the General Assembly’s Institution in the 1830s seemed to offer no interest in outreach to Indian women and girls. Early conversion narratives intensified the representation of the Church of Scotland’s mission as highly homosocial and exclusionary. Relationships between Duff, other male missionaries, and young Indian men were valorised in early accounts of conversion. The account of the conversion of ‘Baboo Anundo Chund Mojoonder’ in *the Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* focused on the missionary figure as patriarch in a quasi-familial relationship with the convert and his father: ‘I deliver my son,’ wrote the father of ‘Mojoonder’ to Duff, ‘in your own way and make him your follower and from this moment he became your own son as he is mine.’<sup>76</sup> ‘Mojoonder’s’ ability to withstand the test of Brahminical displeasure, loss of caste and family displeasure at his conversion to Christianity rendered him, in the words of Duff, a figure who exhibited ‘a good deal of the manly independence of his uncle.’<sup>77</sup>

In 1835, an account of ‘Mojoonder’s’ relationship with Mr Groves, a missionary from Baghdad who was staying with Duff in Calcutta, reiterates the idealised and

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<sup>74</sup> There were, however, later experiments with elite education on the General Assembly Institution model by John Wilson in Bombay in 1832 and by John Anderson in Madras in 1837. See Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Christianity in India: From the Beginnings to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 325-327.

<sup>75</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1835, p. 174.

<sup>76</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1834, p. 27.

<sup>77</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* 1834, p. 25.



intimate relationships that missionary men were having with such high-caste converts: Mr Groves

became acquainted with young Mujunder, who used constantly to visit us for instruction and advice. Mr Groves was so overjoyed at finding a respectable Hindu, in whom 'the life of Christ' was manifest, that he resolved to take him as his companion, to England, -- introduce him to his own friends, who might thus be satisfied that it was possible for Divine grace to make 'a new creature,' even of a Hindu, -- and finally to carry him back to Calcutta...As Mr Groves is one of the most spiritually-minded men to be met with, his warm interest in young Mujunder corroborates our opinion of him as a genuine convert to Christianity.' The young man is now with Mr Groves in Bristol.<sup>78</sup>

There are many possible readings of these descriptions of relationships between missionaries and young Bengali converts, but to assume that they characterise a missionary endeavour that excluded women is as problematic as assuming that they represented passive, Bengali converts. Although the accounts foreground the power of the missionaries to 'transform' their Indian trophy converts, in reality, elite missionary education was actively sought in the nineteenth century by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, as well as 'other members of various regional elites [who] were extremely influential in pressing the government to support a system of modern education in English.'<sup>79</sup>

Recent work by Sudhir Chandra on high-caste Bengali converts recalibrates notions of Indian passivity and dependence on the white missionary in these early encounters: key Bengali converts like Duff's biographer Lal Behari Day became critics of missionary arrogance in the mid-nineteenth century and, argues Chandra, 'they even recognized, and deplored, a deleterious connection between Christianity – the Christianity of the Whites – and imperialism.'<sup>80</sup> Chandra also argues that the roles of Lal Behari Day and other nineteenth-century, high-caste Christians need recalibrating in the context of the political contribution they made to 'the Indian

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<sup>78</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1835, p. 177.

<sup>79</sup> Frykenberg, *Christianity in India*, p. 313. For a full discussion of the role of the Indian elites in the demand for nineteenth-century missionary education see, pp. 301-343.

<sup>80</sup> Professor Sudhir Chandra, 'Religion, Culture and the Indian Nation', the Annie Besant Memorial Lecture given at the Benares Hindu University, March 19 2012, p. 9. I thank Professor Chandra for his kind permission to quote from this lecture.



Christian presence within the nationalist vanguard.’<sup>81</sup> Elite missionary education was not forced on high-caste Bengalis and these early converts to Christianity were not the passive trophies of Duff’s first educational enterprise. As Jeffrey Cox has argued, there was a history of considerable friction throughout the nineteenth century among European missionaries and middle-class Indian Christians: the former finding ‘Indian piety suspiciously “English” and...[determined] to use mission institutions for their own educational advancement’; the latter believing that European missionaries were ‘interfering with Indian Christian customs deemed “too European”’.<sup>82</sup>

Homosocial narratives such as the account of ‘Moojoonder’ did not necessarily reflect the social realities of relations between the early Scottish missionaries in Calcutta and their small number of Bengali converts. It is possible, perhaps, to read these early conversion narratives as Scottish missionaries in Calcutta offering an aspirational rhetoric to some members of the Calcutta bhadralok who were experiencing their own insecure economic, social and cultural transformations in colonial Bengal. Much as the SPFEE offered the mixed-race girls of the Landour school a socially aspirational rhetoric at odds with other colonial discourses of the mixed-race community, so offering the rhetoric of ‘manliness’ to high-caste Hindus who attended the General Assembly’s Institution could be construed as a similar aspirational strategy. Sudhir Chandra argues that some high-caste Bengali converts lost status, suffered accusations of deracination and have been excluded from the history of nascent Indian nationalism.<sup>83</sup> ‘Manliness’, which was applied by Duff to the ‘babu’ Mojoonder, was the corrective to effeminacy. As Mrinalini Sinha has explored in the context of late nineteenth-century Bengal, there were shifting characterisations of the ‘effeminate Bengali’ deriving from a variety of colonial sources.<sup>84</sup> An Anglicised product of the General Assembly Institution in Calcutta such as ‘Mojoonder’ could well have, at the end of the nineteenth century, fitted the disparagingly *effeminate* stereotype what Sinha describes as ‘the potentially disloyal

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<sup>81</sup> Chandra, ‘Religion, Culture and the Indian Nation,’ p. 9.

<sup>82</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 99; p. 100.

<sup>83</sup> Chandra, ‘Religion, Culture and the Indian Nation.’

<sup>84</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: ‘the Manly Englishman’ and the Effeminate Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 1-25.

or Anglicised or English-educated Indian in particular.<sup>85</sup> Thus the offer of *manliness* to 'Mojoonder' became a means, perhaps, of ameliorating the potential loss of social status for Bengalis through conversion to Christianity, or simply through a process of Anglicisation in elite missionary institutions.

Accounts like the 'Moojoonder' narrative excluded both Scottish and Indian women and focused on relationships between Scottish missionaries and young Bengali males. I would argue that the homosocial rhetoric had a complicated provenance and did not necessarily reflect the absence of women any more than it reflected Indian passivity and dependence. I would also suggest that this homosocial rhetoric needs to be contextualised by the need for the Church of Scotland foreign mission to present itself and its missionaries as exceptional, particularly as it was entering the field of Indian missions late and had to contend with the presence of the non-denominational SMS as a potential competitor. There was also a sense of social anxiety on the part of early Church of Scotland missionaries and they needed to define themselves as different from other types of missionary male.

In 1836 *The Church of Scotland Magazine* published an article suggesting that the chaotic nature of early missions and the poor educational background of missionary men had impeded their church's support for foreign missions: 'The scenes of their operation were not well chosen – their missionaries were not duly qualified – their managers were not distinguished by wisdom or discretion, and nothing, it was alleged, could be expected from such ill-arranged and ill-ordered institutions but confusion and discomfiture.'<sup>86</sup> Richard Price in his study of nineteenth-century colonial encounters with the Xhosa in Southern Africa argues that the LMS, for example, which included Scottish supporters and missionaries, 'preferred plain men from forge and farm, well read in the Bible and full of faith, over university-educated men.'<sup>87</sup> The Comaroffs also suggested the importance of 'men with practical skills...rather than elevated scholar-priests or saintly aescetics' in the recruitment patterns of early Nonconformist missionary societies like the

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<sup>85</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, p. 17.

<sup>86</sup> *Church of Scotland Magazine*, 1836, p. 294

<sup>87</sup> Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 19.

LMS.<sup>88</sup> The Church of Scotland explicitly set itself apart, however, in terms of the men it recruited to its foreign missions. This was largely embodied in the aspiration for a superior educational institution in Calcutta that would require a high level of education to deliver.

In her analysis of the social composition of nineteenth-century Scottish missionaries and their supporters, Esther Breitenbach argues that the middle-class and Edinburgh-based support for foreign missions was largely reflected in the type of man recruited as a missionary. The Scottish missionary male tended to be an ordained minister and university educated, and the 'superior' nature of the missionary work delivered in India was a direct comment on the superior nature of the Scottish men who delivered it.<sup>89</sup> Robert Eric Frykenberg argues that the provision by missionaries of elite, English-language education 'increasingly tended to divide missionaries along class lines, so that while some missionaries served lower-level institutions, a more select and exclusive few missionaries had the privilege of training those who would eventually become the rising new, largely Hindu, elites of national India.'<sup>90</sup>

There are multiple contexts in which the exclusionary rhetoric of the early Church of Scotland mission to India can be read. There are multiple exclusions, including Indian agency and Indian women, to accommodate a story of men's work which was so narrowly defined. This thesis has argued for recontextualising missionary writing and the absence of women in these early accounts has to be interpreted through an understanding of the various contexts in which new Scottish missionaries found themselves, including relationships with Indians, as well as denominational anxieties about class and status. In Chapter Six I argue that the exclusion of women cannot be read, as it has been by some historians, as representing patriarchal obstruction on the part of the Scottish Presbyterian foreign missions, and that it did not represent the reality of Scottish women's missionary work in India.

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<sup>88</sup> Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa, Volume 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 81

<sup>89</sup> For details about the social background of Scottish missionary men, see Esther Breitenbach, *Empire and Scottish Society*, p. 73; for an account of the exceptionalism of early Scottish male missionaries, including Alexander Duff, to India, see Stuart Piggin and John Roxborough, *The St. Andrews Seven: The Finest Flowering of Missionary Zeal in Scottish History* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985).

<sup>90</sup> Frykenberg, *Christianity in India*, p. 302.

There is also another context in which the exclusion of Scottish women's early missionary work needs to be read. In Chapter Three, I argued that the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* was important in providing a counter-narrative to the stories about female victimhood and 1857. Missionary magazines functioned as 'sites of contestation' and their multiple perspectives from different authors could undermine or challenge the most robust narratives of mission work.<sup>91</sup> The account of exclusionary, homosocial work, largely authored by Alexander Duff did not exist in isolation, and the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* offered a contestatory narrative of British women's missionary work in Calcutta.

The *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* was an interdenominational publication, replicating much of the material published in its English counterpart, particularly articles and reports related to the main British denominational foreign missions such as the CMS, BMS, and LMS. During the 1820s, there were reports of British women's missionary work, particularly in Calcutta, that constructed a highly triumphalist account of educational outreach to Indian girls. In 1821, William Ward delivered an address at the anniversary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society which celebrated missionary access to Calcutta and suggested a new missionary-colonial world of cooperation, with support for the uplift of Indian females coming from the highest reaches of colonial society:

[t]he government of India acts, as far as is prudent, entirely with us; and in a variety of ways, they are assisting us, and that in the most powerful manner. They have established government-schools for the instruction of the natives...And it would be unjust in me not to mention also the name of the Marchioness of Hastings, who is doing everything in her power for the benefit of the female natives of that country...Such a door is opened there, as never before...Of our own countrymen I scarcely know one individual who opposes us; on the contrary, they now have a Calcutta Bible Society, chiefly supported by the Anglo-Indians, which has circulated extensive editions of the Scriptures in the various languages of India. There is also a Calcutta Book Society; and there is a Hindoo College, in which converted natives themselves are training up in suitable knowledge, for the very purpose of becoming preachers of the everlasting Gospel.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>92</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* 1821, p. 223.

In 1824 the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* reported the expansion of female education in Calcutta under the auspices of the CMS, where the number of schools had increased from eight to twenty-two with 400 girls now being educated.<sup>93</sup>

Calcutta was described as a place where the colonial elite and providence conspired to promote female education: Lady Hastings would visit ‘lanes and gullies where Europeans are seldom seen’ and the article opined that ‘[d]ivine Providence carried on his designs of mercy to mankind by the instrumentality of one another, it is impossible to say how great may have been the good effected by the silent influence of the example exhibited by one so exalted in rank and station as Lady Hastings.’<sup>94</sup> The opening up of Calcutta to missionaries and the imprimatur of the highest level of colonial society for women’s mission work represented the city as a desirable destination for future female missionaries. The growth and success of female schools in Calcutta was continually reported by the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, particularly in relation to the CMS’s schools, where the rhetoric of providence was frequently evoked: one missionary woman wrote in 1823 that in spite of her fifteen small schools in Calcutta, ‘I feel as though nothing were done, or even begun compared with what ought to be set on foot by our Society...to do justice to this important cause, which the Lord has so providentially placed under our wing.’<sup>95</sup>

Schools for and missionary work to Indian females in Calcutta also had a feminised figure-head in Lady Hastings and powerful advocates from the Anglican Church, such as the Reverend Daniel Corrie of Calcutta who made an appeal on behalf of female education, which was circulated in Calcutta and its dependencies.<sup>96</sup> Vitally, the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* underscored the support that the large British Protestant foreign missions gave to female educational work in India.<sup>97</sup> The CMS in particular validated the educational work of missionary wives in India, and as the foreign mission associated with England’s established church, it

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<sup>93</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* 1824, p. 273.

<sup>94</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* 1824, p. 273.

<sup>95</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* 1823, p. 416.

<sup>96</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* 1822, pp. 463-66.

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, ‘Success of Female Schools at Calcutta’, *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1825, pp. 512-4.

was a clear sign of a national foreign mission endorsing women's missionary endeavour.<sup>98</sup>

To what extent the Calcutta of the 1820s and 1830s was a place where women of the British colonial elite supported missions to Indian women is uncertain. There is little discussion of the philanthropic lives of elite British women of the early to mid nineteenth century either in the limited scholarship or published accounts.<sup>99</sup> However, accounts of women's missionary work from the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* could be read as a corrective to the highly homosocial representations of men's work: Scottish women were not simply reading missionary narratives constructed from the perspective of one society and denomination. Read against stories of male missionary work were powerful narratives of women's work in Calcutta: this work was endorsed by Anglican elites; it was frequently framed in terms of providential success; and it was actively encouraged by the wife of the Governor General, Lady Hastings, a Scottish peeress in her own right. Whether Lady Hastings' Scottish background was meaningful to the Scottish women readers of the magazine is pure speculation: however, what these early accounts did offer was a highly visible, feminised, and powerful representation of early women's missionary work in India. These accounts may represent a fantasy of female influence and impact, or a propagandist attempt to raise funds at home in their narratives of female missionary endeavours: but they provided visibility and the all-important imprimatur of Providence. Scottish women would use a variety of written accounts about women's work, particularly in Calcutta, to demand an extension of their work in India.<sup>100</sup>

In terms of establishing Indian missions to women and girls, missionary magazines played both an undermining and a critical role. The partial exclusion of Indian and Scottish women, particularly in the Church of Scotland's early mission to Calcutta, was the result of homosocial narratives of men's work. Yet these could be clearly read against triumphalist narratives of women's work by other societies in the

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<sup>98</sup> See, for example, the extract from 'the Report of the Committee of the Ladies' Association for Female Schools', *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1826, pp. 369-70.

<sup>99</sup> Pat Barr, *The Memsahibs: The Women of Victorian India* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1976); Emily Eden, *Up the Country: Letters from India* (London: Virago Press, 1983).

<sup>100</sup> See Chapter Six.

same urban space. Scottish women would utilise alternative narratives of women's work in order to gain access to Calcutta as a mission field after the founding of the SLA in 1837, as I explore in Chapter Six. Multiple and conflicting narratives of men's and women's missionary work were central to the experience of how missionary work was read.

### **Scottish Women and national discourses of missions**

The establishment of a national women's missionary organisation attached to the Church of Scotland in 1837 did not simply derive from metropolitan discourses of degraded Indian women in the Scottish missionary press, nor from representations of early missionary activity by either the SMS in Bombay, or the Church of Scotland foreign mission in Calcutta. The uplift of Indian women and girls was a significant absence in much of the early writing about Scottish missions in India, although the Bombay mission of the SMS at least acknowledged that outreach to Indian girls took place. The uplift of Indian females as a rationale for missions was not, as I have detailed earlier, a constitutive element in a foundation story about missionary work for Scottish missionaries in India. Arguing that ideologies underpinning the *specific* uplift of Indian females were not necessarily central to the establishment of the SLA in 1837 suggests some similarities with the case of the SPFEE.

In Chapter Two, I argued that there was plenty of evidence for a humanitarian case being volubly made in the missionary press of the 1820s and 1830s to encourage women to see the education of Indian females as the urgent corrective to the horrors of sati and female infanticide. Yet, India was not immediately foregrounded as the most important field when the first national foreign mission for women was established. The SPFEE had an initial focus on China, which problematises the argument for the power of the figure of the Indian woman in the early missionary press to mobilise overseas missionary action. Similarly, Scottish women at home were visibly engaged in missionary activities from visiting the 'heathen' to establishing and supporting missionary auxiliaries. However, in 1825, Scottish women responded directly to an appeal for missionary intervention overseas

and established a small, national foreign mission for the uplift and education of Greek, not Indian, females.

There is, therefore, another context in which the establishment of the SLA in 1837 needs to be read. Scottish women responded to a sense of Scottish national expression in their missionary organisations: it was not the only factor in the setting up of Scottish women's missionary organisations, but it was important. They responded enthusiastically to the 'national' discourses of mission work to Greek women and girls, and this would be replicated in an opportunity to create a national mission to Indian women in 1837. The cause of Greek women, I would argue, was secondary to the opportunity of participating in a tentative national venture. In this respect, the establishment of the SLA and the SPFEE were different. A connection with 'English' or 'British' national identity was not significant for the establishment of the SPFEE or its focus on China and India. There is evidence, however, that Scottish women sought inclusion in a national project of Scottish missions and that inclusion was meaningful.

The Scottish Ladies' Society for the Education of Greek Females was established in Edinburgh with the support of James Moncrieff, with interest in the society expressed by Dugald Stewart and Sir James Mackintosh.<sup>101</sup> Its national status was encoded in its rhetoric: James Moncrieff, 'could not help thinking, however, that the condition of Greece, was calculated to excite a peculiar interest in the people of this country,' particularly given 'the high station which was occupied by that people in the history of the world...when he reflected on the benefits which the modern nations of Europe had derived...from the philosophy and poetry'.<sup>102</sup> The British and Foreign School Society had issued a circular on the subject of education in Greece and the Scottish Ladies' Society was founded as an immediate response because 'of the absolute impossibility of any nation possessing civilization, or possessing the light of useful knowledge, or in any proper degree cultivating habits of intelligence and general habits of refinement, where the female part of the

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<sup>101</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1825, p. 169.

<sup>102</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1825, p. 169.



community was in a degraded state, or not considered fit to partake in the knowledge that was thought necessary for the other sex.’<sup>103</sup>

James Moncrieff’s deployment of ideas underpinned by stadial theory was not simply a rhetorical device: Scottish women were actively seeking endorsement for their plans to send well-educated women out to Greece ‘to lead the females of the country to acquire that education necessary to fit a whole people to exercise the privileges of a free government,’ and Moncrieff told the assembled women that their scheme was not ‘at all visionary or useless.’<sup>104</sup> After initial problems in establishing female schools in Cephalonia and Ithaca, a Miss Robertson was sent out in the spring of 1830 as the first woman missionary of the Scottish Ladies’ Society for Promoting Female Education in Greece.<sup>105</sup> She superintended a girls’ school for the higher classes in Corfu and intended to expand into the villages. The committee asked whether ‘Scotland, mindful of her own abundant means of education, and of the mighty advantages which result from them, [can] resist the appeal which Greece makes to her?’<sup>106</sup> Euphemia Roberston of Edinburgh was probably, then, the first woman missionary sent out by a Scottish women’s foreign mission with national aspirations and an educational imperative.<sup>107</sup>

This small, missionary society and its focus on the uplift of Greek females through education suggests that Scottish women’s early missionary interests engaged in *national* expression. Greek women were attractive because their uplift was offered in terms of a national project or organisation, and their claims to uplift were arguably less influential. Education is considered a key element in the construction of Scottishness, and it has been more easily adapted to include women than the other elements of the Scottish Presbyterian Kirk and the law.<sup>108</sup> The rhetoric of this society invoked the special status of Scottish education for women. Whatever the

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<sup>103</sup> For the BFSS circular, see the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* 1825, pp. 170-172; quote from the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* 1825, p. 170.

<sup>104</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* 1825, p.170.

<sup>105</sup> For the society’s initial problems, see the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1826, pp.358-361; for a record of Miss Robertson’s departure to Greece, see the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1830, p. 294.

<sup>106</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1830, p. 296

<sup>107</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1831, p. 296

<sup>108</sup> Esther Breitenbach and Lynn Abrams, ‘Gender and Scottish Identity’, in *Gender in Scottish History Since 1700*, eds. Lynn Abrams, Eleanor Gordon, Deborah Simonton, Eileen Yeo (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 28.

patriarchal realities of the Scottish education system for nineteenth-century girls, women's educational opportunities as a particular characteristic of Scottishness inflected the rhetoric of the Scottish Ladies' Society for Promoting Female Education in Greece.<sup>109</sup> As early as 1822, there is evidence that a sense of national connection to a mission was important to some Scottish women's missionary auxiliaries. In 1822 the Lanark Ladies' Auxiliary of the SMS had stated that their clear objective was 'to assist the National Missionary Society' to 'awaken an interest in the conversion of the heathen world to Christianity.'<sup>110</sup>

National loyalties to the Scottish missionary project became foregrounded in the late 1820s and 1830s because of the practical realities of Scottish foreign missions. When the Church of Scotland sent Duff to Calcutta there were essentially two Scottish missionary societies operating in India: the SMS in Bombay and the Church of Scotland in Calcutta. Loyalty to a foreign mission cause was also an economic imperative. Before the disruption of 1843 the expense of the mission project in India was frequently and openly communicated. The Church of Scotland's response in the 1830s was to consolidate its claim to India as a field of *national* missionary endeavour on behalf of Scottish missions by taking on the SMS missionaries in India.

The Church of Scotland's decision to expand its India mission in the 1830s into Madras and Bombay was partly linked to the claims of India as a field of particular *national* obligation and supporting the national church became critical for funding and cohesion during a period of conflict and impending schism within the church itself. Duff's timely publication in 1839 on the history and justification of the Church of Scotland's India missions asserted:

[g]radually, however, without previous concert or communication, the conception was springing up in the minds of many in widely distant parts of the kingdom, that the Church of Scotland, in her collective corporate capacity as a National Church, ought to acknowledge her obligation to embark on the great cause of missions, --that she should concentrate her scattered forces in

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<sup>109</sup> Lindy Moore, 'Education and Learning' in *Gender in Scottish History Since 1700*, eds. Lynn Abrams, Eleanor Gordon, Deborah Simonton, Eileen Yeo (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 131-132.

<sup>110</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1822, p. 404.

one focal point, and open up to her own members an authorised channel for the influx of their benevolent contributions.<sup>111</sup>

The link between a national church and obligations to create foreign missions is clearly articulated in Duff's account. The Church of Scotland foreign mission had to create economic and personal loyalties in a context where many Scots had already established economic connections to other foreign missions in the 1820s. The image of the feminised national church needing to 'concentrate her scattered forces in one focal point' in India is an appeal for both national and economic loyalty to the Church of Scotland's foreign missions.

The importance of national loyalty to Scottish women missionary supporters was exemplified in the mid 1830s, when the SMS attempted to find a missionary role for itself outside India. In 1834 when arguing for support for their mission to the West Indies, a committee meeting

[r]esolved unanimously that the emancipation of the slaves of the West Indies imposes on Christians in this country new and powerful obligations to make extended efforts for their religious instruction; - that such extended efforts...are required of us, at once, as a testimony of gratitude to God for the accomplishment of that great National act of justice and humanity as the appropriate use of the increased facilities which it will afford for the moral and religious improvement of the negroes, and as being essentially necessary to fit them for the full participation of the rights and privileges of freemen, as well as for introducing them into 'the glorious liberty of the children of God.'<sup>112</sup>

This statement evoked a *national* duty towards its new mission in Jamaica at a time when two Scottish missionary societies were operating, albeit in different countries. Although there could be some ambiguity about whether 'national' in this context meant Scottish or British, the fact that the SMS had status as a national, Scottish missionary organisation is what decided the Peebles Female Missionary Society to devote its considerable funds to the exclusive support of the SMS. A meeting of the Peebles Female Missionary Society reported that '[i]n former years the committee were wont to distribute their funds more generally; but the *urgent wants of the*

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<sup>111</sup> Duff, *India and Indian Missions*, p. 476.

<sup>112</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/200, Minute Book of the Scottish Missionary Society, 28 April 1834.

*National Society* they considered as calling for *their utmost efforts...*'.<sup>113</sup> So profound was this sense of commitment to this national cause, that in 1834 the Peebles Female Missionary Society changed its name to the Peebles Female Missionary Society for Jamaica Missions.<sup>114</sup> The example of the Peebles Female Missionary Society and its decision to commit to the SMS as the 'national' foreign mission society of Scotland suggests the importance of recruiting the loyalties of Scottish women, their organisations and their money to the foreign mission project in the mid nineteenth century.

## **Conclusion**

Inclusion in a national mission project was not the only reason that Scottish women enthusiastically embraced the formation of the SLA in 1837 for the education of Indian women and girls. However, as Esther Breitenbach has argued, overseas missions contributed to the expression and formation of Scottish identity, and it provides a context for understanding why Scottish women took up the cause of India.<sup>115</sup> British women's missionary organisations of the mid nineteenth century operated in different denominational and local contexts, and these contexts were highly influential in terms of why or how the Indian female was adopted as a missionary cause. Arguing that women's missionary action overseas derived most powerfully from discourses of the degraded Indian woman at home is reductive, and ignores the complex social realities of these early women's missionary organisations.

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<sup>113</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1830, p. 440.

<sup>114</sup> *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register*, 1834, p. 367.

<sup>115</sup> Esther Breitenbach, *Empire and Scottish Society*, pp. 125-151.

## **Chapter Six: Scottish Women's Missions to India, 1837-1870**

Scottish women's missions to India became a highly resourced and well-supported venture in the mid nineteenth century. Even after the religious and economic upheavals of the Disruption in 1843, the rump of the Church of Scotland mission to India and the new Free Church mission supported the expansion of Scottish women's missionary work in India through institution building. There was also evidence that the uplift of Indian women became integrated in the work and even careers of some Free Church missionary men. However, the rhetoric related to the uplift of Indian women's missions was still problematic. The rhetoric of Alexander Duff about the futility of uplifting Indian women and the foregrounding of zenana work by John Fordyce has skewed an understanding of Scottish women's missionary work in this period. This chapter argues that this rhetoric needs to be recontextualised and not read as shaping or representing the business of Scottish women's outreach in India in the mid nineteenth century.

### **A little local interest? Calcutta, Bombay and the founding the Scottish Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India, 1837.**

Although I showed in Chapter Five that the published accounts of early Scottish missions to India were characterised by a focus on men's work and Scottish missionary masculinity, I also argued that this did not imply the absence of Scottish women's activity in India or aspirations for active missionary work. Yet the establishment of a women's foreign mission to Indian females by the Church of Scotland in 1837, officially the Scottish Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India and popularly known as the SLA, was characterised in later accounts as struggling with the competitive attitudes and patriarchal values of the Church of Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Library of Scotland (NLS), Foreign Mission Records of the Church of Scotland MSS. 7530-8072: Minute Book Series Dep. 298/29, Minute Book of the Church of Scotland Female Education in India Association (SLA), 16 April 1839.

Mrs Murray Mitchell, a Scottish missionary woman with a long career in India, wrote in a memoir of her early work that ‘the work is no longer the imperfect, one-sided thing it necessarily was for long years, when half the community, - the women - were excluded from participating in the boon the men accepted for themselves; when, as Dr Duff expressed it, it was impossible to reach the females of the higher classes and castes.’<sup>2</sup> Annie Swan who wrote a pre-Indian Independence history of Scottish female missions characterised the endeavours of both Dr Chalmers and Alexander Duff as ‘not likely to offer a very eager or enthusiastic welcome to any competing scheme’ after raising £50, 000 for early missions in a single year.<sup>3</sup> Swan’s aside about economic competition between early male and female Church of Scotland missions to India gave way to a far more vituperative and patriarchal analysis of the attitudes of the Church of Scotland towards women’s foreign missions:

[a]longside these practical objections no doubt could be placed the deep-seated and very strong prejudice against women having any important or initiative part in the work of the church. It has taken a long time for that prejudice to die, and it says much for the quality of our Scottish womanhood that it has stood the test, suffered many things at the hands of its superiors and advisers, and given a century of untiring devotion...<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary historians have tended to reinforce this interpretation of early foreign mission work by Scottish women being organised ‘within boundaries of church order that had been well established on the grounds of gendered differences’.<sup>5</sup> Rhonda Semple continues her account of the SLA’s early years as characterised by the authoritarianism of the General Assembly and the desire to curtail the tentative independence of women’s work.<sup>6</sup>

It is problematic to argue that the Church of Scotland sought to promote the education of Indian females through unequivocally supporting the work of the newly-formed SLA before the Disruption of 1843. There is little evidence for the

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<sup>2</sup> Mrs Murray Mitchell, *In India: Sketches of Indian Life and Travel* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1878), p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Annie S. Swan, *Seed Time and Harvest* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1937), p.33.

<sup>4</sup> Swan, *Seed Time and Harvest*, p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> Rhonda Anne Semple, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2003), p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> See also, Lesley A. Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland, 1830-1930* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2000), p. 111.

widespread belief that the uplift of the high-caste Indian woman was *critical* for the immediate success of evangelisation in India; and there is conflicting evidence about how key missionary figures such as Alexander Duff viewed the resourcing and rationale of a fledgling society dedicated solely to female missions. The SLA was not initiated by Alexander Duff, who had returned from India by 1835 due to illness, but by an obscure military officer from Bombay who, according to an account in the *Eastern Females' Friend*, the magazine associated with the later women's mission of the Free Church of Scotland, 'instead of spending his *furlough* in gaiety or indolence, went from house to house, and travelled from city to city, to move Christian hearts in behalf of the females of India.'<sup>7</sup> John St. Clair Jameson's brief obituary notes 'with what zeal and assiduity he laboured for this Society when in its infancy, and how abundantly those labours were blessed.'<sup>8</sup>

Unlike David Abeel who had helped establish the SPFEE, this founding figure was not symbolic or tokenistic: Jameson was active on the committee of the SLA as one of its three male secretaries until his return to India in 1839 or 1840.<sup>9</sup> In spite of his relative personal obscurity within the Church of Scotland foreign mission circles at home, he was an inveterate missionary networker with a clear sense of how philanthropic networks functioned at local levels. Jameson was central to organising the formation of the SLA's auxiliaries throughout Scotland and he advised the SLA on the importance of cultivating local people of influence in parish networks:

[h]e stated that the influence of the clergymen...was necessary in particular to the formation of Associations and that it would be most desirable to obtain the interest of those of the Parishes...and in an especial degree it was requisite to have the influence and support of the religious families.<sup>10</sup>

Jameson's own local network in India was crucial to his advocacy of Scottish women's missions. He was connected with, and a conduit of information about, the Bombay mission associated with the Church of Scotland which was run by Dr Wilson, whose wife Margaret became a celebrated Scottish missionary woman.

<sup>7</sup> *The Eastern Females' Friend*, p.35, 1858.

<sup>8</sup> *The Eastern Females' Friend*, p.35, 1858.

<sup>9</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA. In the first meeting of the SLA, on 8th March 1837, Captain Jameson was made one of three male secretaries; for a note of his return to India, see NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29 Minute Book SLA, 20 August 1839.

<sup>10</sup> For Jameson's involvement in setting up auxiliaries, see NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 12 October 1838, 16 April 1839; quote taken from 12 October 1838.

This, arguably, was the mission where Scottish female influence was most visible and the case for the education of Indian females most voluble: the first meeting of the SLA had even specified that ‘aiding the Bombay Ladies’ Native Female School’ was central to the society’s efforts.<sup>11</sup>

Communication from India was dominated by the Bombay missionary network of Dr Wilson, his late wife’s sisters, and then Miss Reid, the SLA’s first woman missionary, who was appointed as a superintendent of the female schools in Bombay in 1838.<sup>12</sup> There was little reported activity elsewhere for female missions among the Church of Scotland missionaries in India, although Mr Mackay of Calcutta had attempted to found a school for girls, but Mr Anderson had nothing to offer in Madras.<sup>13</sup>

There was little apparent effort at home from Alexander Duff himself. Duff had been in Scotland from 1835 onwards, having left India after serious illness. The foreign missions committee of the Church of Scotland had supported Duff’s continual efforts at home which focused on fundraising for the Calcutta mission: a visit to Glasgow in 1839 had resulted in a separate subscription being established for the founding of a church ‘where converts and enquirers among the educated natives, might attend on the ordinances of Christian worship.’<sup>14</sup> Female education in Calcutta was not fulsomely embraced by the Church of Scotland’s Foreign Missions Committee at this stage: on the advice of the Reverend Charles, missionary for the Church of Scotland in Calcutta, the Foreign Missions Committee decided to ‘acquiesce in declination of female schools’; in 1838 attempts to start a female orphan refuge in association with the Church of Scotland were ‘left, for the present, with the subscribers in Calcutta,’ and not to be supported as part of a Scotland-wide appeal.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 8 March 1837.

<sup>12</sup> The Misses Baynes went to Bombay to supervise female schools, see NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 15 February 1838; For Miss Reid’s appointment, see 15 February 1838.

<sup>13</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 15 February 1838.

<sup>14</sup> National Library of Scotland (NLS), Foreign Mission Records of the Church of Scotland MSS. 7530-8072: Minute Book Series Dep. 298/1, Minute Book of the Church of Scotland India Missions, 30 October 1839.

<sup>15</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/1, Minute Book of the Church of Scotland India Missions, 1 May 1837; 29 March 1838.



In what has been described as the ten years' conflict within the Church of Scotland, up until the Disruption of 1843, women's missions to India were endorsed on a denominational level by the Church of Scotland and given the status of a 'national' society, which was unique among the British Protestant foreign missions of the early to mid-nineteenth century. Yet reading this as the Church's unequivocal belief in the importance of the uplift of Indian females is as unsatisfactory as reading the accounts of early Scottish missions as frontier-ventures which excluded both Indian and Scottish women in their homosocial encounters with mission work. One could argue that attitudes and ideologies of outreach to Indian females up until the Church of Scotland split in 1843 were simply highly localised and contingent on the theories and practices of sympathetic male missionary figures in different locations across India, but particularly centred in Bombay. This would suggest that the formation of a 'national' venture for a Scottish women's mission for the education of females in India did not derive from a consensus within the Church of Scotland about the importance of educating Indian women, or the centrality of female conversion to the project of the evangelisation of India. Arguably the establishment of the SLA only represented the aspirations of the Bombay network of missionaries, centred around Dr John Wilson and his wife Margaret, who were vocal about the uplift of Indian females.

There is significant evidence to suggest that the SLA was founded through the interests of the Bombay mission of the 1830s, seeking support and representation in Scotland. In 1838, at a meeting of the SLA's sub-committee in Edinburgh, Jameson proposed that

as there was not conveyed by the tracts already published to the public a sufficiently correct knowledge of the association a new tract should be published stating the object viz to raise the degraded females of India. The plan to be pursued viz of providing teachers – the formation of schools – the teaching of European Education in the native languages of the East and in English – the employment of European agents whose duty it was to instruct and strive to raise up native teachers – the instruction given always under the inspection of missionaries.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 7 November 1838.

The focus on schools as the means of uplifting females in India, the aspiration to create native teachers but not necessarily to access high-caste Indian women, and the refusal to identify particular groups as the key to successful evangelisation characterised the public rhetoric of John Wilson's Bombay missions in the 1830s. The form that his writing took about early women's work and female education in India, and more specifically Bombay, was a memoir of his wife, Margaret Wilson, who had died in 1835. In 1839, Wilson's memoir claimed to articulate a consensus between him, his wife and other missionaries in Bombay about missionary work for women:

[t]he establishment of schools appeared to us the best mode of getting access to the young, -- certainly not the most hopeless part of the community...and the probability of thus raising up native agents ... Establishments, in which native females should be taught, presented themselves to Mrs Wilson as the most important desiderata connected with her prospects of direct usefulness; and she resolved accordingly, to give the institutions and conducting of them a large share of her energies and time.<sup>17</sup>

Crucially, the latitudinarian attitudes to outreach within the Bombay mission, which seemed to contrast with the missionary ideas of their colleagues in Calcutta in the 1830s, were showcased in this memoir of a Scottish woman missionary.

The memoir's mixture of correspondence, biography and previously published material provided John Wilson with a vehicle to suggest that refusing to privilege high-caste education and conversion led to greater openness and experimentation in all aspects of mission work and outreach, not just to women:

[i]n forming plans for our operations in Bombay, we resolved to be guided by two principles -- that of announcing the Gospel by preaching, discussion, writing, and education, to all classes of the native community, -- high and low, rich and poor, young and old, Hindus, Musalmans, Parsis, Jews, and others, as far as we might have the power of making our exertions efficiently to bear upon them, -- and that of ministering among them, both statedly and occasionally, publicly and privately, within doors and under the canopy of heaven.<sup>18</sup>

The Bombay missionaries were, through the ideas of John Wilson, associated with an experimental approach to mission work that made them apparently more amenable to

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<sup>17</sup> John Wilson, *Memoir of Mrs Margaret Wilson* (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1838) pp. 194-5.

<sup>18</sup> Wilson, *Memoir*, p. 193.

female education and uplift than their Calcutta counterparts. This is an early indication of how the practical attitudes of men to missionary work inflected the opportunities afforded women of establishing outreach to Indian women.

The publication of the memoir of Margaret Wilson in 1839 was also central to giving greater visibility to Scottish women's mission work in India to missionary supporters at home. Above all, the memoir was a testimony to the practical viability of female education in India: Annie Swan argued in her history of the early SLA that '[t]hose interested in all Christian work in those days...followed with sympathetic interest all they were permitted to know about the work of Mrs Wilson in Bombay.'<sup>19</sup> The memoir was not simply an extended obituary to his late wife: the representation of women's mission work in print would always be crucial to John Wilson who petitioned for and became the first editor of the *Eastern Females' Friend*, the small magazine publication that reported on women's mission work in India for the Free Church Ladies' Society after the Disruption. John Wilson also established the *Oriental Christian Spectator* in Bombay and saw women's writing about missionary work as valuable to the representation of the Church of Scotland's mission in print. Margaret Wilson wrote that 'I have written a review of Mrs Judson, not from the desire of authorship, but because *commanded* and *entreated* by my husband, whose authority I always acknowledge.'<sup>20</sup>

The memoir provided evidence to missionary supporters at home of the viability of female education in Bombay. Margaret Wilson was far from elegiac about the female schools she established in Bombay and complained about the 'total apathy of the natives on the subject of female education, and in the general belief among them, that, however proper an accompaniment for 'dancing girls,' it was neither desirous, not even decorous, for any persons who were expected to maintain the least respectability of character.'<sup>21</sup> Yet, the establishment and continuation of the schools she supervised provided a powerful testimony to the 'rightfulness' of female education, much as accounts of female education in missionary magazines provided a record of providence's hand. According to her husband, Margaret Wilson often

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<sup>19</sup> Swan, *Seed Time*, p. 33.

<sup>24</sup> Wilson, *Memoir*, p. 201.

<sup>21</sup> Wilson, *Memoir*, p. 195.

wrote ‘as a record of providential occurrences...She regarded the appointments of God as extending to every event which could befall her, and she was careful to mark in them the tokens of his infinite wisdom’.<sup>22</sup> Her survival through childbirth and the survival of her schools were part of a providential narrative that justified her outreach to Indian women.

The memoir also suggested the heroic dimension of women’s missionary lives by using the rhetoric of providence: both Margaret Wilson and an American missionary woman commented on their belief that they were destined to die in India: ‘I would not give up the thought of going to India, though I were assured that I was only going to let my ashes repose under its soil’.<sup>23</sup> The memoir modelled a representation of female missionary self-sacrifice and bravery: from recording the inevitable deaths of women in childbirth, to accounts of missionary women having to part from their children as they are sent back to Scotland, the publication was a timely corrective to some of the accounts that privileged the Scottish missionary masculinity explored in Chapter Four.<sup>24</sup>

The memoir largely presented the early uplift of Indian women and girls as a practical and providential endeavour. Yet it also provided a wider rationale: the memoir articulated the belief in the centrality of female uplift to the wider evangelisation of India, which was important in a context where much early Church of Scotland missionary rhetoric had excluded the uplift of Indian women altogether. John Wilson commented that ‘[t]he general state of native society, she [his wife, Margaret] clearly perceived, could never be improved while their [Indian females’] education was neglected...The stream of corruption she traced to its source...’.<sup>25</sup> It also connected the ‘domestic and social virtues’ to the role women had in ‘informing the minds and moulding the characters of their children, or in soothing, comforting, counselling, and humanizing their husbands.’<sup>26</sup> Utilising Protestant and evangelical notions of domestic ideology to argue the case that Indian women were central to the

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<sup>22</sup> Wilson, *Memoir*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>23</sup> Mrs Harvey, an American missionary wife believed ‘from the time she set foot on the shores of India, and even for a long time previously, that her life would be speedily terminated.’ Wilson, *Memoir*, p. 279; quote from Wilson, *Memoir*, pp. 96-7.

<sup>24</sup> For accounts of death in childbirth, see Wilson, *Memoir*, p. 245; Mrs Wilson wrote a letter to Mrs Stevenson as the latter had to send her children away to Europe, see Wilson, *Memoir*, p. 169.

<sup>25</sup> Wilson, *Memoir*, p. 198.

<sup>26</sup> Wilson, *Memoir*, p. 198.

immediate evangelisation of India was a set-piece in missionary writing on India and something of a trope that did not necessarily translate into a commitment to women's missions, as I argued in Chapter Two. However, in the context of establishing a national women's foreign mission from within the Church of Scotland, Margaret Wilson's argument about missions to Indian females being foundational to the whole project of evangelising India was important, particularly in the context of these ideas having been omitted in early Scottish missionary discourses of work in India.

After the establishment of the SLA in 1837 and the publication of the memoir of Mrs Wilson, the role that the uplift of Indian women and girls played in the Church of Scotland's missionary strategy was openly debated for the first time. In 1839 Alexander Duff addressed the first annual general meeting of the SLA in Edinburgh and implicitly contested the argument about the centrality of female conversion in India. From the published text, a long preamble focused on the status of the Indian female in the 'shastras', and examples of social practice from bigamy among the Kulin Brahmin to female infanticide among the Rajputs before he argued that 'the improvement of the female mind would react on every member of the domestic circle...It must be admitted that it would greatly accelerate the liberation of the native mind at large...The only question that can ever be entertained regards not the advantageousness and desirableness of the object, but the practicability of accomplishing it.'<sup>27</sup>

Duff acknowledged that Calcutta missionaries, both male and female, had already experimented with female education and then commended the work of the late Mrs Wilson and the current Mrs Stevenson in Bombay: '[w]ith what rare talent and devoted energy the late Mrs Wilson of Bombay, stepped in to second the efforts, and carry out into larger development the designs of her predecessors and pioneers...is, from her recently published memoirs too well known to all of you, to require any statement at my hands.'<sup>28</sup> But his message was unambiguous:

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<sup>27</sup> For the preamble on the status of females in India, see Alexander Duff, *Female Education in India, being the Substance of An Address Delivered at the First Annual Meeting of the Scottish Ladies' Association, in Connection with the Church of Scotland, for the Promotion of Female Education in India*. (Edinburgh, John Johnstone, 1839), pp. 9-16; quote pp. 18-19.

<sup>28</sup> For an account of educational experiments, see Duff, *Female Education in India*, pp. 20-28; quote from p. 28.

[i]t is a perfect chimera to expect anything like a *general* system of female education, until there first be a general scheme of enlightened education for the males. The extensive enlightenment of the latter, and that alone, can secure the extensive enlightenment of the former. The one must be antecedent, and the other the consequent.<sup>29</sup>

Hinduism's 'tyranny of superstition, and the prescriptive usages of semi-barbarism' gave 'absolute supremacy...to the male over the female, by statutes acknowledged on part of both to be of divine authority.'<sup>30</sup> Although Duff acknowledged the argument about female domestic power over the minds and characters of both husbands and children, his argument to the supporters of the SLA presented them with little evidence for imagining that the education of Indian females was foundational to his vision of the dismantling of Hinduism. He argued that instead of 'female education being offered to a few forsaken orphans, or retained...to scores or even hundreds of the lower classes', the mission should 'devote the whole exclusively to the organization of a more effective system of Christian instruction for the juvenile race of males; -- in the full assurance that by this indirect process...more had been effected towards the establishment of an extensive and satisfactory scheme of female education.'<sup>31</sup>

The rhetoric of John Wilson and his wife from the Bombay network vied with the rhetoric of Duff, which indicates that Scottish women's missionary work in India was not underpinned by consensus or shared ideologies. Instead, these contrasting perspectives suggests that outreach to Indian women and girls was merely a local endeavour, supported only in Bombay, and transformed into a national society in Scotland through the opportunism of Captain Jameson, a missionary enthusiast. But as I argued in Chapter Five, much of this early rhetoric of Scottish missionary work did not necessarily reflect the social reality of the broader missionary experience in India. Certain texts become over interpreted and read as if embodying the complex aspirations or attitudes of whole networks of missionaries, and Duff's writing is particularly prone to this treatment.

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<sup>29</sup> Duff, *Female Education in India*, p. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Duff, *Female Education in India* p.40.

<sup>31</sup> Duff, *Female Education in India*, p.36; p.37.

Duff's address to the SLA, both the fact of his having addressed the SLA for its symbolic first annual meeting and the content itself, exemplifies the problems of interpreting the rhetoric about Indian females in missionary texts. The speech undeniably privileges the education of high-caste Indian women as the ultimate goal for female missions and builds around them and their husbands a totalising theory of Hinduism. In his study of how early British Protestant missionaries constructed theories of Hinduism, Geoffrey Oddie argues that Alexander Duff was particularly important in consolidating a monolithic view of Hinduism that had been evolving from Jesuit accounts through to the work of orientalist in Bengal, based on 'an all-embracing brahminical system'.<sup>32</sup>

Oddie argues that Duff's unremittingly defamatory interpretation of Hinduism remained unmodified throughout his career and that its monolithic nature was 'held together vertically by the caste system, oppression and fear.'<sup>33</sup> Oddie argues that this Hinduised version of all India inflected women's missionary work and that Duff was among 'the most effective male advocates of the Hindu woman's protection and 'emancipation.'<sup>34</sup> Oddie's study, based largely on printed missionary sources including magazines, sees Hinduism as the dominant discourse of the early and mid nineteenth-century missionary interpretation of India and looks for examples of women's mission work in India that underscore that reading.<sup>35</sup> As I have argued throughout this thesis, it is problematic and reductive to assume that missionaries simply internalised a theory of women's outreach in India based on an uncontested oeuvre of texts and articles which constructed a particular version of Hinduism and which consequently privileged access to the high-caste Hindu woman in the zenana as the only desirable work for women missionaries.

A more nuanced picture emerges in the 1840s, indicating which factors were important in establishing India as a mission field for Scottish women. Missionary networks seem to count for more, in terms of establishing women's outreach to

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<sup>32</sup> Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant Missionary Constructions of Hinduism, 1793-1900* (New Delhi and London: Sage, 2006). For an account of Duff's writing within a tradition of missionary ideas about Hinduism, see Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism*, pp. 184-202; quote from p. 184.

<sup>33</sup> On Duff's interpretation of Hinduism, see Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism*, p. 184; quote from p. 194.

<sup>34</sup> Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism*, p. 321.

<sup>35</sup> Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism*, pp. 320-340.

Indian women and girls, than missionary rhetoric, even if delivered by iconic figures like Duff. The practical response to Duff's speech suggests that his view of the importance of high-caste Hindu women over all other potential groups in India was not the *dominant* discourse. In reality, the SLA had sent two women missionaries to Calcutta by 1840 in order to superintend female *schools*. The establishment of a Calcutta women's missionary network was reported in the annual reports of the society leading up to the Disruption; it was also supported by the views and theories on female education espoused by a variety of missionaries in the pre-existing Calcutta networks of Scots.

Duff's speech was never actually reported in the SLA's annual reports: instead, a variety of Bengal and Calcutta-based sources, both male and female, were used to validate establishing a mission to Indian females in Calcutta among a variety of groups. The first annual report of the SLA drew on sources derived from the SPFEE's networks of informants with experience of Bengal. The SPFEE were lauded as an authority on women's work in India being 'the only other [society] having the same specific object with our own, is some years in advance of us in point of age.'<sup>36</sup> The exhaustive use of extracts from the SPFEE's printed papers featured the views of a private gentlemen, 'holding a high civil appointment in Bengal', who argued that it was orphan outreach that held the key to the evangelisation of India:

[o]f all the institutions ever yet established, Mrs Wilson's (of Calcutta) orphan asylum seems to me, humanly speaking, the best calculated to effect the grand object of introducing the scriptures throughout India. The poor orphans are educated as Christians, and already have applications been made by rich Hindoos for governesses for their daughters. This itself is a very great point gained. Christian Hindoos have married from Mrs Wilson's school, and they evidently begin to see the comfort of having a sensible educated wife at the head of their domestic establishment.<sup>37</sup>

Although he cited orphan outreach as a means of accessing high-caste girls in Calcutta, it was not the sole purpose of educating Indian girls and the rhetorical force

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<sup>36</sup> SLA, *First Report of the Scottish Ladies' Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India, under the Superintendence of Missionaries of the Church of Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Alexander Colson, 1839), p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> SLA, *First Report of the Scottish Ladies' Association*, p. 11.



of the extract was in its empirical testimony to the success of female outreach in Bengal.

Other sources in the report also bore witness to the success of schooling girls in the region, but the most extensive source printed in the report was from a letter by the Reverend John Macdonald, a Church of Scotland missionary who had arrived in Calcutta in 1838.<sup>38</sup> Macdonald wrote something of a rejoinder to Duff. His letter to the SLA argued that educating whoever, irrespective of racial or caste status, might be available in Calcutta among girls and females was ‘the grand object of Christian effort, and if it be practicable in any degree, and with *any* class of children, or with any small average number...then surely a blessed work is practicable.’<sup>39</sup> Macdonald argues vociferously against identifying one group for female uplift in Calcutta and directing limited resources to their education as ‘it is not right to make this an exclusive system’.<sup>40</sup> At the end of the extract Macdonald argues that Hindu girls were not necessarily central to the successful evangelisation of India and that there was another important group being overlooked:

I have gone on the supposition that attention only is directed to Hindu children, but should it be so? Why should we overlook the multitudes of Portuguese children here, who are as much natives as the others, and who are as ignorant and as unchristian as the former? I believe that much of the hopes of India depend on the conversion of these poor children; and if they are to be educated, as they ought to be, then may you have female education to any amount.<sup>41</sup>

In the next annual report of 1840 Mrs Macdonald’s school in Calcutta, consisting of twenty Portuguese girls, six orphans and only one Hindu was reported as thriving in her letter.<sup>42</sup>

In the same report the Reverend Macdonald’s views on female outreach were reiterated in his role as an informant ‘who has been for several years in Calcutta, and has much knowledge of the state of society’:

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<sup>38</sup> SLA, *First Report of the Scottish Ladies’ Association*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>39</sup> SLA, *First Report of the Scottish Ladies’ Association*, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> SLA, *First Report of the Scottish Ladies’ Association*, p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> SLA, *First Report of the Scottish Ladies’ Association*, p. 15

<sup>42</sup> SLA, *Second Annual Report of the Scottish Ladies’ Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India, under the Superintendence of Missionaries of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Alexander Colston, 1840), p. 3.

[o]f the argument deduced by some, that because higher castes cannot at present be reached, that therefore the lower classes, having less influence in society, need not be cared for, Mr MacDonald proceeds to answer this argument by this simple statement, 'Educate the children whom God now sends you...by what law of nature or of grace, shall ten low caste children be rejected because one high caste child cannot be obtained.' These sentiments must approve themselves to the minds of all. But independently of the Hindu children, the Committee are anxious, along with the missionaries, that the multitudes of Portuguese children in Calcutta, to whom there is already access, should not be overlooked.<sup>43</sup>

In 1841, the annual report stated that the committee's 'eyes are fixed on Calcutta with longing desires...they feel that the call for their sympathy is all the stronger and more imperative.'<sup>44</sup>

The reception of Duff's speech, and its exclusion from the early reports of the SLA in favour of the Reverend Macdonald's ideas about female outreach in Calcutta, questions the value of privileging missionary texts as a means of interpreting how women's missionary work in India was established and practised. Instead, the early experience of the SLA suggests that complex missionary networks, both at home and in India, were central to how Scottish women and men imagined and conducted missionary work. There was no simple correlation between an iconic speech by the Church of Scotland's most celebrated missionary and the work that the SLA chose to engage with in its immediate aftermath, however authoritative Duff's words appeared to be. Duff's speech, with its potential to be read as either endorsing a narrative of patriarchal constraint on the aspirations for female education in India, or as an injunction to focus only on high-caste women of the Hindu household, cannot be read as an articulation of collective aspiration for missionary work in either the Indian or Scottish contexts.

Sending Scottish women out as missionaries to Calcutta in the aftermath of Duff's speech suggests the importance of local missionary networks to the establishment of Scottish women's work in India. What initially appeared to be a women's foreign mission organisation in Scotland supported only by the Bombay

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<sup>43</sup> SLA, *Second Annual Report*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>44</sup> SLA, *Third Annual Report of the Scottish Ladies' Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India, under the Superintendence of Missionaries of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Balfour and Jack, 1841), 1841 p. 3.

network of missionaries was simply not just that. Many of the key players in missionary networks for the Church of Scotland both before and after the Disruption were not as voluble or visible as the Wilsons of Bombay or Duff of Calcutta. Yet their work and endorsement of female education became evident, particularly at times of crisis. The Reverend MacDonald was never a high-profile figure in the Calcutta network of Church of Scotland missionaries, but his support for female education in India was utilised and foregrounded at a critical juncture in the early years of the SLA.

Similarly Mr and Mrs Ewart were relatively low profile but significant fixtures in promoting female education among the Jewish and Armenian populations in Calcutta. David Ewart was appointed as the third master of Duff's Institution in Calcutta in 1834 and he and his wife petitioned continuously for her female school for Armenian and Jewish girls.<sup>45</sup> Even though in 1853 Mrs Ewart suffered 'the opposition of the Jews and the withdrawal of all the Jewish girls who had attended the school', her school became a well-known institution that was continuously sponsored by the Free Church Ladies' Society in Scotland from 1846 onwards. Other missionary networks were crucial to the SLA and later to the post-Disruption Church of Scotland's women's mission.<sup>46</sup> The SPFEE had stronger links with the women's committee than is evident from early documents. The fact that the SLA's early annual reports used the London society's materials is made more significant by the role that the SPFEE and Mrs Weitbrecht played in supporting their depleted networks in Britain and India after the Disruption. This network, and its effect on the work that the SLA managed to achieve after 1843 will be considered later in the chapter. Yet what is significant about the networks of this period is how little we know of their composition, and how the attitudes to female education in India of different missionaries within the Scottish networks can be skewed by the presence and publications of some of the iconic actors like Duff.

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<sup>45</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/1, Minute Book of the Church of Scotland India Missions, 3 April 1834.

<sup>46</sup> National Library of Scotland (NLS), Foreign Mission Records of the Church of Scotland MSS. 7530-8072: Minute Book Series Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Female Society of Scotland for Promoting Christian Education among the Females of India (Free Church Ladies' Society), 19 December 1853.

The SLA was not, therefore, founded simply through the endeavours or petitioning of one missionary network in Bombay. It is evident, that in spite of the rhetoric of Alexander Duff, there was general support for women's missions emanating from India, including members of the Church of Scotland's missionary network in Calcutta. What emerges from the formation of the SLA and the establishment of Scottish women's work in Calcutta is the importance of local missionary networks in India and the support of male missionaries within those networks. This is not a narrative of women's work in India struggling to get established against the patriarchal objections of men like Duff; the reality was that Scottish women's outreach to Indian women and girls was seen as an integral part of the Scottish missionary strategy in India, and this became clearly evident in the aftermath of the Disruption at home.

#### **After the Disruption: Scottish Women's missionary work in India until 1855**

The most compelling argument for the support of outreach to Indian women by Scottish Presbyterian missionaries derives from their economic support and institution building endeavours at a time of crisis. After the crisis of the Disruption, Scottish women's missionary work in India was highly incorporated into much of the missionary work of men, leading to an integrated and familial strategy of outreach to Indian women and girls, rather than an isolated or separate endeavour. As Scottish missionary networks in India divided to reflect the schism of the Church of Scotland at home, the two new Scottish Presbyterian foreign missions of the original Church of Scotland and the new Free Church of Scotland reiterated their commitment to women's work. The various Scottish missionary networks across the three presidencies in India facilitated the work of women, largely through the building of schools and orphanages, suggesting again that the missionary networks in India itself were critical for establishing outreach. Scottish women's missionary work in India was established within the reality of denominational politics: but the Disruption illustrated how women's work was securely supported, irrespective of the rhetoric of high-caste outreach prosecuted by Alexander Duff.

The conflict between the moderates and evangelicals within the Church of Scotland that led to its spectacular split in 1843 was partly precipitated by controversy over evangelical claims to spiritual independence from the state and legal issues over patronage and the appointment of livings.<sup>47</sup> Callum Brown describes the evangelicals walking out of the General Assembly in May 1843 as ‘the most spectacular ecclesiastical event in modern Scotland. It created a large and influential denomination almost literally overnight... The event was to become symbolic of a great sacrifice of money and security...’<sup>48</sup> The Free Church took with it Scotland’s economically powerful urban class: ‘a new and upwardly mobile generation of businessmen, agents and bank staff’ who helped to raise £418, 719 by 1844.<sup>49</sup> The Free Church was also socially diverse, with wide geographical penetration across Scotland, enabling it to claim to be the national church.<sup>50</sup> Most missionaries transferred to the Free Church of Scotland in India and there is evidence that the Disruption caused an initial surge in economic support for Free Church foreign missions.<sup>51</sup> The Church of Scotland’s SLA split along denominational lines and followed the pattern of evangelical support for the Free Church: the Female Society of the Free Church of Scotland for Promoting Christian Education among the Females of India took the bulk of home support and nearly all the women missionaries in India, leaving the rump of the SLA with significant issues of human resourcing.<sup>52</sup>

The reality of the Disruption for the Scottish missionaries in India related more to the financing of buildings than to theological conflict. Although all bar one missionary joined the Free Church, the need to finance new buildings, because the existing buildings were no longer in legal ownership, took up much energy and fundraising. In March 1847, it was noted that ‘energetic measures were adopted for

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<sup>47</sup> Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 21-22.

<sup>48</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland*, p. 25.

<sup>49</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland*, p. 26.

<sup>50</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland*, p. 27.

<sup>51</sup> For an account of the effect of the Disruption on the Scottish missionary movement, see Esther Breitenbach, *Empire and Scottish Society: The Impact of Foreign Missions at Home, c.1790 to c.1914*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), p. 57.

<sup>52</sup> I will continue to refer to the post-Disruption Church of Scotland’s Scottish Ladies’ Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India as the SLA. The new Free Church women’s missionary society will be called the Free Church Ladies’ Society.

the erection of a new church, subscriptions to the amount of £3000 or £4000 being obtained for this end – that a Sustentation Fund, for the support of a stated ministry, was commenced with a gratifying success’.<sup>53</sup> Alexander Duff, however, wrote to the Convenor of the new Free Church of Scotland’s Foreign Missions Board that his Calcutta Institution had reopened and that denominational differences were sublimated in the realities of missionary work and providing a united front in India:

[w]hatever may be our mutual differences, as members of different and violently severed branches of the Church of Christ, our object, in the sight of the Heathen, has ever been to maintain peace and harmony... What do they know or care about the real merits of the question which rent Scotland’s national church asunder? Nothing... our great object has ever been, not to obtrude our differences on the heathen, but rather, as far as possible, to shroud them from their view.<sup>54</sup>

Immediately after the Disruption, both Scottish Presbyterian missions supported the continuation of Scottish women’s missionary work in India and supported the maintenance of separate denominational foreign mission organisations at home. The depleted sub-committee of the SLA wrote to Dr Wilson of Bombay in 1843 to assure him that they had resolved ‘to prosecute the work of Female Education in India as God might enable them.’<sup>55</sup>

More critically, Scottish women’s mission work in India was convincingly resourced during this economically turbulent period rather than treated as a competitive distraction from the business of re-establishing two Scottish foreign missions run by men. Underpinning the resourcing of Scottish missions to women in India was the willingness of the Church of Scotland and the Free Church foreign missions to invest in, for example, expensive orphan institutions in Calcutta immediately after the events of 1843. The business of institution building for the purposes of female education in India, particularly in the costly business of schools, characterises the period up until the uprisings of 1857 in India. Both the Free Church and Church of Scotland’s women’s missions established institutions for a variety of groups and purposes. The orphanages in Calcutta were simply examples

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<sup>53</sup> *The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Free Church of Scotland*, March 1847, p. 47.

<sup>54</sup> *The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Free Church of Scotland*, May 1846, p. 354.

<sup>55</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA, June 20, 1843.

of a venture that challenges the assumption that the Scottish Presbyterian missions of this period were competitive and undermining of female education in India.

The female orphanage in Calcutta had received the backing of Duff by 1843 before the Disruption and an acre of ground had been reserved, for free, for the building of an institution for Miss Laing and her charges.<sup>56</sup> Duff's decision to advocate for the orphanage just before the Disruption and pursue its establishment as part of the Free Church Ladies' Society after the Disruption, underscores how problematic reading his public rhetoric of female outreach in India against his behaviour continued to be. Duff's stated position on women's missions to females in India was always labile: from a letter reprinted in the *Home and Foreign Mission Record for the Free Church of Scotland* in 1846 which reiterated the problems of educating Hindu women to an assertion at the seventh annual general meeting of the Free Church Ladies' Society in 1850 that 'the present state of degradation and wretchedness of the females of India forms an insuperable obstacle to the progress of the general evangelization of its people,' his public rhetoric of this period could be distinctly at odds with his practice.<sup>57</sup> Duff's personal support for establishing and maintaining an orphanage for Indian girls was evident in his protracted negotiation with the SLA after the Disruption for the site that remained in their hands. And when it became clear that the SLA would not renounce the site for the orphanage, even though they had lost their key missionary woman, Miss Laing, to the Free Church, Duff ensured that that the new Free Church orphan institution venture was supported.

In March 1844 the Free Church Ladies' Society in Edinburgh read a letter from Duff supporting an increase in salary for Miss Laing, as well as supporting her forming a school for Bengali and Portuguese children, and continuing to support her orphan project.<sup>58</sup> By 1845, Miss Laing's orphan institution had expanded enough to need a temporary assistant, arranged by Duff in Calcutta, as well as more

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<sup>56</sup> SLA, *Fifth Annual Report of the Scottish Ladies' Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India, under the Superintendence of Missionaries of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Balfour and Jack, 1843), p. 8.

<sup>57</sup> For Duff's opinions, see *The Home and Foreign Missionary Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, May 1846, pp. 355-6; quote from NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 27 May 1850.

<sup>58</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 14 March 1844.



accommodation and new buildings.<sup>59</sup> In 1847 Duff published a narrative of Charlotte Green, one of the girls in the orphan institution in Calcutta, which had sold out by December 1847. By 1849, the expansion of female missions in India on the part of the Free Church's women's mission had caused significant funding problems; yet the orphan institute in Calcutta and other schools within the Calcutta vicinity took £560 of the £890 available budget.<sup>60</sup> The rush to establish and expand an orphanage in Calcutta was replicated by the SLA. On 20<sup>th</sup> May 1846, the meeting of the SLA's committee in Edinburgh reported that over £2000 had been raised for the orphan 'refuge' as it was termed in Calcutta.<sup>61</sup> By June 1848 it was clear that the numbers and groups involved in the SLA's orphanage had expanded beyond Hindu and Muslim girls to encompass girls of 'East Indian, Portuguese and Jewish parents.'<sup>62</sup> The establishment of these flagship orphanages, both of which included mixed-race, Jewish, and Portuguese girls, was partly a response to the emerging growth of Catholic girls' schools in Calcutta in the 1840s which were popular with mixed-race communities. In a letter of 1842, Miss Savile, who remained with the SLA after the Disruption and who superintended the orphanage, reported,

a few weeks ago I began to go round amongst the Indo-Portuguese, ...and I have succeeded in obtaining twelve day scholars. I would fain hope that in another week the number will be doubled, as they are all desirous of learning English...I am told that the Roman Catholic Priests are very busy of late, doing all they can amongst them; however this is only a reason for our being more active in the cause.<sup>63</sup>

Duff also wrote about the revival of Catholic missions in India in a letter reprinted in the *Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Free Church of Scotland*.<sup>64</sup> He argued that since his arrival in Calcutta 'the emancipation and reform bills at home had given an impulse to the adherents of Popery, [and] the influence began to extend to the remotest corners of the British Empire.'<sup>65</sup> He continued,

<sup>59</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 4 November 1845.

<sup>60</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 7 June 1849. Calcutta received £560; Madras £150; Bombay £150 and Puna £50.

<sup>61</sup> NLS, MSS Dep 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 20 May 1846.

<sup>62</sup> NLS, MSS Dep 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 5 June 1848.

<sup>63</sup> SLA, *Fifth Annual Report*, p. 8.

<sup>64</sup> *The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Free Church of Scotland*, January 1847, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> *The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Free Church of Scotland*, January 1847, p. 2.



[c]hildren were soon withdrawn from Protestant schools and constrained to attend newly-erected Popish ones. New churches were built, and the old ones began to be better attended. Then following the College of St Xavier, and its Jesuit professors from Rome, and the Convent of Loretto, with a large importation of nuns from Ireland.<sup>66</sup>

As I argued in Chapter Four, the threat of Catholic girls' schools aimed at mixed-race communities made a necessity out of establishing Protestant alternatives. The situation in Calcutta replicated that of Landour, in that Catholic institutions for girls were being successfully established and required a robust and visible Protestant rejoinder. I am not arguing that the Scottish Presbyterian missions only supported women's missionary institutions in Calcutta so fulsomely because of the revival of the Catholic 'threat', but it was part of the social reality and context of the 1840s which made schools a privileged mode of outreach. Schooling, however, became a missionary strategy that was shared by both Scottish men and women and which was central to seeing the missionary strategy adopted in this period as integrated, rather than divided into separate spheres of work.

There was, particularly within the Free Church mission in India, a schools-based strategy which made outreach to the females of India integral to the work, and even to the careers, of Scottish missionary men. By the early 1850s, the Free Church's Foreign Missions Committee were concerned to offer clear, practical guidance to male missionaries in India about the work expected of them. The Reverend Murray Mitchell wrote from Bombay requesting another missionary and 'that if so his sphere and department be distinctly laid down by the committee.'<sup>67</sup> The report that came out of that meeting in 1850, which was prepared by Duff among others, argued that after the experience of twenty years, 'the Institutions – meaning by that term, the School and college department at each of the stations – should, *in every case*, be the object of primary regard to the Missionaries sent from this country...the Institutions, viewed in the light of means, are the right arms of our influence for good in

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<sup>66</sup> *The Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Free Church of Scotland*, January 1847, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> National Library of Scotland (NLS), Foreign Mission Records of the Church of Scotland MSS. 7530-8072: Minute Book Series Dep. 298/106, Minute Book of the Acting Committee Foreign Mission of Free Church (Free Church Foreign Mission), 19 November 1850.

India..’<sup>68</sup> The report recognised the centrality of building an Indian Christian ministry in India, as well as allowing the management of educational institutions to be under a local council of ordained European missionaries. Most crucially, the report stated quite unequivocally that schooling through institutions was central to the Free Church mission in India in the mid-nineteenth century.

The centrality of schooling through institutions had also been asserted by the Free Church Ladies’ Society in Edinburgh in 1843. Although no policy statement was issued by them, after reading a letter by the Reverend Anderson in Madras in which he asserted that ‘it was but little, which could be done there to communicate religious instruction to Native females of Caste,’ the committee decided that on the basis of letters from the Reverend Anderson and the Reverend J. Mitchell of Bombay ‘and especially from the opinion of the Reverend Dr Wilson, expressed some years ago’,

[i]t appeared that all the missionaries of the church were immediately connected with the work of Female Education, concurred with private friends in India, in recommending that generally speaking this society select as their agents in future married missionaries, who would receive the assistance of their wives in superintending the schools.<sup>69</sup>

Whether this can be read as a dismissal of zenana work as a preferred means of outreach to the females of India is uncertain. However, the aspiration to integrate the schooling of girls into the work and physical spaces occupied by Scottish missionary families of the Free Church became something of an experiment that was implemented by some Scottish male missionaries in the 1840s and 1850s. Integrating female education in India into the family project was partly motivated by concerns about the ‘impropriety and inexpediency of placing the Females Schools under the control of a more secular and financial body like the Corresponding Board.’<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> ‘Report to the Committee of the Free Church of Scotland on Foreign Missions, by their Sub-Committee appointed to consider the state of the Missions, at the different stations in India’, p. 2: NLS, MSS Dep. 298/106, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 13 February 1851.

<sup>69</sup> For the quote from the Reverend Anderson’s letter, see NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies’ Society, 10 November 1843; for the quotes by the committee, see NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies’ Society, 10 November 1843.

<sup>70</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies’ Society, 8 January 1844.

The Free Church Ladies' Society affirmed their family policy through a number of instructions to Free Church missionaries in India. The committee wrote to Mrs Mitchell that '[i]t being considered desirable that the mission families should be encouraged to take as many orphans under their care, as they can superintend', and Mr MacDonald of Calcutta was told that the right to superintend schools supported by Free Church ladies was vested only in foreign missionaries and that they were 'desirous of aiding the different mission families in India in their attempts to advance the cause of female education.'<sup>71</sup> Mrs Murray Mitchell of Bombay was awarded Rs50 per month for housing orphans in her own home and by 1846, her husband proposed to the committee that 'the missionaries who are disposed to attend to female education to have each a school in his compound.'<sup>72</sup> By 1849, the Reverends Nisbet and Murray Mitchell had established girls' schools within the mission compound.<sup>73</sup> Female education in India became a family enterprise for missionaries in India after the Disruption because the Free Church of Scotland retained some powerful husband and wife partnerships, which was not straightforwardly the case for the Church of Scotland's mission.

The Reverend Anderson, a Free Church missionary in Madras, married Miss Locker who left the Church of Scotland mission. The new Mrs Anderson was involved in a public controversy related to female converts at her school but remained a pivotal figure in the development of central and district schools in the new field of Madras. The Reverend Murray Mitchell and his wife were also key figures in the Scottish mission at Bombay and Puna, and even Duff's wife and daughter became increasingly visible in reporting on the work of female education in Calcutta. In 1847, the Reverend John Anderson of Madras wrote of his male colleague in the *Home and Foreign Missionary Record of the Free Church of Scotland* that

[m]y colleague, Mr Braidwood, has, from the very first, devoted an hour and a-half every forenoon, sometimes the whole forenoon to the interesting department of our work. I mention this here, because, though some mistakes

<sup>71</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 8 January 1844.

<sup>72</sup> For Mrs Murray Mitchell's award, see NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 8 October, 1844; quote from 23 November, 1846.

<sup>73</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 16 November 1849, 7 February 1848.

both in the *Eastern Females Friend*, and the Greenock Ladies' Report, Mrs Braidwood is said to take that part of the work which her husband actually takes.<sup>74</sup>

At one level, this family model of missionary work within the Free Church missions to India tended to underplay the uniqueness, and separateness, of women's work. Mr Braidwood made his supervisory role in the girls' schools of Madras a visible part of his daily routine; Mrs Braidwood wrote in 1851 to the women's committee in Edinburgh 'referring to the beneficial effects which were being produced by the method then adopted of having both sexes in connection with the same institution.'<sup>75</sup> Mr Murray Mitchell of Bombay wrote in 1848 'intimating his intention to devote part of his time to the regular visitation of the district female schools at that station and his willingness to undertake...part of the expenses which this would involve.'<sup>76</sup>

The Reverend Anderson's earlier injunction to avoid 'Native Females of Caste' suggested that more exclusive work that could only be undertaken by missionary women had been deprivileged. When Miss Laing, one of the few single female Free Church missionaries in India, needed to return to Scotland for health reasons, the Free Church Ladies' Society were adamant that she should be replaced by a couple who would superintend the Calcutta orphanage. The Reverend Fordyce asked in 1853 how integrated his wife's work would be in the female orphan institution and whether 'the wife of the agent would be regarded as a paid and responsible servant of the society and be held bound to discharge public duties in connection with the Institution besides her own domestic arrangements.'<sup>77</sup> The Free Church's Calcutta orphanage had recently been a female-run institution with Miss Laing in charge. Hiring Fordyce as the representative of the Free Church's women's mission to India and superintendent of the female institution, suggests that a 'separate spheres' notion of women's missionary work in India was not entrenched. The Free Church Ladies' Society in Edinburgh replied that his wife would not be paid as a separate agent of the society but

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<sup>74</sup> *Home and Foreign Missionary Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, 1847, p. 25

<sup>75</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 12 December 1851.

<sup>76</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 8 November 1848.

<sup>77</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 12 March 1853.

as to the kind of service that would be required of the agent's partner-in-life, that her time should be devoted to the general superintendence of the internal arrangements of the mission feeling assured that one imbued with a lively missionary spirit and with a zeal for the cause of Christ would seek the best interests of the Institution and endeavour by every means to promote the cause the society has at heart.<sup>78</sup>

The division between domestic and institutional roles was left ambiguous for Mrs Fordyce and her work within this highly symbolic institution for the Free Church mission was not imagined as unique to her.

After the Disruption and up to the mid 1850s, the Church of Scotland's followed a similar pattern of supporting and expanding resources for female education in India. Outside its orphanage in Calcutta, it established a variety of institutions, including the 'St Andrew's Girls' School' in Madras, district schools in Bombay and Calcutta, a 'Hindoo female boarding school' and an orphanage in Bombay. Initially, the SLA were left with Miss Savile in Calcutta after the Disruption and a serious problem in terms of recruitment. Attempts were made to establish a husband-and-wife culture of missionary work towards Indian females, with the Reverend and Mrs Yule sent to Calcutta to superintend the SLA's work there in 1850, and the Reverend Mr Stevenson of Bombay and his wife were encouraged to communicate their 'suggestions relative to the manner for carrying on work of the Association at that Presidency.'<sup>79</sup>

However, without substantial familial networks where male missionaries were supportive of women's work, and with the resulting reliance on single women missionaries, there was less integration of Scottish men into women's educational work in India, even though school-based outreach was central to the Church of Scotland's women's mission at the time. In 1846 a Mr Grant who superintended a school of 150 Hindoo girls in Bombay was advised to ensure there was no mixing of the sexes in the school, as 'at Calcutta a strong feeling exists in favour of an entire separation of the girls from the boys.'<sup>80</sup> In the same meeting the secretary was advised to write to Dr Charles, the Church of Scotland's missionary in Calcutta, 'to

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<sup>78</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 12 March 1853.

<sup>79</sup> For the appointment of the Yules, see NLS, MSS Dep. 298/30, Minute Book SLA, 4 October 1850; quote from 16 November 1847.

<sup>80</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 14 October 1846.

obtain [his] opinion and advice on the subject of the Association sending out a male agent to superintend the operation of the Association in the Calcutta Presidency.<sup>81</sup> In 1847, the SLA appointed a Mr Walker to superintend the female schools at Madras on the proviso that 'it being understood that he devote his whole time and attention to the interests of that section of the Church of Scotland Mission at Madras which is under the support and care of this association.'<sup>82</sup>

The SLA had to rely on their connections with the SPFEE to expand some of their work in India after the Disruption. Crucially, this inflected some of the work that they felt compelled to support. Mary Weitbrecht of the SPFEE was highly influential in the post-Disruption period: she offered to vet potential agents; attended a meeting in Edinburgh in 1844; and advised them to avoid the site in Calcutta that had been designated for the much contested orphan asylum.<sup>83</sup> In 1846, the SPFEE appealed directly to the SLA to support the school of Miss Aldersey, who had long term connections with London-based committee. They had little choice but to divert funds to this venture in Ningbo, China, given, as they framed it, 'the Association [SLA] had been laid under the deepest obligation.'<sup>84</sup> Support for the SPFEE's school in China continued into the 1850s, in spite of there being no mandate for the SLA to fund mission work outside India. The SPFEE used their networks, including their connections with European missionary societies, to train and send women to India on behalf of the SLA. Miss Locker from Zurich was recommended by the SPFEE and after a short career in Madras and Calcutta on behalf of the SLA, she became engaged to a Free Church Missionary.<sup>85</sup>

After the Disruption, both the Free Church of Scotland women's mission and the SLA retained school-based strategies for the uplift of women and girls in India. Women working for the Free Church of Scotland in India were largely missionary wives and the integration of much 'women's work' into the daily work and careers of male missionaries reflects this. The Disruption obviously had a more deleterious effect on the Church of Scotland's mission in India and the women's mission relied

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<sup>81</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 14 October 1846.

<sup>82</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 6 February 1847.

<sup>83</sup> For Weitbrecht's offer to vet agents, see NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 31 January 1844; for her advice on the Calcutta site, see 17 April 1844.

<sup>84</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 19 January 1846.

<sup>85</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/29, Minute Book SLA, 30 June 1846.

more on single women missionaries, particularly through SPFEE networks. Even though this meant that the familial model of outreach to Indian women and girls was impractical, it did not alter the nature of the work they adopted. For both sets of women's missions in India, an institution building strategy persisted. Whether missionary women were wives with husbands who were involved in outreach to girls, or whether women were single, institutions catering to a variety of social and racial groups characterised mission work of this period. This suggests the importance accorded the work, given the high level of investment required to build and sustain institutions. It also underscores the argument that outreach to Indian girls and females was informed by a shared missionary strategy, and that 'separate' models of uplift like zenana work, were not being deployed.

### **The Free Church Missions in India and Separate Spheres? Scottish Women's Missionary work in India to 1870**

This final section focuses on the uplift strategies towards Indian women and girls pursued by the Free Church of Scotland's women's missions committee up until 1870. Although the Church of Scotland was rebuilding its female missions in India, its numbers were still relatively small. This period involved palpable changes in the missionary strategies adopted by the men of the Free Church and women's work was increasingly characterised as being zenana focused. The uprisings of 1857 inflected developments in the more conciliatory approaches of male missionaries towards 'Hinduism' and the development of strategies for building an Indian Christian church. However the uprisings are also attributed to a shift in missionary strategy for women, moving their work away from the marginal groups of females they taught in missionary institutions like schools and towards a focus on high-caste women in the zenana.

This story of changes to Scottish women's missionary work in India from the 1850s to the 1870s is shaped in part by its own publicity about zenana schemes. This, in turn, has been internalised by historians.<sup>86</sup> David Savage has argued most

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<sup>86</sup> Clare Midgley argues that women missionaries felt disenchanted with a schools' strategy. She claims that '[f]rom the mid-1850s, missionaries would attempt to address this problem by developing 'zenana' education within the homes of high-caste women. However, prior to this they



forcefully that an ideologically-driven ‘zenana strategy’ was prosecuted by women missionaries after the 1850s, which followed the failed project of ‘public schooling’: he argues that ‘a clear strategy for zenana education’ was articulated in the mid-nineteenth century to ‘fit the totalist aims and the downward filtration theory of social change’ and ‘[o]nce fully articulated, this ideology provided the rhetorical strategy for recruiting in the next decades hundreds of British and American into the zenana missions movement.’<sup>87</sup> The zenana mission enshrined the separate spheres ideology of mid-nineteenth-century Britain, and provided a suitable outlet for a more separatist sense of women’s missionary work in India.<sup>88</sup> Steven Maughan attributes the focus on zenana work in the second-half of the nineteenth century to the 1857 uprisings and ‘the evangelical assessment of both the causes of the Indian rebellion in 1857 and the nature of the Indian home...The argument in favor [sic] of zenana work was reinforced after 1857 because of meshed closely with evangelical assessments of the rebellion.’<sup>89</sup> The clear separation of male and female missionary work in India has some attractions as an argument: it enabled British women to argue more fiercely, perhaps, for their unique mission to Indian women as the work firmly excluded men; it coheres a project of uplift around a prominent gender ideology; and after 1857, it was clearly crucial to an understanding that all social ills emanated from the Indian home and the power of the high-caste Hindu wife and mother. As I argued in Chapter One, the zenana story is an oversimplification of women’s work in India, serving certain postcolonial narratives, but not necessarily reflecting the reality of mainstream missionary work. However, Free Church missionary women provide the best case study to examine its claims. Zenana work

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continued to focus on schools but these tended to attract girls from lower-caste, poor and minority groups. Even these girls attended erratically and often left early to marry. By 1846 the report of the Calcutta Branch of the Scottish Ladies’ Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India was describing the aims of day schools in rather despairing terms that did not even mention their evangelising purpose...’. See Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 112.

<sup>87</sup> David W. Savage, ‘Missionaries and the Development of a Colonial Ideology of Female Education in India’, in *Gender and History* 9 (1997), 212; quote from 213.

<sup>88</sup> Savage argues that ‘[b]y the 1840s missionaries were able to draw upon a well-established British domestic ideology, itself greatly influenced by evangelical understandings of proper gender relations, which delineated separate spheres for the sexes and assigned new social significance to the role of women in the domestic sphere.’ Savage, ‘Missionaries and the Development of a Colonial Ideology’, p. 201.

<sup>89</sup> Steven S. Maughan, ‘Civic Culture, Women’s Foreign Missions, and the British Imperial Imagination, 1860-1914’, in Frank Trentmann, ed., *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn, 2003), p. 207.



was allegedly the invention of Scottish missionaries and the Reverend John Fordyce was one of its most vocal exponents.<sup>90</sup>

However, this story of a shift in strategy towards zenana work is an exaggeration of its prominence in Free Church missions in India. It not only expunges the real value, as I detailed earlier, of work towards marginal groups of girls, but it is a renunciation of a schools-strategy to women's work, which had attracted money and men after the post Disruption period. Another compelling reason to challenge its adoption as a key strategy for the uplift of Indian females is that it would undermine some of the strategic changes taking place in men's missionary approaches to India.

### **Men's work**

From the 1850s onwards there was a discernible shift in men's missionary work in India for the Free Church foreign mission. As Jeffrey Cox has noted, much of the aggressive and defamatory rhetoric against Hinduism was replaced by a more conciliatory approach, which attempted to engage with Islam and Hinduism in 'fulfilment preaching', which offered 'the argument that Christian truth is prefigured in the teaching of Indian religions.'<sup>91</sup> A more conciliatory attitude towards 'Hinduism' was in evidence on the part of some Scottish male missionaries in Calcutta in 1865, when the committee in Edinburgh reported 'the present interesting position of the Brahma Somaj [sic], to the leading members of which party our missionaries are finding access in a very remarkable way.'<sup>92</sup> In 1866 'Baba Kesub Chandra Sen', the leader of the movement was commended for his address in Calcutta, 'in which he spoke in glowing terms of "Jesus Christ and him crucified"'.<sup>93</sup>

This was not simply an ideological or a rhetorical shift: the reality of the 1857 uprisings had led to narratives of blame on aggressive foreign missionaries, and the Free Church of Scotland, like many other British Protestant foreign missions, sought

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<sup>90</sup> See Chapter Five.

<sup>91</sup> Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, p. 65.

<sup>92</sup> National Library of Scotland (NLS), Foreign Mission Records of the Church of Scotland MSS. 7530-8072: Minute Book Series Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Acting Committee Foreign Mission of Free Church (Free Church Foreign Mission), 19 December 1865.

<sup>93</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/106, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 17 July 66.

to both defend themselves and reappraise their strategies in private.<sup>94</sup> Only the Reverend Thomas Hunter of the Church of Scotland mission and his family in Sialkot had been killed in the uprisings, but the Scottish missionary response, exemplified in Duff's published letters, suggest the profound impact 1857 had on Scottish Presbyterian missionaries and their supporters.<sup>95</sup> Linked to the impact of 1857 on the work of Scottish Free Church missionary men in India was the reaffirmation of establishing an Indian Christian church. In 1858 the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland pronounced 'with satisfaction the measures which are in progress at Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay, for forming the pastoral tie between native congregations...and such of the native ministers or preachers.'<sup>96</sup> Later in 1858 there was a complaint to the Convenor of the Free Church of Scotland Foreign Missions Board that 'our mission in India was originally started upon the plan of raising up native agents, but this had been largely departed from by school operations and otherwise.'<sup>97</sup> In 1866 the Free Church's General Assembly reported triumphantly that the policy of building an Indian Christian church had led to 297 'native churches', with the Calcutta congregation being entirely independent economically.<sup>98</sup> This public story of the successful building of a more independent Indian Christian church targeted over the controversies and conflict that had characterised the Free Church's focus on developing Indian agency from the 1850s onwards. Indian Christian Free Church of Scotland ministers sought greater economic and administrative parity with Scottish missionaries in India during this

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<sup>94</sup> For discussions of how the causes of the 1857 uprising were interpreted, see Ian Copeland, 'Christianity as an Arm of Empire: The Ambiguous Case of India under the Company, c1813-1858', *The Historical Journal*, 4 (2006): pp. 1025-1054; Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 99-107; Salahuddin Malik, 'Popular British Interpretations of "the Mutiny": Politics and Polemics' in *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857, Volume 2 Britain and the Indian Uprising*, ed. Andrea Major and Crispin Bates, (New Delhi: Sage, 2013), pp. 25-49. On how the LMS negotiated 1857 and narratives of blame, see Andrea Major, "'Spiritual Battlefields': Evangelical Discourse and Writings of the London Missionary Society' in *Mutiny at the Margins*, pp. 50-73. For a discussion of how 1857 was interpreted by Scottish Presbyterian missionaries, see Esther Breitenbach, 'Scottish Presbyterian Missionaries and Public Opinion in Scotland' in *Mutiny at the Margins*, pp. 74-94.

<sup>95</sup> Alexander Duff, *The Indian Rebellion: Its Causes and Results. In a series of letters from the Rev. Alexander Duff D.D. LL.D, Calcutta* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1858). For a discussion of Duff's *Indian Rebellion* and how he shifted blame, although not exclusively, onto Muslims, see Esther Breitenbach, 'Scottish Presbyterian Missionaries and Public Opinion in Scotland', *Mutiny at the Margins*, pp. 80-84.

<sup>96</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 20 April 1858.

<sup>97</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 21 December 1858.

<sup>98</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 6 June 1866.

period and much of the work of the Free Church of Scotland Foreign Missions Board was taken up with negotiating Indian ordination protocols, differential salaries, and access to missionary councils.<sup>99</sup>

The economics underpinning what missionary work could be enacted became more overt in the Free Church of Scotland Foreign Missions Board meetings in Edinburgh. Educational institutions were the bedrock of the Free Church of Scotland Scottish mission in India and were a constant, and often compromising, drain on home resources. Alexander Duff, on a tour at the invitation of the American Board of Missions, was advised to ‘keep clear of all connection with the subject of slavery...[but] he should aim at increasing the sum for buildings at Calcutta from £8000 to £12000.’<sup>100</sup> The increasing openness about the connection between money and work was partly the result of the crisis in local funding brought about by 1857, where Calcutta, with its flagship Free Church Institution, was particularly badly hit: when the Foreign Missions Board complained that Calcutta took up a disproportionate amount of income, they were told that local funding had collapsed due to the death or removal of local contributors, and ‘from many of the larger contributors now appropriating their charities to the relief of those rendered destitute by the recent outbreak.’<sup>101</sup> The destruction of the mission and school premises in Calcutta after a hurricane in 1864 required Alexander Duff to raise £3779 in immediate funds and then attempt to raise another £50,000 for mission buildings in general in 1866, such was the need to maintain, repair and expand teaching institutions.<sup>102</sup>

The grants-in-aid offered by the colonial government as a result of Wood’s Educational Despatch were fulsomely exploited to maintain central and branch schools and to expand vernacular education. By the 1860s, vernacular language learning and education were well embedded as a missionary strategy for the Free Church’s foreign mission and was clearly connected with the underlying aims of the

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<sup>99</sup> The Reverend Wurzier Beg attended a meeting in Edinburgh and read a statement ‘embracing various objections to the regulations of the committee as to the position of native agents with reference to missionary councils, salaries etc.’ NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 16 December 1856.

<sup>100</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 2 January 1854.

<sup>101</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 20 October, 1857.

<sup>102</sup> For the effects of the hurricane, see NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 29 December 1864; for the attempt to raise a further £50, 000, see 17 April 1866.

Despatch to promote vernacular schooling.<sup>103</sup> Whatever misgivings missionaries had about the grant-in-aid scheme and the place of Christian teaching in institutions that were awarded these government funds, the centrality of institution building and maintenance for the Free Church missionaries in India engendered a co-operative relationship with the colonial government. Alexander Duff, when he became Convenor of Free Church of Scotland Foreign Missions Board in 1864, argued that

[t]he government were anxious that mission schools should be established in as many places as possible, throughout the province [Nagpore], grants-in-aid being made in all cases for their maintenance and that so long as a proper standard of education was kept up in these no Government Schools would be planted in the same locality.<sup>104</sup>

The centrality of visible institutions, particularly schools, as the Free Church of Scotland's missionary strategy in India during the second half of the nineteenth century meant that all manner of compromises were made, particularly with the colonial government. Yet there was another trend in men's missionary work in India: while maintaining the focus on expensive institution building, and maintenance, in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Nagpur, the Free Church foreign mission diversified into 'rural missions', medical missions and work 'among the wild tribes of India.'<sup>105</sup> And diversity of missionary work and outreach became the centrepiece of the Free Church's contribution to the Paris Missionary Exhibition in 1868.

Alexander Duff sent out a call to showcase the missionary work being prosecuted by Scottish men in India. He asked all missionaries

to gather any articles, illustrative of the state and progress of our various missions, such as photographic view of mission buildings, heathen temples and heathen deities; photographs of mission agents, European and natives, as well as individuals of the different races, castes, or classes, Hindu, Mahomedan, Parsi, Waralis, Gonds etc among whom we labour, books,

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<sup>103</sup> Vernacularisation was asserted when the Foreign Missions Board asserted that 'it is now a Resolution of the Committee that each new missionary appointed to India shall be allowed time after joining his station, to study the Vernacular needed there, this committee now recommend that an examination as to a missionary's aptness in the language should take place.' NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 22 April 1862; see also the account of policies of vernacularisation in Chapter Four.

<sup>104</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 18 October 1864

<sup>105</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 17 October 1865.

pamphlets, papers, tracts, published, by any of our agents in the English or vernacular languages; specimens of their handwriting, in English or native characters, list of all text books studies, in the Institutions and Schools, with specimens of any that are peculiar, of local origin or in the vernacular, or of anything else that might suggest itself to the heathen on the spot, or friends of the mission, as likely to throw light on the real nature, extend, effects or results of all our operations, educational, and evangelistic etc etc or anything else whatever.<sup>106</sup>

This rhetoric of male missionary work, for once, reflected something of the reality: Indian teachers and missionaries, vernacular schools, missions to adivasis were included to reflect a mission that no longer confined itself to the high-caste Hindu prize. And to celebrate fifty years of foreign missionary work, the Free Church of Scotland published a history. The story of missionary work in India both lauded the institution building tradition established by Duff and acknowledged how diverse the encounter had been: '[i]n truth', wrote George Smith

there is no tried system or method of missionary effort among savage and coloured races, among males and females, which the Free Church of Scotland has not been led to follow during fifty years of its mission history, and which it is now vigorously applying to bring men and women, boys and girls, of all stages and conditions, to the partaking love of Jesus Christ.<sup>107</sup>

### **Women's work**

As men's work retreated from a confrontation with Hinduism and encompassed diversity, although remaining embedded in institutions, Free Church women's work became characterised as 'zanana [sic] or household teaching, first devised by Dr T. Smith in 1840 [which] was with his assistance begun in Calcutta by the Rev. John Fordyce.'<sup>108</sup> Although the variety of female missionary encounter in India is explored elsewhere, characterising the work of Scottish women as somehow specialising in zenana work was repeated in later histories of Free Church women's

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<sup>106</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 20 November 1866.

<sup>107</sup> George Smith, *Fifty Years of Foreign Missions: or the Foreign Missions of the Free Church of Scotland in their Year of Jubilee, 1879-80* (Edinburgh: John Maclaren and Son, 1879), p. 25.

<sup>108</sup> Smith, *Fifty Years of Foreign Missions*, p. 10.

missionary work in India.<sup>109</sup> In a history of bible and medical missions to women in India, zenana work becomes the *invention* of the Free Church of Scotland's foreign mission:

[l]ate in 1854 a meeting was held in Calcutta addressed by a forthright Scottish missionary, John Fordyce. For two years he had been bombarding influential Indians with 'short, strong, striking appeals on behalf of their wives and daughters', and a few weeks earlier a zenana had at last opened... And in his speech at the meeting Fordyce did not mince his words. 'So effectually,' he said, 'do these warders of the zenana perform their part their cruel part in the social system of this land, that woman...is morally polluted, mentally benighted and, relatively to man, cruelly degraded...Attempts, in a systematic way, to evangelize the mothers and daughters of this land can only be made through education. The time has come. The era of action has dawned. Let a great and united effort be made to secure from Britain, and prepare here, may who shall carry the lamp of knowledge into the zenanas of the rajahs and other educated natives. And, if successful, a few illustrious examples will be followed by many, and the middle classes will then send their daughters to a public school.'<sup>110</sup>

It is hardly surprising that the zenana work so promoted by Fordyce should characterise outreach to Indian women by Scottish Free Church missionaries. The Reverend Fordyce and his wife were sent to superintend the girls' orphanage in Calcutta in 1852 and returned to Scotland in 1855 on the grounds of his wife's ill health. Fordyce was certainly an advocate of high-caste, zenana outreach in Calcutta, but its characterisation as the most central missionary strategy for Scottish women in India derived from Fordyce's career after mission work in India. He became the representative of the Free Church of Scotland women's foreign missions committee and editor of the *Eastern Female's Friend*.

Fordyce was an effective fundraiser and propagandist for the Free Church Ladies' Society. In 1856 he was actively fundraising in Scotland and in 1857 he was developing strategies to find sympathetic women among Free Church congregations

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<sup>109</sup> Smith acknowledges more diversity later when he claims that women's work included, '[f]emale Boarding-Schools, with their normal classes for training native female teachers, Girls' Day Schools, Zanana work, or house-to-house visitation, and employment of Native Bible-women are the means through which the good seed of the Kingdom is sown. For many years the Society assisted Mrs Ewart's school in Calcutta for Jewesses, Greeks and Armenians.' Smith, *Fifty Years of Foreign Missions*, p. 73.

<sup>110</sup> J.C. Pollock, *Shadows Fall Apart: The Story of the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), pp. 18-19.

to collect funds.<sup>111</sup> He was a consummate publicist, and in 1861 he held meetings in Glasgow and the West of Scotland to publicise the missionary work of Free Church women in India with such notables as the Reverend Behari Lal Singh and the Reverend James Mitchell in attendance.<sup>112</sup> Even as Minister at Dunse, he continued to represent the Free Church women's missionary endeavour in India: he was elected as a president of the Free Church Ladies' Society and remained their editor of the *Eastern Females' Friend*.<sup>113</sup> Thus the cause of zenana missions in Calcutta was overstated by its key exponent who had limited experience of missionary work in India himself, and who spent the rest of his career as a crucial publicist for women's missions in Scotland. Although men's missionary work reflected a more conciliatory approach to Hinduism from the 1850s onwards and their work diversified, the interpretation of women's missionary work is one of greater focus on the Hindu family and household and of specialisation, not diversity.

The pattern of Scottish women's work for the Free Church foreign mission in India from the 1850s onwards imitated male missionary endeavour: the emphasis remained on institution building; there was a similar emphasis on vernacularisation; and there was an increasingly visible Indian presence in the endeavours of Scottish missionary women. Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Nagpur were mission fields occupied by formidable Scottish missionary women of the Free Church who petitioned for the maintenance and extension of their schools or orphanages. The protection and continuation of 'visible institutions' as detailed earlier in the chapter remained the key strategy for the uplift of women and girls in India and, during this period, there was the development of institutions for Indian girls in relatively new Free Church mission fields like Nagpur. A Reverend Adam White petitioned for female education in Nagpur in 1859; by 1865 Mrs Cooper, the Free Church's woman missionary stationed there since 1864, reported that her mission had been requested by the colonial government to provide a superintendent for a Female Normal School,

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<sup>111</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 16 May 1856, 12 November 1857.

<sup>112</sup> National Library of Scotland (NLS), Foreign Mission Records of the Church of Scotland MSS. 7530-8072: Minute Book Series Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 18 January 1861.

<sup>113</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 11 May 1858.



which it duly did.<sup>114</sup> In 1866 Mrs Cooper was in Edinburgh petitioning for money to establish an orphanage and girls' school and the Free Church of Scotland women's foreign committee granted her £100 per year for her institution.<sup>115</sup> The final institution was illustrated and showcased in George Smith's *Fifty Years of Foreign Missions*.<sup>116</sup>

The development and extension of expensive institutions for Indian girls in Nagpur typifies the experience of an institutional strategy that was shared by Free Church men and women. Maintaining central teaching institutions and resourcing branch schools and orphanages was costly, erratic and a constant drain on both local and home resources. But all the key women's institutions in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were maintained and supported in spite of problems of price increases affecting rents in Calcutta and Bombay in particular.<sup>117</sup> Financing followed a similar pattern to that of Free Church missionary men's institutions. In 1857, for example, a Free Church woman missionary nearly lost her school buildings in Bombay due to rent problems.<sup>118</sup> Another building was found and financed but by 1863 Mrs Nesbit was back in Edinburgh raising funds for the purchase of a permanent school building in Bombay as she had to leave the house she had rented as a boarding school.<sup>119</sup> In 1867 Mrs Nesbit was awarded £2500 by the colonial government as a grant-in-aid for the 'Native Female Boarding School', which was awarded due to the institutions 'special merit' as an orphanage and a school for training teachers.<sup>120</sup> In 1867 Mrs Nesbit wished to retire and the Edinburgh committee saw it as crucial to maintain the institution: first they needed to 'act in concert with the Foreign Missions Committee in obtaining the services of a married missionary and his wife'.<sup>121</sup> In 1868 an Indian minister and his wife were suggested for the role: 'Mr and Mrs Dhanjibhai should

<sup>114</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 18 March 1859; NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 16 June 1865.

<sup>115</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 19 October 1866.

<sup>116</sup> Smith, *Fifty Years of Foreign Missions*, p. 53.

<sup>117</sup> In 1865 Bombay was badly affected by price rises and the Convenor of the Free Church of Scotland Foreign Missions Board argued that 'regarding the great increase that had taken place there in the rent of houses and the prices of all commodities, arising chiefly from the state of trade and commercial speculation, an increase which affected most seriously the means of livelihood of the various mission agents.' NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 6 August 1865.

<sup>118</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 13 November 1857.

<sup>119</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, June 5 1863.

<sup>120</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 5 July 1867.

<sup>121</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 1 November 1867.



reside at the school, the former acting as Chaplain and the latter as the superintendent of its secular matters, leaving educational work to Mrs Ewing.<sup>122</sup>

This story of a girls' institution shares key elements with the story of institutions being built by Scottish Free Church men. Crucially, in spite of the costs and staffing problems, these institutions represented the central missionary strategy for outreach in India and were prosecuted at almost any cost. Private fundraising, government-grants-in aid and money sent directly from the Free Church women's foreign mission committee maintained Mrs Nesbit's school economically as rents and prices soared in colonial coastal cities in the 1860s. It also represented a vernacular strategy and sought to train teachers to provide elementary, vernacular education, which was a key strategy underlying with Wood's Despatch. This institution also alludes to the presence of Indian Christians. In this case Mrs Dhanjibhai's role was less august than that of Mrs Ewing's, but like Mrs Venkaturamiah in Nellore and Mrs Bhattacharjya in 'Mahanad', the imperative to establish an Indian Christian church and community inflected women's as well as men's work.<sup>123</sup>

Scottish women's mission work of the Free Church remained integrated with men's, and the familial aspiration of missionary husband-and-wife teams remained enforced. The Reverend Fordyce was obviously the most celebrated example of a man who made a career out of women's missionary work. However, the Pouries, who ran the Calcutta Orphanage after the Fordyces left were typical of the aspiration for men and women's missionary endeavours to remain integrated.<sup>124</sup> In 1861 it was declared at a Free Church Ladies' Society meeting that

whilst the operations of this society are chiefly and appropriately in the hands of Christian women, the nature and importance of the cause are such as to entitle the society to the hearty sympathy and Generous aid of Fathers and Brethren in the ministry and membership of the church.<sup>125</sup>

The administration of women's missionary institutions became more integrated with male mission councils in India. In 1863 the Edinburgh committee argued that

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<sup>122</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 15 May 1868.

<sup>123</sup> For a reference to Mrs Ventkaturamiah, see NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 18 April 1866; for a reference to Mrs Bhattacharjya, see 13 November 1863. In 1862 the Edinburgh committee were asked for £10 to sponsor 'Marion' Bhattacharjya, see 17 January 1862.

<sup>124</sup> They arrived in Calcutta in 1857.

<sup>125</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 29 January 1861.

‘regarding the relations of the missionaries and the mission councils with the female schools...the desire of the committee [is] that the missionaries at Poona should take some oversight of the boarding school there, so far as they might see cause.’<sup>126</sup> This desire for an integrated, not separatist, strategy for women’s work came to the fore when the Free Church Ladies’ Society were asked whether they would follow the policy of the Free Church of Scotland’s Foreign Mission Board and accept integration with the independent Glasgow Ladies’ Society for Female Education in Kaffraria.<sup>127</sup> The Free Church’s Foreign Mission Board had inherited, rather reluctantly, the African mission of the Glasgow Missionary Society in 1844.<sup>128</sup> Alexander Duff addressed the Free Church women’s missions committee to enquire whether the *exclusive* uplift of Indian women and girls was enshrined in their constitution.

Far from arguing the unique case of Indian women for uplift, the Edinburgh committee responded that

[i]t was stated in reply that the society had hitherto confined its operation to India, but as the committee strongly desired that it should be more definitely recognized as supplementary to and co-operating with, the Foreign Missions of the Church, they would gladly recommend to the Annual meeting that the constitution of the society should be so far altered as to embrace the same fields as the foreign missions.<sup>129</sup>

As I argued at the end of Chapter Five, inclusion in a national missionary project which reflected a Scottish identity was crucial to women who were establishing early local missionary auxiliaries. Although it is impossible to argue in this case that there was a national impetus behind adopting Africa as a mission field, the desire for a missionary strategy shared broadly with men keenly overrode any ideological notion of the ‘specialness’ of Indian women as a privileged group for outreach.

Zenana work certainly did take place among some of the Free Church’s missionary women in Calcutta, but it did not, as I have detailed above, characterise it. As I argued earlier, Free Church missionary men diversified some of their missionary work, while maintaining a strong institution-building strategy. Just as

<sup>126</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies’ Society, 24 April 1863.

<sup>127</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies’ Society, 11 January 1865.

<sup>128</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 15 March 1848.

<sup>129</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies’ Society, 11 January 1864.

rural missions, outreach to adivasis, and medical missions developed in the 1850s onwards, so zenana visiting and rural mission work was incorporated into the variety of mission work prosecuted by The Free Church of Scotland women's foreign missions committee. They agreed in 1862, for example, to support the development of girls' schools in the rural mission established by the Free Church's minister in Indapur, the Reverend Narayan Sheshadri.<sup>130</sup> In 1863, the Edinburgh committee were funding the extension of his female schools into Judapur.<sup>131</sup> By 1866, the committee agreed to fund an Indian woman teacher to Sheshadri's rural mission girls' schools at 20 Rupees per month.<sup>132</sup> This was a small act of diversity from the mainstream project of schools and orphanages, and 'diversity' among the missionary work supported or prosecuted by Scottish women was not as dramatic as that of their male counterparts in terms, for example, the establishment of missions to 'the wild tribes of India' and the Waralis.<sup>133</sup>

Zenana work should be interpreted as part of the diversity of Scottish women's missionary work and not as a mainstream strategy underpinned by an ideological preoccupation with one group of Indian actors. Zenana work was largely confined to Calcutta during this period and it was connected to only one of the three Free Church of Scotland's female institutions in the city.<sup>134</sup> A Miss Taylor was appointed in 1864 to prosecute zenana work with some of the girls at the Free Church's orphanage in Calcutta.<sup>135</sup> The orphanage had certainly been at the centre of experimental schemes for encouraging zenana work in the mid-1850s under the supervision of the Reverend Fordyce. Fordyce had evidently tried to manipulate the demographic in educating Indian girls for zenana work. After his departure, there had been some confusion about what the purpose of the orphanage in Calcutta was, and his replacement, Miss Laing, wrote to the committee in Edinburgh to ask for guidance. The committee resolved that

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<sup>130</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 10 October 1862.

<sup>131</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 15 May 1863.

<sup>132</sup> NLS MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 16 February 1866.

<sup>133</sup> For a reference to tribes, see NLS, MSS Dep. 298/107, Minute Book of the Free Church Foreign Mission, 17 October 1865; for a reference to Waralis, see 19 December 1865.

<sup>134</sup> The three institutions were Alexander Duff's day school, the orphanage and Mrs Ewart's school.

<sup>135</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 13 October 1865.

except in very special cases, the pupils admitted should be pure native girls; and that as a general rule, those of them that are not orphans or destitute should have to pay for their food and clothing at least;...such of the pupils as seem likely to be afterwards useful as teachers should receive as superior an education as possible, and should be trained to teach others...<sup>136</sup>

It was evident that Indian girls only, or 'pure native girls', were to be cultivated for a superior education and future teaching work. Although it is not clear that these girls would engage exclusively in zenana education, in 1865 the Edinburgh committee decided that 'in view of the great importance of this special work [zenana visiting] in which some of the senior scholars of the Orphanage now assist Miss Taylor, that the grant to Calcutta will be increased.'<sup>137</sup>

Zenana work was envisaged as an encounter between Indian Christian girls from missionary institutions like the Free Church's orphanage and high-caste Hindu women at home. However, the zenana scheme, if there was such a thing, remained limited to Free Church's girls' orphanage and not extended to the vernacular day and boarding school opened by Alexander Duff in 1857.<sup>138</sup> There is no evidence that it was anything other than connected to the Orphanage, and this in itself had limited utility as a resource for producing Indian Christian girls. In 1863, when applying for a grant-in-aid from the colonial government, the Reverend Pourie, the supervisor of the Orphanage, gave a snapshot of the demographic: of the seventy-eight girls it housed, forty-four were 'Jewesses'; ten were Armenian; and there were twenty-four 'others'.<sup>139</sup> The other school run by a Free Church Scottish missionary woman, Mrs Ewart, was exclusively made up of Jewish and Armenian girls from Calcutta, and it was fulsomely funded and supported by the Free Church Ladies Society. The demographic reality of outreach to women and girls by Free Church Scottish women in Calcutta institutions is probably more Jewish and Armenian than Indian in the mid nineteenth century, and these girls were not selected to engage in zenana work, which was considered the provenance of the Indian woman. Duff's vernacular day school, the only Free Church institution for 'Indian' girls in Calcutta, whatever the

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<sup>136</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 16 May 1856.

<sup>137</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 13 October 1865.

<sup>138</sup> Duff opened a vernacular day school in Calcutta and declared that 40 to 50 high-caste girls were in regular attendance. NLS, MSS Dep. 298/118, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, 13 November 1857.

<sup>139</sup> NLS, MSS Dep. 298/119, Minute Book of the Free Church Ladies' Society, November 13 1863.

actual numbers and racial provenance of the girls, was not necessarily used as a school for producing zenana teachers.

There is little evidence for zenana work being anything other than a specialist, highly localised form of women's missionary work adjunctive to a more mainstream institutional strategy. Although demographic information about who attended Free Church schools and orphanages across all the presidencies is unreliable during this period, it is evident that in Calcutta, there is a story emerging of Jewish and Armenian girls on the margins of Indian society. It is impossible to generalise across the SPFEE and the Free Church of Scotland's women's foreign missions to argue that uplift in an institutional setting was more focused on marginal 'whites' than Indians, but the evidence of some of their key institutions, from the Calcutta Orphanage to the Landour School, does not suggest a robust case for an ideological focus on the Hindu woman or strategies for entering and transforming the Hindu home.

## **Conclusion**

Scottish women missionaries from before and after the Disruption worked with a variety of groups of girls in India and shared their central missionary strategy, that of institution building, with their husbands and fellow male missionaries. The economic resourcing and maintenance of these institutions underscores their centrality as a strategy for the uplift of women. Many Scottish men also integrated the uplift of women into their own work and careers, and this needs to contextualise the reading of early narratives of Scottish missionary work. That zenana work came to characterise Scottish women's missionary work in print is, I have argued, partly the result of John Fordyce, its principal exponent. From the case study at the end of this chapter into the Free Church's women's work in Calcutta, there is little evidence that zenana work constituted a central strategy for uplift. Zenana work had some powerful enthusiasts, particularly Fordyce, who became the editor of the *Eastern Females' Friend*, and who had considerable control over the representation of women's work. Like the SPFEE's distortion of zenana work in the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* and annual reports, the case study of the Free Church

missionary work to women in India suggests that there was a distinct conflict between print and practice.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusions

British women's missionary organisations of the mid-nineteenth century made the uplift of Indian women and girls their central concern. The three British women's missionary societies at the centre of this study established institutions in India and engaged with a variety of groups of women and girls with varying degrees of success. They sought visibility for their work through their activity in schools and orphanages and through print. They also engaged with mainstream missionary strategies from discourses of colonial education to vernacularisation. However, this is not the narrative that characterises British women's missionary work in India. As I detailed in Chapter One, the story of British women's missions at this formative time has been focused on entering the Hindu household and converting the high-caste Indian woman. Male and female missionaries partly constructed this story and it still structures scholarship. *Establishing India*, therefore, has been an exploration of both the stories and the evidence of work as constitutive, but often conflicting, elements of making the females of India central to the British women's missionary aspirations.

### Texts and Contexts

Missionary magazines were central to British women for establishing India as a key field of missionary endeavour in the early nineteenth century. As I argued in Chapters Two and Five, both the *Missionary Register* and the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* afforded women at home the opportunity to argue for and showcase their involvement in an expanding philanthropic world with global dimensions. In the mid nineteenth century, as Chapter Three asserts, the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* enabled British women missionaries in India to seek sponsorship for orphan outreach from readers at home. Therefore a woman's missionary magazine served a practical purpose: it facilitated, through fundraising, a mode of work for British women in India and it supported outreach to Indian orphans. Chapter Three also detailed why missionary magazines in general, and the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* in particular, were crucial for the project of

establishing women's missions to Indian females: missionary magazines provided a continuous record of women's work in India to an expanding number of groups.

Through accounts of the work established by women and the different groups encountered, the belief that providence was on the side of women's missions was reinforced. This sense that British women's missionary work had a rightful place in India was made visible in missionary magazines, and both Chapters Three and Five argue that the *Female Missionary Intelligencer* and the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* were important for providing counter narratives of women's missionary endeavour at strategic moments. Miss Googenough's account of 1857 was a testimonial to the survival of the women's missionary project in India, and the *Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register* provided feminised counter narratives to the homosocial world constructed by early Scottish missionaries.

*Establishing India* also argues for recontextualising the missionary writing that explores the uplift of Indian woman and girls. Missionary discourses of Indian women in the early press, did not, as I argued in Chapter Two, result in privileging the Indian woman as a central missionary cause for the SPFEE. In Chapters Two and Six, I explored how in spite of the importance of accounts of Indian women in the *Missionary Register* and the speech by Alexander Duff about Indian women in 1839<sup>140</sup>, what mattered to establishing early women's missionary organisations were often local contexts. Whatever the intentionality of missionary discourses of Indian women, their impact was often limited by the power of personal connections and networks. Simply because these texts had a powerful place in missionary discourses, or were delivered by charismatic and iconic men, did not mean they were consumed as such.

By reading missionary texts in conjunction with archival records of missionary societies, *Establishing India* has argued that missionaries often distorted their accounts of work. Chapter Five detailed how the early accounts of missionary work from the Church of Scotland excluded women and constructed highly homosocial narratives. Yet, these narratives did not reflect the reality of male support for

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<sup>140</sup> Alexander Duff, *Female Education in India, being the Substance of An Address Delivered at the First Annual Meeting of the Scottish Ladies' Association, in Connection with the Church of Scotland, for the Promotion of Female Education in India*. (Edinburgh, John Johnstone), 1839.



women's missions as evidenced in Chapter Six. Female exclusion and Indian passivity were strategic to early Scottish missionaries' self-representation, but neither can be read as a social reality. Missionaries also distorted women's work and exaggerated the importance of zenana visiting. Both Chapters Four and Six read some of the zenana literature against evidence of the practice in the SPFEE and the Free Church mission in India. Yet as I argued in Chapter One, the zenana story of women's missions in the mid-nineteenth century is still read as characterising women's mission work. These mythopoetic narratives derived from sati still structure readings of who and how British missionary women sought to uplift in India.<sup>141</sup> Crucially, the focus on the uplift of the high-caste Hindu woman obscures the marginal females and non-elite Indian women who were also central to women's missionary concerns. It also reduces the work women did to the private and domestic domain and separates it from the missionary strategies of men.

### **British Women's work: outreach to the women and girls of India**

*Establishing India* contests the argument that British women only sought to uplift Indian women and girls because of the impact of metropolitan discourses of the degraded Indian female. Chapter Two shows how personal connections and transnational encounters were key to establishing India as a field of missionary endeavour for the SPFEE in the 1830s and 1840s. Connections to networks of missionaries in India and China were critical to the initial strength of these respective fields, rather than the power of their respective humanitarian claims. Chapter Five shows that Scottish women's missionary sympathies were initially inflected by an interest in societies that offered some form of 'national' participation, and that this was an important context for their adoption of the Scottish missionary project to India. For the SPFEE and the SLA in the 1830s, the adoption of Indian women and females as their primary focus of missionary work was shaped not only by the powerful humanitarian claims of the Indian woman in missionary print.

The work that British missionary women undertook in India, whether as wives of Scottish missionaries or single women sent out by the SPFEE, cannot be

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<sup>141</sup> See Chapter One.

characterised as focusing on high-caste outreach to the Hindu home. *Establishing India* has used extensive archival research into the missions of men and women to suggest a shared missionary strategy based on schools and institutions in the mid-nineteenth century. In Chapter Two, I explored how the SPFEE had no clear ‘policy’ or strategy for work in India and gave money and resources opportunistically, largely in response to requests and petitions. Chapter Four details how by the 1850s the SPFEE sought to establish an ambitious school institution in Mussoorie, based on the strategic importance of mixed-race girls. This project was facilitated and supported by a network of men in Mussoorie and conformed to a larger nineteenth-century strategy of building visible Christian institutions in important locations. Chapter Four also reiterates how the SPFEE sought inclusion in wider strategies for education in India, particularly deriving from Wood’s Educational Despatch. The SPFEE devised a scheme to implement vernacular education and collaborated with another male organisation, the Christian Vernacular Education Society. The story of work for Scottish women in India follows a similar trajectory of inclusion in mainstream missionary thinking in the mid-nineteenth century. Chapter Six shows how women’s missionary institutions, mainly schools and orphanages, were central to the idea and expression of women’s work. After the Disruption, considerable resourcing went into girls’ institutions, and outreach to the women and girls of India was deemed a collaborative and familial venture. As the variety of work enacted by Free Church male missionaries expanded, women’s followed, although the central strategy of institution building remained the bedrock of the project. Zenana work, which was presented as a Scottish invention, was part of a variety of approaches to outreach in India, but it was not the central strategy.

*Establishing India* constructs a story of outreach to women and girls in India that is predicated on shared approaches to missionary work. By comparing denominational societies with husband and wife teams with an interdenominational society sending out single women, there is no evidence that shared missionary strategies were only sought or available to married women. I would argue that the SPFEE were determined to assert their interest in mainstream missionary work and participate in strategies and plans with national aspirations for Indian education.

Arguing that British missionary women engaged in mainstream mission strategies in India does not undermine the scholarship that asserts women's work was gendered. Eliza Kent's scholarship on South India underscores ideas of gender in how missionaries sought to shape the social practices of female converts.<sup>142</sup> Although it is impossible to construct a story of how British women in this period shaped the behaviour, dress and mobility of girls in their institutions, gendered expectations were axiomatic to outreach, and not the focus of my work.

By shifting the focus away from claims that British missionary women came principally to focus on zenana visiting is not to challenge that gendered behaviour and power structures were not enacted across schools and orphanages. My contention is that the story of British women's missionary work did not contract into one specialism in the Hindu home, while men's missionary work expanded and moved away from confrontational encounters with Hinduism.

*Establishing India* has deprivileged the encounter between the high-caste Hindu woman of the zenana and the British missionary woman as the central drama of women's work in mid-nineteenth-century India. This encounter, as I showed in a discussion of the magazine material of Chapter Three and in a discussion of John Fordyce's publicity in Chapter Six, was exaggerated in print but limited in practice. As I have asserted in both those chapters, zenana work and the uplift of women in the Hindu home was important to some missionaries and it was underscored by the belief that it could affect a powerful transformation on India through the mother and her family. But this story, however powerful and symbolic, is challenged by this thesis and the emerging narratives of other groups of girls and women in India. The uplift of 'marginal' groups, particularly girls of European extraction, was not simply a virtue of necessity until the zenanas opened, and Chapters Four and Six put them back in the picture as historical actors. In Chapter Four, the story of mixed-race girls emerges as central to how the SPFEE imagined India could be evangelised. They were the focus of a substantial institutional experiment by the SPFEE, when they had no experience of direct missionary work or institution building in India. Most

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<sup>142</sup> Eliza Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

significantly, these girls were described in socially aspirational terms, which was at odds with other discourses of their community. The SPFEE and their missionaries in India conferred social status on this group and the belief that they should be cultivated for missionary schooling was reinforced by other schools opening on the Landour School model.

In Chapter Six, another demographic picture emerges about the girls and women who attended Scottish schools and orphanages. I argued that, although the data is limited and unreliable, Jewish and Armenian girls constituted perhaps half of the girls in Free Church institutions run by Scottish missionaries in Calcutta. In reality, the institutional encounter between Scottish women missionaries and girls in India was not necessarily dominated by high-caste Hindus. Although evidence is limited, Scottish missionaries were also concerned about the uplift of mixed-race girls in Calcutta. In Chapter Six, it is obvious that Alexander Duff's privileging of high-caste women in his speeches and writing is set against the reality of Catholic schools offering education to mixed-race girls. I would suggest that the Catholic 'threat' to uplift mixed-race girls, particularly by Irish women's orders in mid-nineteenth century India, is a context that needs further research and development. Marginal whites, therefore, are more significant and important groups in the story of mid nineteenth-century women's missions than zenana narratives allow. They were significant in numbers and their uplift was deemed socially important. I also argue in Chapter Four that rhetoric the missionaries and their supporters used about mixed-race girls could suggest how 'uplift' is characterised. It offered 'status' to a community seeking social advantage, which suggests that 'uplift' was a complex negotiation with communities who had something to gain.

By looking beyond the rhetoric of high-caste trophy converts, Indian Christian women emerge, very tentatively, as strategic figures in mid-nineteenth-century women's mission work. In Chapter Four, the SPFEE formulated a policy in response to Wood's Despatch. The scheme to train Indian widows as teachers was not aimed at high-caste women and the intention was to prepare them to work in elementary and vernacular schools. These women were imagined as critical to a 'scheme' and 'strategy' for more permanent Christian education in India. In Chapter Six, it is clear that the Free Church's missionary policy to foreground the establishment of an Indian

Christian church also encompassed the wives of Indian converts. Non-elite Indian Christian women were increasingly perceived as of 'strategic' importance to the work of mission building in the mid-nineteenth-century. This does not imply that they were accorded equal status to white women missionaries, but their increasing appearance in 'schemes' and 'policies' for the wider evangelisation of India contests a narrative where only high-caste Hindu wives and mothers mattered to missionaries.

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